



The Causes of K's Melancholic feeling in *Blade Runner 2049*

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Abstract. This research looks at the reasons why K, the main character in *Blade Runner 2049*, feels sad from a Freudian point of view. The main theoretical framework is Sigmund Freud's theory of melancholia from *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), which lists important emotional symptoms like guilt, self-reproach, low self-worth, and identity disturbance. The research uses a qualitative descriptive method and only the film's script by Hampton Fancher and Michael Green as its data source. This research shows that K's melancholic state is caused by a number of interconnected factors, such as denying his humanity, wanting love, making up memories, and finally losing his identity. This is done by closely examining certain lines of K's dialogue. These reasons suggest that K's mental health problems are more than just grief; they are a deeper loss of meaning in life. This fits with Freud's idea of melancholia as a reaction not just to death but also to an unclear, ungrievable absence. The results show how melancholia in science fiction can be a way to show deep emotional and philosophical problems, especially when it comes to posthuman or artificial identities.

Keyword: *Melancholia, Memory, identity*

INTRODUCTION

Melancholia is a mental illness that makes you feel a deep and lasting sense of loss that you don't consciously deal with. Melancholia, on the other hand, is when the thing that is lost is either abstract, unknown, or repressed. This is different from mourning, which recognizes a specific and identifiable loss. Freud describes melancholia as having symptoms like feeling less valuable, not wanting to do things, blaming oneself, and not knowing where the sadness comes from. In books and movies, melancholia has been used as a way to look at characters whose emotional pain comes from more than just things that happen to them; it shows a break in their own minds. Science fiction is a rich field for the research of depressing situations because it regularly deals with issues of identity, humanity, and emotional detachment. K, a replicant in Hampton Fancher and Michael Green's (2017) *Blade Runner 2049*, demonstrates complex emotional reactions, especially those that fit Freud's definition of melancholia. His words convey an internal

state characterized by existential uncertainty, emotional repression, and a desperate quest for purpose. K's desire for approval and recognition is a sad yearning that stems from his perceived lack of humanity rather than being human in the biological sense. The specific goal of this study is to pinpoint and examine the reasons behind K's depressing emotions as they are depicted in the screenplay. Few studies have focused on melancholy through a Freudian lens using the script as the primary data, although previous research on *Blade Runner 2049* has examined philosophical and psychological themes in general. This method is important because it treats K as a psychological subject whose emotional breakdown is textually constructed, rather than just as a narrative device or dystopian victim. Thus, this study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate the textual causes of K's melancholy based on Freud's theory. The study looks at specific dialogue from the script to determine how K's character develops melancholy as a result of dehumanization, artificial memory, and emotional neglect. This focus sheds light on how psychological conflict ingrained in language is used to create emotional depth in science fiction stories.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theme of melancholia has been examined in a number of earlier studies by English literature students at Indonesian universities using psychoanalytic literary analysis, specifically Freud's theory of mourning and melancholia. The book offers helpful references for the current study.

Mar'ie Naufal Rizqi's undergraduate thesis, "*A Psychoanalytic Reading on Melancholia in Orhan Pamuk's Snow*" which she finished in 2023 at Universitas Gadjah Mada's (UGM) English Literature Department, is the first study that makes a substantial contribution to this research. The protagonist Ka, who suffers from a recurring emotional battle and internal disarray stemming from unresolved loss and identity confusion, is the subject of Rizqi's investigation. Using Sigmund Freud's theory of melancholy as a guide, Rizqi lists a number of symptoms of melancholy suffering, including narcissistic identification, self-destructive tendencies, emotional withdrawal, and an inability to cope with loss. The thesis focuses on Ka's internalization of the thing he lost, which results in identity confusion, self-criticism, and a declining sense of purpose. Because it demonstrates how Freudian psychoanalysis can be applied to a literary character without the use of visual cues or cinematic analysis, this study is especially pertinent. Like K in *Blade Runner 2049*, Ka's melancholy is conveyed through dialogue, narrative changes, and internal monologues all of which can be understood through textual analysis alone—rather than through dramatic outbursts but rather through quiet despair and psychological detachment. The validity of deriving melancholy from a script or written narrative is thus confirmed by Rizqi's work.

The second undergraduate thesis that supports the current research is "*The Relation of Melancholia and Unreliable Narrator in Julian Barnes's The Sense of an Ending*" which was also carried out by Hadi, the student of Universitas Gadjah Mada, in 2019. Hadi's research integrates narrative theory more especially, the idea of the unreliable narrator with Freud's theory of melancholia. According to Hadi's analysis, Tony

Webster, the main character, displays melancholy symptoms through his warped memories, emotional suppression, and unwillingness to face his past trauma. This narrative unreliability is a sign of Tony's depressed state rather than merely a literary device. He unconsciously edits his memories as a result of his incapacity to completely process his grief, which results in selective storytelling and inconsistent narratives. Hadi's thesis is relevant because it makes a connection between narrative structure and psychological theory. Given K's fractured identity and belief in made-up memories, this realization is essential to comprehending his internal monologue and sense of reality in *Blade Runner 2049*. Similar to Tony, K lives in a state of uncertainty, and melancholy shapes how he sees the world and himself. Hadi's research supports the idea that melancholy can be identified in a character's narration of their experience and in the way they interpret their memories, rather than just in their emotional outbursts.

Yessika Ardianti's 2018 undergraduate thesis, *"The Representation of Melancholia through the Character of Nina Sayers in Black Swan"* from Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, is another crucial source. Even though a movie character is the focus of this study, it is carried out as part of the English Literature curriculum and uses textual analysis of the screenplay and character development to approach the narrative. Ardianti analyzes Nina's psychological decline using Freud's idea of melancholia, concentrating on her narcissism, identity breakdown, and compulsive behavior. The thesis shows how melancholy can cause a person to fail to separate from the lost object and instead integrate it into their ego, which can result in a total collapse of the self. Understanding how melancholy affects a character's actions and choices, even when those actions are subtly expressed or internalized, is made easier by Ardianti's research. K displays similar symptoms of melancholy in *Blade Runner 2049*, which affect his decisions, relationships, and reality perception. Despite being contained and muted, his suffering has an impact on his identity, sense of purpose, and ability to connect emotionally. Ardianti's work supports the use of text-driven character analysis in deciphering complex psychological states and validates a psychoanalytic approach to screen-based characters. They carry guilt and worthlessness as if they were the truth, making Freud's melancholy subject "morally despicable," but only in their own eyes (Freud, 1917:246).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study examines the reasons behind K's depressing emotions in the *Blade Runner 2049* script using a qualitative descriptive method. Because it emphasizes meaning interpretation and emotional depth over quantitative measurement, a qualitative approach is appropriate.

The film script authored by Hampton Fancher and Michael Green (2017) serves as the main source of data. To concentrate on how melancholy is conveyed through language and dialogue, the analysis is restricted to the script and does not include any visual or cinematic components.

According to Sigmund Freud's theory in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), data was gathered by identifying K's speech patterns that represent depressive symptoms.

Confusion, emotional disengagement, low self-esteem, and self-reproach are some of these symptoms. The underlying psychological reasons for K's melancholy were then ascertained by analyzing a selection of the dialogue.

With Freud's framework serving as the primary lens, this approach enables the study to examine K's emotional state using textual evidence and psychoanalytic interpretation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Loss of Loved One

The loss of a loved one, which Freud (1917:244) identifies as a basic trigger of melancholia, is one of the main reasons for K's depressed mood. According to Freud's explanation in *Mourning and Melancholia*, melancholy frequently ensues after the loss of a deeply cherished item, whether as a result of rejection, death, or abandonment. When Joi, his holographic companion, is destroyed, K feels this kind of loss. K's intense and sincere emotional bond with Joi, despite the fact that she is an artificial intelligence, suggests that the object of love in melancholia need only be psychologically internalized and not physically "real."

The script makes clear how much K depends on Joi for company and emotional validation. Joi tells K, "You don't have to say anything," in one scene prior to her deletion. All I want is to be with you (Fancher & Green, 2017:66). This private moment highlights Joi's symbolic role as K's sole affectional source in a society that deprives him of his most fundamental humanity. In melancholia, the ego identifies with the lost object, and the loss turns inward, leading to guilt and self-criticism, according to Freud (1917:245). Following Joi's passing, K displays actions that are consistent with the melancholy symptoms identified by Freud, including silence, withdrawal, and a fractured sense of self. When K faces her deletion, the language of grief becomes even more apparent. "K looks down at the emanator, which is now cracked and blinking," the script reads. He remains silent (Fancher & Green, 2017:78). In addition to expressing a sense of emotional destruction, this silent response also exhibits the inhibition of all activity, which Freud ascribed to melancholia (Freud, 1917:244). K experiences emotional paralysis as a result of his grief being internalized rather than externalized. Furthermore, this clearly illustrates Freud's observation regarding the decline in self-esteem (1917:246). Joi reinforced K's sense of identity and value by telling him he was unique on a regular basis. K's internal collapse is accelerated by her absence since he lacks external validation. When K later sees a huge commercial hologram of Joi speaking to him impersonally, the script provides more context for his emotional state: "You look like a good Joe." (Green & Fancher, 2017:97). In sharp contrast to her previous affirmation, this instance serves as a painful reminder of how phony and brittle that love was. In addition to losing her, K's sadness grows as he comes to terms with the possibility that what he believed to be special was actually a manufactured delusion.

According to the Freud's framework, this realization leads to uncertainty regarding the cause of suffering. According to Freud (1917:245), people who are melancholic might not be aware of what they have lost because it may not be material or culturally

accepted. K's grief is made more difficult by Joi's artificial status; while society does not accept it, the emotional harm is just as real. K is left to grieve alone for a creature that no one else ever thought was deserving of love. Joi's passing also represents K's loss of hope for love, approval, and a new life. His psychological decline begins with her removal. What started out as emotional support turns into a void that makes him grow more distant from both himself and others. This detachment, according to Freud, lowers the capacity for love as the melancholic becomes consumed with internal loss (Freud, 1917:247). K, who represents the Freudian melancholic who withdraws libido from the outside world, avoids making new friends and becomes emotionally inert after her death. Joi's passing is more than just a story point; it's a psychologically significant incident that contributes to K's depressed mood. According to Freud's theory, this section shows that this particular loss is the main cause of K's emotional breakdown because it is deeply ingrained in his symptoms, which include withdrawal, guilt, inhibition, confusion, and a diminished sense of self-worth.

Loss of Identity

One of the main causes of K's depressed state turns out to be identity loss. Freud (1917:244) asserts that the loss of an abstract idea, such as one's ideal self, can also result in melancholy, in addition to the death of a cherished object. When K is faced with the idea that he might be more than just a replicant that he might be "special" but his manufactured identity starts to fall apart in *Blade Runner 2049*. But later on, this hope is dashed, and it is this identity breakdown that sets off a profoundly depressing reaction.

Throughout the earlier parts of the script, K has a clear role as a blade runner who follows orders without question. K's robotic loyalty and lack of individualism are reflected in Lieutenant Joshi's statement, "You do what you're told, you've always done what you're told" (Fancher & Green, 2017:12). However, K gets caught up in an identity quest after finding Rachael's bones and learning that a replicant gave birth. He believes he may be the missing child after looking into her. His previously set place in the world is called into question by this fleeting possibility, which also introduces an emotional ideal: that he might have a soul, a family, or a special origin.

According to Freud's theory, this loss of the ego-ideal results in intense guilt and self-reproach. K withdraws into numbness, solitude, and silence after realizing he is not the chosen one. According to the script, K is silent. He appears blank, numb. (Green & Fancher, 2017:85). This portrayal of K's dissociation shows a sad loss of the idea of being someone who matters, rather than a loss of a person. His assumed uniqueness is disproved, and his identity—built on duty—is weakened. Freud's differentiation between mourning for a deceased internal ideal and mourning for a real person is reflected in this dual loss (Freud, 1917:246).

Additionally, a decrease in self-esteem, another important Freudian symptom, results from this loss of identity. K now views himself as worthless after initially being viewed as a tool and then momentarily as a savior. When Joi's replacement refers to him as "a good Joe," repeating the same affectionate term she once used, it reveals the depth of his

melancholy. But now it feels mass-produced, generic, and hollow. This instance represents K's coming to terms with the fact that even his love was a simulation, further depriving him of any genuine uniqueness.

One of the main characteristics of melancholia, according to Freud, is confusion of self, which is also brought on by identity loss (Freud, 1917:246). K is no longer certain that anything about him is genuine, that his feelings are genuine, or that he is special. He is unable to reconcile his sense of self because of the existential uncertainty caused by the forced memories, the fake love from Joi, and the betrayal of his belief that he is the child. Lost between human desire and predetermined purpose, he turns into a meaningless subject.

CONCLUSION

According to Fancher and Green's (2017) analysis of *Blade Runner 2049*, K's melancholy sentiment is a reflection of his existential and psychological experiences, which are also reflected in the film's script. It is evident from Sigmund Freud's theory of melancholia that K's condition stems from a number of interconnected factors, including his ongoing denial of his humanity, the loss of artificial but emotionally meaningful attachments like Joi, and the instability of his identity as a replicant who was created to obey but longs to feel. These elements combine to produce an internal conflict characterized by self-reflection, emotional disengagement, and perplexity all signs of melancholia according to Freud (1917).

K's depressed state is exacerbated by his false memories, his inability to receive true recognition, and the breakdown of purpose in his life. His melancholy stems from a combination of relational absence, identity erosion, and emotional dissonance rather than a single traumatic event. This study confirms that melancholy in *Blade Runner 2049* is both a psychological condition and an existential commentary, and that it can be successfully examined using a Freudian framework, particularly when it is based solely on the script's language. In the end, K's depressing mood highlights the emotional toll of being torn between conformity and longing, purpose and meaninglessness, artificiality and authenticity a conflict that characterizes the replicant condition and speaks to larger human fears in a technologically advanced society.

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