

Melancholia and Repressed Desire in Selected Song Lyrics by Eleventwelfth: A Psychoanalytic Study

Rebeca Ariela Cynantian

English Literature, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Surabaya

rebeca.22069@mhs.unesa.ac.id

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji representasi melankolia dan hasrat yang direpresi dalam tiga lirik lagu pilihan karya Eleventwelfth, yaitu *Your Head as My Favorite Bookstore*, *The More I Try to Trace You Forthwith*, *the Less I Want to Know Where to Find You*, dan *Another Night Awake with You on My Mind*. Penelitian ini menggunakan konsep melankolia dan represi Sigmund Freud yang didukung oleh teori lirik Jonathan Culler melalui pendekatan kritik sastra psikoanalitik dan close reading. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa melankolia direpresentasikan melalui kehilangan yang terinternalisasi, kekosongan emosional, dan ingatan sebagai ruang simbolis duka yang belum terselesaikan, sedangkan hasrat yang direpresi muncul melalui kerinduan yang ditekan, ekspresi tidak langsung, dan bahasa simbolik. Selain itu, melankolia dan hasrat yang direpresi merupakan kondisi yang saling memperkuat dan membentuk suara lirik yang ditandai oleh ketegangan psikologis dan keterikatan emosional yang belum terselesaikan.

Kata Kunci: Eleventwelfth, melankolia, kritik sastra psikoanalitik, hasrat terepresi

Abstract

This study examines the representation of melancholia and repressed desire in three selected song lyrics by Eleventwelfth: *Your Head as My Favorite Bookstore*, *The More I Try to Trace You Forthwith*, *the Less I Want to Know Where to Find You*, and *Another Night Awake with You on My Mind*. Drawing on Freud's concepts of melancholia and repression, supported by Jonathan Culler's lyric theory, this study employs psychoanalytic literary criticism and close reading to analyze how these psychological conditions are represented within the speaking voice. The findings reveal that melancholia is represented through internalized loss, emotional emptiness and stagnation, and memory as a symbolic site of unresolved grief, while repressed desire emerges through suppressed longing, indirect expression, and symbolic language, demonstrating that emotional conflict is communicated primarily through figurative rather than direct expression. Furthermore, melancholia and repressed desire are mutually reinforcing conditions that construct a speaking voice characterized by persistent psychological tension and unresolved emotional attachment.

Keywords: Eleventwelfth, melancholia, psychoanalytic literary criticism, repressed desire

INTRODUCTION

Song lyrics have been recognized as literary texts because they employ poetic language, imagery, symbolism, and figurative expressions to convey complex emotional experiences. VERNYK (2025) demonstrates this by analyzing song lyrics through the frameworks of modernist poetry and structuralism, arguing that lyrical texts force listeners to engage in active and conscious interpretation beyond literal meaning. Their literary qualities make them suitable for critical interpretation, particularly through approaches that explore the psychological dimensions of literary expression. Illahi and Herlyna (2025) further confirm this by demonstrating that song lyrics metaphorically represent psychological conflict and repressed emotions through figurative language, reinforcing the argument that lyrics function as meaningful literary texts worthy of scholarly examination. Among critical approaches,

psychoanalytic literary criticism offers a productive framework for examining how unconscious emotional conflicts are represented through symbolic language, as it assumes that language, imagery, and symbolism function as channels through which repressed emotions and unconscious experiences emerge in indirect forms.

Freud's concepts of melancholia and repression are especially relevant for analyzing song lyrics because they explain how unresolved grief and suppressed desire continue to shape emotional experience and expression. In *Mourning and Melancholia*, Freud (1917) defines melancholia as a psychological condition in which loss is internalized rather than resolved, distinguishing it from mourning by explaining that the subject unconsciously identifies with the lost object, resulting in persistent sadness, emotional emptiness, and inward-directed emotional conflict rather than gradual acceptance.

Repression, meanwhile, refers to the unconscious mechanism through which distressing desires are excluded from conscious awareness but continue to influence expression indirectly through symbolic language, contradiction, and hesitation (Freud, 1915, as cited in Madison, 1961). Together, these two concepts provide a framework for examining lyrical texts where grief and desire are expressed indirectly rather than through explicit statement.

Previous studies have demonstrated the applicability of psychoanalytic approaches to song lyrics and literary texts. Researchers have examined psychological conflicts through concepts such as the id, ego, and superego (Zakkiyah & Sari, 2023), neurotic tendencies (Fazhira et al., 2024), anxiety (Ardiantari et al., 2025), denial (Nugraha, 2025), and repression (Nugraha et al., 2026). Studies applying Freud's concept of melancholia to literary texts have also confirmed its analytical relevance. Yemez (2022) applies Freud's melancholia theory to Longfellow's narrative poem, concluding that melancholia in literature often manifests as emotional withdrawal and fixation on memory rather than narrative resolution. Similarly, Rentzepis (n.d.) examines how melancholia operates within Sylvia Plath's lyric poetry, finding that the speaking voice's inability to detach from the lost object results in a progressive disconnection from reality. These studies collectively confirm that psychoanalytic literary criticism is a valuable approach for examining the psychological dimensions of lyrical texts.

Despite these contributions, melancholia and repressed desire have rarely been examined together as interconnected psychological conditions within song lyrics. Most previous studies focus on a single psychological concept or analyze individual songs, making it difficult to identify recurring emotional patterns across multiple texts. In addition, while Eleventh's lyrics have been recognized for their emotional depth in music journalism, with reviews in outlets such as Pophariini (2023) and VOI (2023) noting the emotional nuance and lyrical complexity of their work, they have received no attention in literary scholarship. The psychological representations embedded in their lyrics therefore remain largely unexplored in academic discourse.

This study examines three selected song lyrics by Eleventh: *Your Head as My Favorite Bookstore*, *The More I Try to Trace You Forthwith, the Less I Want to Know Where to Find You*, and *Another Night Awake with You on My Mind*. It aims

to analyze how melancholia and repressed desire are represented in the selected lyrics and to examine how these two psychological conditions relate to and reinforce one another within the speaking voice. In doing so, the study contributes to psychoanalytic literary criticism by extending its application to contemporary Indonesian indie song lyrics and by examining the bidirectional relationship between melancholia and repressed desire across multiple lyrical texts, an aspect that remains underexplored in existing scholarship.

METHOD

This study applies psychoanalytic literary criticism as its primary analytical approach, focusing on close reading of selected song lyrics by Eleventh as the main technique for examining the texts. Psychoanalytic literary criticism views literary texts as expressions of unconscious desires, emotional conflicts, and inner psychological struggles, assuming that language, imagery, and symbolism function as channels through which repressed emotions and unconscious experiences emerge in indirect forms. This approach is chosen because it allows the researcher to interpret symbolic language, imagery, and emotional expression within the text in relation to Freud's psychoanalytic concepts of melancholia and repression, rather than measuring or quantifying textual elements. Close reading is employed as the primary data collection technique because it enables detailed interpretation of textual meaning and emotional nuance, allowing the researcher to identify how psychological conditions are constructed through specific linguistic and symbolic choices within the lyrics.

The primary theoretical framework consists of two key concepts drawn from Freud's psychoanalytic theory. The first is melancholia, as discussed by Freud (1917) in *Mourning and Melancholia*, which refers to a psychological condition in which loss is internalized rather than gradually resolved, causing the subject to remain emotionally bound to the lost object through persistent sadness, emotional emptiness, and self-directed feelings. The second is repression, which Freud (1915, as cited in Madison, 1961) defines as the unconscious mechanism through which distressing desires are excluded from conscious awareness but continue to exert psychological pressure and influence expression in indirect and disguised forms. The supporting framework is lyric theory as proposed by Jonathan Culler (2017), who argues that lyric texts should be

understood as poetic discourse rather than dramatic monologues spoken by fictional characters, and that the voice within a lyric should be treated as a textual construct rather than a direct autobiographical statement. Following Culler's theory, this study treats the voice in the selected songs as a lyrical voice, keeping the analysis grounded in the text itself rather than in the songwriter's personal biography.

The primary data consist of three song lyrics by Eleventwelfth, namely *Your Head as My Favorite Bookstore* from their self-titled EP (2017), and *The More I Try to Trace You Forthwith, the Less I Want to Know Where to Find You* and *Another Night Awake with You on My Mind* from their debut album SIMILAR (2023). These songs were selected because they share recurring themes of memory, loss, longing, and emotional restraint that make them particularly suitable for psychoanalytic literary analysis. The data were collected through repeated close reading of the selected lyrics, during which the researcher identified lines, phrases, and expressions reflecting emotional conflict, loss, or suppressed desire. The identified textual evidence was then categorized according to the specific characteristics of melancholia and repressed desire as defined by Freud. The findings were subsequently organized to examine recurring emotional patterns across the three selected lyrics and to trace the interplay between melancholia and repressed desire within the speaking voice, ensuring that the analysis moves beyond surface level description toward a systematic psychoanalytic interpretation of how these psychological conditions are represented and interact within lyrical discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals that melancholia and repressed desire are consistently represented across the selected song lyrics by Eleventwelfth through recurring patterns of imagery, symbolism, and emotional expression. Rather than functioning as isolated psychological conditions, the two concepts are closely interconnected in constructing the speaking voice. Melancholia is primarily represented through internalized loss, emotional emptiness and stagnation, and the persistent presence of memory, while repressed desire emerges through suppressed longing, indirect expression, and symbolic language. Together, these representations demonstrate how unresolved grief and concealed desire shape the emotional landscape of the selected lyrics. The following discussion first examines the

representation of melancholia, followed by the representation of repressed desire, before exploring how the two psychological conditions interact and reinforce one another across the selected songs.

Representing Melancholia

The analysis reveals that melancholia is consistently represented across the selected song lyrics through recurring experiences of internalized loss, emotional stagnation, and the persistence of memory. Rather than portraying grief as a temporary emotional response, the lyrics construct a speaking voice that remains psychologically attached to the lost object. These recurring patterns reflect Freud's (1917) concept of melancholia, in which loss is internalized instead of resolved, causing the subject to remain emotionally bound to what has been lost. Freud (1917) further distinguishes melancholia from mourning by noting that "in mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself," suggesting that in melancholia the grief does not pass outward but turns inward and becomes part of the subject's psychological condition.

The first representation of melancholia appears through internalized loss. Freud (1917) argues that in melancholia "the existence of the lost object is psychically prolonged," indicating that the emotional attachment continues despite the object's absence. This condition is evident in *Your Head as My Favorite Bookstore*, particularly in the line "The one that got me stuck on hold." The phrase "stuck on hold" suggests emotional suspension, implying that the speaking voice remains trapped in an unresolved experience of loss rather than moving toward acceptance. Rather than progressing toward emotional resolution, the voice is fixed in a lingering attachment to what has been lost, reflecting what Freud (1917) describes as a process in which "object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss," meaning what started as losing someone else gradually becomes something closer to losing a part of oneself. Similarly, in *Another Night Awake with You on My Mind*, the line "Another Night Awake with You on My Mind" portrays the persistent presence of the absent figure. The repetition of "another night" emphasizes that emotional attachment continues over time, while the inability to sleep suggests that thoughts of the lost object repeatedly occupy the speaker's consciousness. The representation of memory in *Your Head as My Favorite Bookstore* further strengthens this condition, particularly in the line

"Pairing all the vivid lights to bear away all those memories," which portrays memory as something vivid and continuously present rather than fading. These examples demonstrate that loss is not represented as something left behind but as an enduring psychological condition that becomes part of the speaking voice's emotional identity.

Beyond internalized loss, melancholia is further represented through emotional emptiness and psychological stagnation. Freud (1917) describes melancholia as involving "cessation of interest in the outside world" and "an inhibition of all activity," reflecting a withdrawal of emotional energy from everyday life. This condition is illustrated in *Another Night Awake with You on My Mind* through the lines "My brain has grown so tired" and "My body lies supine." Rather than merely describing physical exhaustion, these expressions portray a speaker whose emotional resources have been depleted by unresolved grief. The image of the body lying motionless symbolizes psychological paralysis, suggesting an inability to move forward after loss. Freud (1917) describes this condition as the melancholic complex behaving "like an open wound, drawing to itself cathectic energies from all directions, and emptying the ego until it is totally impoverished," meaning the grief continuously drains the subject's psychological resources rather than allowing them to recover. This sense of emotional stagnation is reinforced by the rhetorical question "How can I sleep tightly?" The inability to sleep indicates that grief remains psychologically active, and as Freud (1917) specifically notes, "the sleeplessness in melancholia testifies to the rigidity of the condition, the impossibility of effecting the general drawing-in of cathexes necessary for sleep," meaning the speaking voice cannot find rest precisely because the melancholic condition keeps the mind in a state of constant internal tension. Together, these images portray melancholia as a condition that immobilizes both the emotional and psychological life of the speaking voice.

Memory also functions as a significant representation of melancholia throughout the selected lyrics. According to Freud (1917), melancholia repeatedly returns the subject to "each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object," allowing emotional attachment to persist instead of gradually disappearing. This process is represented in *Your Head as My Favorite Bookstore* through the metaphor "Beyond this library of our mind." The

image of a library suggests a mental space where memories are carefully preserved and continuously inhabited rather than forgotten, reflecting what Freud (1917) describes as a condition in which "the shadow of the object fell upon the ego," meaning the lost other leaves such a strong psychological imprint that it continues to define the subject's inner world. Likewise, the line "Inside those pages you've handed down" portrays memories as something permanently recorded and repeatedly revisited, as if the speaking voice returns to the same narrative over and over rather than releasing it. The desire to "rewrite the story where it ends in a halt" further illustrates an inability to accept the finality of loss. Rather than allowing the past to remain unchanged, the speaking voice repeatedly returns to it in an attempt to reconstruct its ending, yet the phrase "ends in a halt" suggests that closure is never achieved, reinforcing the idea that memory functions not as a source of comfort but as a symbolic space where grief continues to exist, sustaining the melancholic attachment to the lost object.

These three representations of melancholia, internalized loss, emotional stagnation, and the persistence of memory, are not merely thematic observations but also confirm the theoretical assumption underlying this study's approach to lyric. Following Culler's (2017) argument that lyric should be read as discourse about the world rather than as a fictional character's narrated experience, the melancholic condition traced across the selected songs is better understood as a recurring structure of feeling within the speaking voice than as a biographical account of loss belonging to any particular persona. The repetition of imagery across the three songs, rather than a single extended narrative of grief, supports this reading. Each song returns to the same psychological condition through different images, a library of memory, a sleepless body, a suspended present, which indicates that melancholia here functions as what Freud (1917) calls an unresolved struggle between the ego and the lost object rather than as a plot that moves toward resolution. This distinction matters because it reframes the absence of narrative closure in the lyrics not as an aesthetic flaw but as the very mechanism through which melancholia is represented. The speaking voice cannot conclude the story of its loss because, psychoanalytically, that story was never meant to conclude. The lyrics therefore enact melancholia formally as well as thematically, sustaining the reader or listener within the same

condition of suspension that defines the speaking voice itself.

It is also worth noting that the three aspects of melancholia discussed above do not operate in isolation from one another but build cumulatively within each song. Internalized loss establishes the initial condition in which the object is retained rather than released, emotional stagnation reflects the psychological cost of maintaining that retention, and memory becomes the specific site in which the retained object continues to be encountered. This progression suggests that melancholia in the selected lyrics is not a static state described once and repeated identically, but a condition that deepens as the speaking voice keeps circling back to the same unresolved attachment. Freud (1917) notes that the melancholic ego undergoes a process in which grief is worked through only "bit by bit, at great expense of time," and the layered structure of internalized loss, stagnation, and memory across the three songs can be read as a textual enactment of that slow, incomplete labor, rather than as three unrelated symptoms placed side by side.

Taken together, these representations demonstrate that melancholia is constructed through interconnected experiences of internalized loss, emotional stagnation, and persistent memory. Each aspect reinforces the others, creating a speaking voice that remains psychologically bound to unresolved grief. Instead of depicting loss as a process that gradually reaches acceptance, the selected lyrics portray melancholia as an enduring emotional condition that continually shapes perception, memory, and selfhood.

Representing Repressed Desire

The analysis indicates that repressed desire is consistently represented throughout the selected song lyrics as emotional longing that cannot be expressed openly. Instead of directly articulating desire, the speaking voice negotiates its emotions through contradiction, hesitation, and symbolic language. These recurring patterns reflect Freud's (1915, as cited in Madison, 1961) concept of repression, in which unacceptable or distressing desires are excluded from conscious awareness yet continue to influence thoughts and expression indirectly. Across the selected lyrics, repressed desire is represented through suppressed longing, indirect expression, and symbolic imagery, all of which reveal the continuing psychological presence of unacknowledged desire.

The first representation of repressed desire appears through suppressed longing. Freud (1915, as cited in Madison, 1961) explains that repression involves "turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious," yet the repressed content continues to exert influence rather than disappearing completely. This condition is evident in *The More I Try to Trace You Forthwith, the Less I Want to Know Where to Find You*, particularly in the lines "*The More I Try to Trace You Forthwith, the Less I Want to Know Where to Find You.*" These contradictory statements reveal the coexistence of desire and resistance. While the first part of the line expresses an attempt to reconnect with the absent figure, the second immediately rejects that impulse, suggesting that the longing remains psychologically active despite the speaker's attempt to suppress it. This reflects Freud's (1915, as cited in Madison, 1961) observation that "the repressed exercises a continuous pressure in the direction of the conscious," meaning the desire keeps pushing to be acknowledged even while being held back. A similar pattern appears in *Another Night Awake with You on My Mind* through the question "Am I all you ever dreamt about?" Rather than openly confessing the desire to be remembered or loved, the speaking voice expresses longing through uncertainty, allowing the emotion to emerge indirectly without fully acknowledging it. These examples demonstrate that desire is not absent but consciously resisted, causing it to surface in conflicted and contradictory forms.

Beyond suppressed longing, repressed desire is further represented through indirect expression. Madison (1961) summarizes Freud's concept by noting that repressed content surfaces along "a gradient of increasingly disguised and psychologically more distant or indirect expressions of impulse," meaning that the further an expression is from direct statement, the more safely it can pass through the barrier of repression without being blocked. This process can be observed in *Another Night Awake with You on My Mind* through the line "Is it okay if I say goodbye, leave you all alone?" Rather than presenting a firm decision, the speaking voice frames the statement as a question, revealing hesitation and uncertainty. The phrase "is it okay" introduces a need for external validation, suggesting that the emotional intention cannot be directly asserted. This reflects what Freud (1925, as cited in Madison, 1961) describes as negation, where "negation is a way of taking account of what is repressed," allowing the speaking voice to

acknowledge the emotional intention without fully owning it. The repeated use of interrogative forms softens emotional confession and reflects the speaker's inability to communicate desire openly, revealing emotional needs that remain partially concealed beneath tentative language.

The selected lyrics also represent repressed desire through symbolic language, allowing unconscious emotions to emerge indirectly. Freud (1915, as cited in Madison, 1961) argues that repressed material does not disappear but returns in disguised forms through what Madison (1961) describes as derivatives, which are indirect symbolic outlets through which repressed content finds expression when direct articulation is not possible. This process is reflected in *Another Night Awake with You on My Mind* through the image "Rain has been dropping since quarter to nine." Rather than referring only to weather, the persistent rain symbolizes emotional burden and longing that continues despite attempts to suppress it, with the continuity of the rain mirroring the persistence of the speaking voice's repressed desire. Similarly, the metaphor "Evening tide incarcerated me like I am trapped in a wire" transforms psychological distress into an image of physical confinement, suggesting that repressed desire has become an inescapable psychological condition. Rather than directly stating what is desired, the speaking voice expresses its emotional state through imagery of entrapment, indicating that the desire remains present but inaccessible. Through these recurring symbols, the selected lyrics demonstrate how figurative language becomes a medium for expressing emotions that cannot be communicated directly.

Taken as a group, suppressed longing, indirect expression, and symbolic language also reveal a consistent pattern in how the speaking voice negotiates the boundary between what can and cannot be said. Rather than being distributed randomly across the lyrics, these strategies appear to escalate in distance from direct statement, moving from open contradiction, to hesitant questioning, to fully externalized imagery, which mirrors Freud's own description of repressed content surfacing along "a gradient of increasingly disguised and psychologically more distant or indirect expressions of impulse" (Freud, 1915, as cited in Madison, 1961). This gradient is significant for reading the speaking voice as a lyrical construct in Culler's (2017) sense, since it suggests that the voice is not simply concealing a fixed, already-known desire but

is actively producing meaning through the very act of indirection. The desire in these lyrics does not exist prior to its symbolic articulation and then get hidden behind it; rather, the symbolic imagery of rain, entrapment, and unanswered questions is the primary form through which the desire becomes legible at all, both to the listener and, implicitly, to the speaking voice itself. In this sense, repression in the selected lyrics operates less as a barrier that blocks emotional content and more as a productive mechanism that generates the lyrics' distinctive poetic texture, reinforcing the relevance of reading song lyrics as literary texts capable of dramatizing unconscious processes through form and not only through explicit content.

A further point worth emphasizing is that the indirect forms through which desire surfaces in these lyrics, contradiction, questioning, and symbolic projection, are not interchangeable but appear to correspond to different intensities of psychological threat. Contradiction allows desire and its rejection to coexist within a single statement, which keeps the conflict visible but unresolved. Questioning distances the speaking voice further by displacing the emotional claim onto uncertainty about the other's perception. Symbolic language distances it furthest by transferring the emotional content entirely onto external imagery. This layered structure suggests that repression, as represented in the selected lyrics, is not a single defensive act but a graduated response that adjusts according to how threatening the underlying desire feels at a given moment, which is consistent with Freud's broader account of repression as a continuous and effortful process rather than a one-time exclusion of unwanted content.

Taken together, these representations demonstrate that repressed desire functions as an ongoing psychological condition rather than a hidden or forgotten emotion. Through contradiction, hesitation, and symbolic imagery, the speaking voice repeatedly expresses desires that remain partially concealed from conscious acknowledgment. Instead of eliminating emotional longing, repression redirects it into indirect forms of expression, allowing desire to continue shaping the emotional atmosphere of the selected lyrics.

The Interplay Between Melancholia and Repressed Desire

The analysis reveals that melancholia and repressed desire do not function as separate psychological

conditions but continuously reinforce one another throughout the selected song lyrics. Rather than appearing independently, unresolved grief and suppressed longing form a reciprocal relationship that shapes the emotional experience of the speaking voice. Freud's (1917) concept of melancholia and his concept of repression (Freud, 1915, as cited in Madison, 1961) therefore complement one another in explaining how the lyrics construct a persistent state of psychological conflict, in which the inability to release the lost object simultaneously intensifies desire and prevents emotional resolution.

Melancholia deepens repressed desire by preserving the emotional attachment to the lost object. Freud (1917) argues that in melancholia "the existence of the lost object is psychically prolonged," meaning that the emotional bond continues despite physical separation, and because the memory of the lost object remains vivid and psychologically present, the desire attached to it also remains alive. This condition is reflected in *Your Head as My Favorite Bookstore* through the line "Beyond this library of our mind," where memory is constructed as a psychological space the speaking voice cannot leave behind. Because confronting that desire would simultaneously mean confronting the loss, it becomes repressed instead, and the melancholic attachment to memory traps the desire within it, keeping the longing preserved but unspoken. This dynamic is further visible in *Another Night Awake with You on My Mind*, where the speaking voice's exhaustion and insomnia suggest something beyond ordinary sadness. The line "My brain has grown so tired" indicates that the speaking voice is not only drained by grief but also by the sustained effort of keeping something suppressed, since as Freud (1915, as cited in Madison, 1961) explains, "repression demands a persistent expenditure of force," meaning that maintaining repression requires continuous psychological energy. When the subject is already in a melancholic state that continuously drains the ego, as Freud (1917) describes as behaving "like an open wound, drawing to itself cathectic energies from all directions, and emptying the ego until it is totally impoverished," that energy is depleted even further. In this way, melancholia creates the very conditions under which repressed desire is generated and sustained, making the two conditions fundamentally inseparable within the speaking voice.

Conversely, repressed desire prolongs melancholia by preventing the speaking voice from fully confronting emotional loss. Freud (1915, as

cited in Madison, 1961) explains that repressed thoughts continue to exercise "a continuous pressure in the direction of the conscious," indicating that suppressed emotions remain psychologically active despite attempts to exclude them from awareness. Because the desire tied to the lost other cannot be consciously faced or released, the grief associated with that loss also cannot resolve. This process is most clearly reflected in *The More I Try to Trace You Forthwith, the Less I Want to Know Where to Find You*, where the speaking voice simultaneously expresses the impulse to pursue and the impulse to withdraw. The desire to reconnect with the other is present, but it becomes redirected into avoidance because confronting it directly feels too overwhelming. However, avoiding the desire does not dissolve the emotional attachment. Instead, the longing continues to operate beneath the surface, sustaining the melancholic condition by preventing the emotional work of mourning from reaching completion. A similar pattern appears in *Your Head as My Favorite Bookstore* through the line "I'll rewrite the story where it ends in a halt," where the impulse to rewrite the past reflects a form of repressed desire in which the speaking voice cannot openly acknowledge its longing for a different outcome and instead displaces this desire into an imagined revision of memory. Because the desire is never directly acknowledged, it only deepens the attachment to the memory, and the phrase "ends in a halt" suggests that this act of rewriting leads nowhere, leaving the grief unresolved.

The reciprocal relationship between melancholia and repressed desire is consistently reflected across the three selected songs. Internalized loss preserves the memory of the absent figure, while repression transforms the resulting longing into symbolic and indirect forms of expression. Freud (1917) notes that in melancholia "countless separate struggles are carried on over the object, in which hate and love contend with each other; the one seeks to detach the libido from the object, the other to maintain this position of the libido against the assault," and this internal conflict is precisely what the selected lyrics construct through the speaking voice's simultaneous reaching toward and withdrawing from the object of its longing. Consequently, the speaking voice becomes trapped in a continuous cycle of remembering, longing, and emotional restraint. Instead of progressing toward acceptance, the lyrics repeatedly return to the same psychological condition, where grief sustains desire and desire in

turn sustains grief, producing a sustained condition of psychological stasis within the speaking voice that runs consistently across all three songs.

This bidirectional relationship also helps explain why the selected lyrics resist any clear narrative arc from grief toward acceptance, a pattern already noted in the discussion of internalized loss above. If melancholia alone were at work, one might expect the speaking voice to eventually exhaust its attachment to the lost object; if repression alone were at work, one might expect the suppressed desire to eventually resurface and be consciously acknowledged. Instead, because each condition continuously regenerates the other, the speaking voice is held in what can be described as a closed psychological loop rather than a linear emotional trajectory. Freud's (1917) own description of melancholia as a state in which "countless separate struggles are carried on over the object" captures this quality of ongoing conflict rather than movement toward an endpoint, and the same quality can be observed in the way all three songs end not with resolution but with a return to their opening emotional condition, sleeplessness, unfinished revision, or renewed distance. Read through Culler's (2017) framework, this structural circularity is itself part of the lyric's meaning: because the songs are not obligated to resolve as a narrative would, they can instead perform the very psychological stasis they describe, allowing the interplay between melancholia and repressed desire to be experienced by the listener as a recurring pattern rather than reported as a completed emotional event.

The cyclical relationship between melancholia and repressed desire also carries implications for how the selected lyrics construct emotional time. Rather than presenting a past that is remembered from a stable present, the lyrics collapse this distinction, so that past attachment and present longing become continuous with one another. This temporal flattening is consistent with Freud's (1917) observation that the melancholic subject keeps bringing up "each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object," treating memory and anticipation as part of the same unresolved emotional field rather than as separate stages of experience. Because repressed desire prevents this field from being consciously organized into a completed past, the speaking voice experiences loss and longing as simultaneous rather than sequential, which further explains why none of the three songs marks a clear boundary between what

has already happened and what the speaking voice still hopes for or fears.

Overall, the findings suggest that melancholia and repressed desire should be understood as complementary psychoanalytic concepts in interpreting the selected song lyrics. Rather than portraying grief and longing as separate emotional states, Eleventwelfth's lyrics reveal how unresolved loss generates suppressed desire while repressed desire simultaneously prevents the completion of mourning. This reciprocal relationship constructs a speaking voice that remains psychologically suspended between memory and desire, illustrating the complexity of emotional experience represented in contemporary Indonesian indie song lyrics.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the representation of melancholia and repressed desire in three selected song lyrics by Eleventwelfth, namely *Your Head as My Favorite Bookstore*, *The More I Try to Trace You Forthwith*, *the Less I Want to Know Where to Find You*, and *Another Night Awake with You on My Mind*, using Freud's concepts of melancholia and repression supported by Jonathan Culler's lyric theory. The analysis was conducted through psychoanalytic literary criticism and close reading, treating the voice in the selected lyrics as a lyrical voice rather than an autobiographical statement, in order to examine how psychological conditions are constructed through language, imagery, and symbolic expression within the texts.

In response to the first research question, the findings reveal that melancholia and repressed desire are consistently represented across all three songs, though neither condition is expressed directly. Melancholia manifests through three aspects. Internalized loss is reflected in the speaking voice's persistent emotional attachment to an absent other, in which unresolved grief has been absorbed into the subject's inner world rather than gradually released. Emotional emptiness and stagnation are portrayed through imagery of exhaustion, physical immobility, and disrupted sleep, illustrating a speaking voice that is psychologically depleted and unable to move forward. Memory further functions as a symbolic site of melancholia, wherein the past is not something the speaking voice leaves behind but something it continues to inhabit, preserved through imagery of libraries, pages, and unfinished narratives. These representations align with Freud's (1917) characterization of melancholia as a

condition in which "the existence of the lost object is psychically prolonged," preventing emotional resolution. Repressed desire, in turn, surfaces through suppressed longing, indirect articulation, and symbolic projection. The speaking voice never states its longing directly but instead expresses it through contradiction, questioning, and environmental imagery that projects internal states onto the surrounding world, reflecting Freud's (1915, as cited in Madison, 1961) understanding of repression as a mechanism that does not erase desire but displaces it beyond conscious reach, causing it to resurface in indirect and disguised forms.

In response to the second research question, the analysis reveals that melancholia and repressed desire are not separate but mutually reinforcing conditions. Melancholia deepens repressed desire by keeping the speaking voice emotionally attached to the past, creating a condition in which confronting desire becomes too overwhelming to sustain consciously, so the desire is pushed further into suppression rather than being acknowledged. At the same time, repressed desire prolongs the melancholic condition by blocking the emotional process of mourning from reaching completion. Because the desire tied to the lost other cannot be consciously faced or released, the grief associated with that loss also cannot resolve. The two conditions therefore sustain each other in a continuous cycle in which the grief keeps the desire buried and the buried desire keeps the grief alive, producing a sustained condition of psychological stasis within the speaking voice that runs consistently across all three songs.

Overall, the findings confirm that the selected song lyrics by Eleventwelfth are psychologically layered texts in which melancholia and repressed desire work together to construct a speaking voice that is unable to achieve emotional resolution. This study demonstrates that Freud's psychoanalytic framework remains a productive approach to interpreting contemporary Indonesian indie song lyrics and contributes to psychoanalytic literary criticism by examining the interaction between melancholia and repressed desire across multiple lyrical texts rather than focusing on a single psychoanalytic concept or an individual song.

SUGGESTIONS

This study highlights the representation of melancholia and repressed desire in selected song lyrics by Eleventwelfth through a psychoanalytic

literary perspective, and several directions are worth considering for future research based on the findings and limitations of this study.

For researchers who wish to continue working with the same songs by Eleventwelfth, there are several psychoanalytic concepts beyond melancholia and repression that may yield productive readings of the same texts. Freud's concept of the death drive could offer a lens for examining the recurring imagery of stillness, exhaustion, and emotional surrender in *Another Night Awake with You on My Mind*, where the speaking voice appears to inhabit a condition that extends beyond ordinary grief. The concept of the uncanny could also be applied to *Your Head as My Favorite Bookstore*, where memory is constructed as a space that is simultaneously familiar and deeply unsettling, something the speaking voice continues to return to despite the discomfort it brings. Narcissism as a psychoanalytic concept may also prove relevant given the inward and self-referential quality of the speaking voice's emotional condition across all three songs.

Beyond psychoanalytic approaches, future researchers may consider examining the same lyrics through different theoretical frameworks entirely. Trauma theory, for example, might interpret the intrusive memories and emotional paralysis in the lyrics not as melancholia but as symptoms of unprocessed traumatic experience, which would yield a meaningfully different reading of the same textual evidence. Affect theory could shift the analytical focus away from unconscious mechanisms and toward the emotional intensities produced by the lyrics, examining how the texts generate feeling rather than what those feelings represent psychologically. A stylistic or discourse analysis approach could also complement the findings of this study by examining the specific linguistic structures through which emotional restraint and indirection are produced at the level of language.

Future research may also expand the corpus of analysis beyond these three songs and examine Eleventwelfth's broader discography, since this study can only make claims about the selected lyrics and a wider analysis might reveal whether the psychological patterns identified here are consistent across the artist's work as a whole or particular to certain songs. A comparative study between Eleventwelfth and other Indonesian indie artists who engage with similar themes of loss and longing could also contribute meaningfully to the field, helping to

establish a stronger scholarly foundation for treating Indonesian indie song lyrics as serious objects of literary and cultural analysis. More broadly, this study encourages scholars to continue recognizing song lyrics as literary texts that offer valuable insights into human psychology, demonstrating that contemporary Indonesian indie music provides a meaningful space for exploring complex emotional experiences through literary expression.

REFERENCES

- Ardiantari, I. A. P. G., Andriyani, A. A. D., & Swabawa, I. B. M. (2025). Depiction of anxiety through metaphorical symbols in Billie Eilish's selected songs: A psychoanalytic perspective. *Dialektika: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra dan Budaya*. <https://ejournal.uki.ac.id/index.php/dia/article/view/7541>
- Culler, J. (2017). Theory of the lyric. *Nordisk Poesi: Tidsskrift for Lyrikkforskning*, 2(2), 119–133. <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2464-4137-2017-02-02>
- Fazhira, E., Ihsan, P., & Ro'ifah. (2024). Neurotic trends in Lana Del Rey's selected song lyrics: A psychoanalytic social approach. *SCOPE: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 8(2), 372–384. <https://doi.org/10.30998/scope.v8i2.19420>
- Freud, S. (1915). Repression. In J. Strachey (Ed. & Trans.), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 14, pp. 141–158). Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1917). Mourning and melancholia. In J. Strachey (Ed. & Trans.), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 14, pp. 237–258). Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1925). Negation. In J. Strachey (Ed. & Trans.), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 19, pp. 235–239). Hogarth Press.
- Illahi, R., Priyoto, & Herlyna, H. (2025). Emotional states and the portrayal of psychoanalytic conflicts in the song "Watch the World Burn" by Falling in Reverse. *JELL (Journal of English Language and Literature) STIBA-IEC Jakarta*, 10(2), 371–376.
- Madison, P. (1961). *Freud's concept of repression and defense: Its theoretical and observational language*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Nugraha, B. W. (2025). Negotiating self-loss through denial defence mechanism: A Freudian reading of Rosé's album Rosie (2024). *Sintaksis: Jurnal Ilmiah Bahasa dan Sastra*. <https://journal.aspirasi.or.id/index.php/sintaksis/article/download/2557/2345/12444>
- Nugraha, B. W., Ramadhantis, D. A., & Lailiyah, N. (2026). The representation of unconscious feelings and regret in Passenger's "Let Her Go": A psychoanalytic study. *Kopula: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pendidikan*, 8(2), 509–515. <https://jurnal.unram.ac.id/index.php/kopula/en/article/view/10586>
- Pophariini. (2023, March 25). *Selamat datang SIMILAR, album debut eleventwelfth* [Music review]. Pophariini. <https://pophariini.com/review/eleven-twelve-similar/>
- Rentzepis, D. (n.d.). Love and loss: Freud's melancholia in Plath's poetry. *The Woven Tale Press*. <https://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/gened/woven/issu/es/seven/docs/rentzepis-piece.pdf>
- Surbakti, D., Soethama, P., Laksmi, L., & Malini, N. (2024). Psychoanalytic criticism on song lyrics Cancer by My Chemical Romance. *Loquēla (Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Education)*, 2(1), 13–21. <https://doi.org/10.61276/loquela.v2i1.31>
- Verniyk, Z. (2025). There is a meaning buried within the sound: H. P. Baxxter's lyrics as modernist intertextual poetry. *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica*, 17, 11–36. <https://doi.org/10.47745/ausp-2025-0002>
- VOI. (2023). *SIMILAR album review: The commotion that makes opportunities* [Music review]. VOI. <https://voi.id/en/musik/270539>
- Yemez, Ö. (2022). Loss, mourning and melancholia in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's narrative poem "The Lunatic Girl." *Söylem Filoloji Dergisi*, 7(3), 777–788.
- Zakkiyah, H., & Sari, R. P. (2023). Portrait of id, ego, and superego on "Dear No One" by Tori Kelly: The understanding for stress management. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Business, Economics, Social Sciences, and Humanities* (Vol. 6, pp. 854–861).