

Psychopath Analysis of the Oliver Quick Character from *Saltburn* (2023) Film

Silvani Eka Putri Dameria Panjaitan^{1*}, Setya Ariani²

^{1,2}English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences,
Universitas Mulawarman
Email: Silvaniekp73@gmail.com

ABSTRAK

Film *Saltburn* (2023) yang disutradarai oleh Emerald Fennell menghadirkan contoh menarik dari karakter psikopat melalui tokoh utamanya, Oliver Quick. Pada awalnya, Oliver terlihat sebagai seorang mahasiswa penerima beasiswa yang biasa saja, namun seiring berjalannya cerita, kepribadiannya yang gelap dan perilakunya yang manipulatif mulai terlihat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis karakteristik psikopat pada tokoh Oliver Quick dengan menggunakan teori psikopat dari Verstappen dan psikoanalisis Sigmund Freud, termasuk model tiga struktur kepribadian (id, ego, dan superego). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif untuk menganalisis data dan menarik kesimpulan. Data dikumpulkan dari tindakan dan dialog yang terdapat dalam film. Setiap ciri psikopat yang ditemukan dianalisis menggunakan teori Freud dengan memetakan ke dalam id, ego, dan superego. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Oliver memiliki tujuh ciri utama seorang psikopat: kurang empati, tidak memiliki rasa bersalah, dangkal, impulsif, tidak bertanggung jawab, suka berbohong secara kompulsif, dan manipulatif. Ciri-ciri ini berkaitan erat dengan konsep id dan ego menurut Freud. Namun, tidak ada bukti peran superego dalam karakter Oliver, yang mengindikasikan kurangnya suara hati atau moral. Penelitian ini menggabungkan dua kerangka psikologis, yaitu psikopati dan psikoanalisis, untuk memahami perilaku karakter dalam karya sastra secara mendalam. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bagaimana teori psikologi dapat diterapkan dalam karya sastra dan film, serta membantu pembaca maupun peneliti selanjutnya untuk lebih mengenali dan menganalisis perilaku psikopat dalam karakter fiksi.

Kata kunci: Psikoanalisis, karakter, psikopat, psikopati

ABSTRACT

The *Saltburn* (2023) film directed by Emerald Fennell presents an intriguing example of a psychopathic character through its main protagonist, Oliver Quick. At first, Oliver appears as an ordinary scholarship student, but as the story unfolds, his dark personality and manipulative behaviour begin to show. This research aims to analyse the psychopathic characteristics of Oliver Quick using Verstappen's psychopath theory and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, including the tripartite model (id, ego, and superego). The research used a qualitative method to analyse the data and draw the conclusion. The data were collected from actions and dialogues in the film. Each psychopathic trait that has been collected was analysed using Freud's theory by mapping them into id, ego and superego. The results show that Oliver possesses seven key traits of a psychopath: lack of empathy, lack of remorse, superficiality, impulsivity, irresponsibility, compulsive lying, and manipulativeness. These traits are closely connected to Freud's concept of the id and ego. However, there are no evidence of the superego's role in Oliver's character, indicating a lack of moral conscience. This research utilized a combination of two psychological frameworks, which are psychopathy and psychoanalysis, to deeply understand a literary character's behaviour. This research also shows how psychological theory can be applied to literature and film, helping readers and future researchers better recognise and analyse psychopathic behaviour in fictional characters.

Keyword: Psychoanalysis, character, psychopath, psychopathy

A. INTRODUCTION

Film is one of the most widely consumed forms of media today, valued not only for its entertainment function but also for its capacity to communicate complex ideas and emotions through visual and auditory elements such as facial expressions, body language, music, and

cinematography (Kuzmicheva, 2024). As a narrative medium containing characters, plots, and themes, film can be considered a form of literature and is often analysed using literary approaches (Klarer, 2004). Like traditional literary works, films reflect human experience and social realities, making them a rich source for academic exploration.

One of the recurring themes found in film is psychology. Films with psychological narratives, especially those that explore deviant behaviour such as psychopathy, have grown in popularity, especially among younger audiences. These films offer a safe space to explore darker aspects of human nature, such as fear, manipulation, or moral ambiguity, without real-life consequences (Hochswender, 2018). Psychopathy, in particular, is a topic of interest due to its disturbing yet fascinating traits, including a lack of empathy, emotional detachment, and manipulative behaviour (Anderson & Kiehl, 2014). The cause of someone suffering from psychopathy is an environment that does not show affection, which may stem from experiences of neglect, abuse in childhood and a lack of positive socialization (Stanek, 2023). Psychopaths tend to use others for personal gain through deception, charm, and control (Hare, 1996, as cited in Camp et al., 2014). Understanding psychopathy in literature and film not only helps create more realistic portrayals of such individuals, but also offers deeper insight into the psychological and moral complexity of human behaviour (Olsson, 2021).

This study focuses on *Saltburn* (2023), a psychological thriller written and directed by Emerald Fennell. The film follows Oliver Quick, a new scholarship student at *Oxford*, who is initially portrayed as a nerd and underprivileged. However, as the story progresses, Oliver reveals his manipulative nature, gradually deceiving and ultimately murdering the wealthy Catton family to claim their wealth and social standing. Despite coming from a decent and supportive background, Oliver harbours deep envy toward the privileged lives of those around him. Oliver exhibits clear traits of psychopathy, which makes his character a compelling subject for analysis. Most previous studies focus primarily on identifying psychopathic traits in movie characters (Fuady & Suhendar, 2019; Octavita et al., 2023; Rusyidi & Wedawati, 2022). However, there is a lack of research that examines how Freud's concepts of id, ego, and superego interact to shape the development and actions of psychopathic characters. This research aims to examine the psychopathic characteristics represented through Oliver's behaviour and decisions, highlighting how id, ego, and superego can drive individuals to commit immoral acts. By analysing Oliver's character through the lens of psychopathology and psychoanalysis, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of psychological representation in film.

B. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1. Film as Literary

Film is a form of visual storytelling that combines sound, time, space, and narrative to entertain and express ideas (Jons & Nafisah, 2019). It can serve both as artistic expression and cultural reflection, with its popularity often shaped by changing social and cultural trends (Andrew et al., 2024). According to Coulson (1978) film presents recorded stories or events, while according to Lorimer and Hamlen (1995) film emphasizes its role in capturing culture and addressing social or political issues. Therefore, film can be seen as a form of literature that presents narratives, culture, and human experiences through moving images and sound.

2. Character and Characterization

Gill (1995) defines a character as an individual in a literary work, while characterization is the process of creating a character. Characters are the result of characterization and are intentionally created by the author. Reams (2015) states that character development is a crucial skill in fiction writing. Characters can be classified as major or minor, or main and supporting (Gill, 1995). Characterization is also defined as a literary device used to describe characters (Nurse & Wimmer, 2023). In films, characterization can be found using different methods, as identified in *The Art of Watching Films*:

a. Characterization through Appearance

Characters are often introduced through visual elements like facial expressions, clothing, body features, and movement, which shape the audience's initial impressions (Boggs & Petrie, 2017).

b. Characterization through Dialogue

Dialogue reveals a character's background and personality through word choice, sentence structure, and accent, which can reflect their social status, education, and mindset (Boggs & Petrie, 2017).

c. Characterization through External Action

A character's actions can reveal their goals and personality. These actions must be consistent and meaningful to connect the character to the storyline (Boggs & Petrie, 2017).

d. Characterization through Internal Action

Internal thoughts, memories, dreams, and fears give insight into a character's mind. These internal elements show the character's hidden motivations and emotional depth. Filmmakers may show these through visuals or voiceover (Boggs & Petrie, 2017).

e. Characterization through Reaction of Other Characters

Other characters' responses and opinions often reveal important information about the character. These perspectives can sometimes be more revealing than the character's own behaviour (Boggs & Petrie, 2017).

3. Psychoanalysis

The psychology of literature explores the connection between human behaviour and literary representation. While psychology explains the causes of behaviour, literature reflects it through fictional characters and narratives (Dar, 2022). Literary works often reveal psychological depth by portraying characters' thoughts, desires, and actions in various situations. Psychoanalysis, founded by Sigmund Freud, offers a framework to analyse these inner experiences. Freud argued that unconscious desires, especially those restricted by reality and social norms, are expressed symbolically through literature and art (Abrams & Harpham, 2015). He introduced the model of the human psyche consisting of the id, ego, and superego, which interact to shape behaviour and mental conflict (Dobie, 2012).

a. Id

Id is the most primitive part of the human psyche, driven by instinctual urges, especially the desire for pleasure and gratification (Lapsley & Stey, 2012). It operates irrationally, without regard for morality, consequences, or social rules, and seeks immediate satisfaction. When left unchecked, the id can lead to destructive behaviour (Dobie, 2012).

b. Ego

Ego develops from the id and serves as a mediator between instinctual desires and reality. It helps regulate behaviour by aligning inner urges with social norms and acceptable conduct (Lapsley & Stey, 2012). Functioning on the reality principle, the ego delays or redirects impulses into socially appropriate actions, maintaining a balance between internal demands and external expectations (Dobie, 2012).

c. Superego

The superego represents internalized moral values and ideals. It strives for perfection and acts as the conscience, rewarding or punishing the individual with feelings of pride or guilt (Lapsley & Stey, 2012). It suppresses unacceptable desires from the id and enforces ethical standards. However, an overly dominant superego can lead to excessive guilt and self-criticism (Dobie, 2012).

4. Psychopath

The term psychopath originates from the Greek words *psykhe* and *pathos*, meaning “sick mind” or “suffering soul” (Silva & Lindberg, 2024). A psychopath is typically described as someone with a chronic mental disorder marked by deviant behaviour, lack of empathy, and emotional coldness. Despite their disorder, many psychopaths appear charming and likable, using emotional manipulation to gain trust. When their charm fails, it can quickly shift to aggression or abuse (O’Toole et al., 2012).

Psychopaths often understand the harm they have caused, but they show no concern and cannot restrain themselves. They are known for high verbal intelligence, low emotional sensitivity, and a strong ability to manipulate others (Arimawati et al., 2020). Their behaviour often stems from unresolved internal conflict, emotional trauma, or an imbalance between destructive and constructive drives (Fuandy & Suhendar, 2019).

However, having psychopathic traits does not always indicate clinical psychopathy. Verstappen (2011) highlights that crime literature can help distinguish between individuals who commit crimes out of necessity and those who act without logical motivation. He identifies eight key psychopathic traits: lack of empathy, lack of remorse, superficiality, irresponsibility, impulsive behaviour, compulsive lying, manipulative tendencies, and anti-social behaviour. These traits are used in this study to identify the psychopathic tendencies of the character Oliver in *Saltburn*.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a qualitative method to analyse the data and draw conclusions from the *Saltburn* film. The qualitative method helps explain Oliver’s character by examining his motivations, behaviours, and interactions throughout the narrative. Bryman (2004) stated that qualitative research is a strategy that focuses more on language than numbers in collecting and analysing data. Therefore, the data in this research are presented in the form of words and images rather than statistical figures.

The data were taken from the *Saltburn* 2023 film, which was written and directed by Emerald Fennell. The data include actions and dialogues that reveal Oliver's psychopathic characteristics, while the film itself is the main data source. The instrument used in this research is the researcher themselves, as qualitative research relies on the role of the researcher to observe, select, and interpret the data (Ary et al., 2010).

The data were collected through two steps: watching the film to understand the storyline, and identify scenes related to psychopathy, and taking notes and screenshots of significant actions or dialogues. After collecting the data, the researchers analysed them by organizing Oliver's dialogues and actions, categorizing them using Verstappen's psychopath characteristics, and mapping them into Freud's psychoanalytic tripartite model of id, ego, and superego. In the final step, the researchers interpreted the findings and drew conclusions based on how Oliver's character represents psychopathic behaviour through these psychological frameworks.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Findings

The researchers identified seven psychopathic characteristics in Oliver based on Verstappen's theory. These characteristics were analysed through Freud's tripartite model (id, ego, and superego) to explore how Oliver's behaviour reflects different aspects of his psyche. To support the findings, the researchers also used characterization theory proposed by Boggs and Petrie (2017).

a. Lack of Empathy

Empathy refers to the ability to understand and share the emotional experiences of others. However, in one particular scene, Oliver displays the opposite. When Felix's body is found in the garden maze, his family reacts with visible grief and shock. They cry and express emotional devastation, while Oliver remains motionless and emotionally detached. He does not cry, look concerned, or even respond when asked by Sir James to help carry Felix's body.



Figure 1. Felix's family gets devastated at seeing Felix's dead body

The scene at 01:36:09 – 01:36:57 clearly shows Oliver's lack of empathy. While Felix's family grieves, Oliver stands still in his pyjamas, scratching his head and showing no emotional reaction. His casual appearance contrasts sharply with the others, highlighting his detachment and indifference. This Oliver behaviour reflects the dominance of the id. Oliver shows no guilt,

concern, or attempt to act appropriately, indicating that the ego and superego are not functioning. His silence and inaction suggest that his behaviour is driven purely by instinct, without moral or social restraint. This moment also illustrates characterization through external action, as Oliver's physical response and lack of emotion reveal his true nature and emotional disconnection from others.

Another example of Oliver's lack of empathy is shown after Felix is buried. When Venetia, who is clearly still grieving, confronts him in the bathroom, Oliver stays quiet and shows no emotion. He does not try to comfort her or respond with care, which shows that he has no real concern for her feelings or the pain of losing her brother.

Venetia : *Your politeness is so grating. Do you know that?*

Oliver : ***It's very late.***

Venetia : *Yet here you are. Right in the middle of it all. Stranger fucking danger.*

Oliver : ***Yeah, I'm going to bed.***

Venetia : *You are a fucking freak! I bet you're wearing his underwear too, aren't you? You disgusting little nobody. Oh my god. You ate him right up. And you licked the fucking plate.*

The dialogue in 01:48:53 – 01:50:56 shows Oliver's lack of empathy when Venetia confronts him in grief and confusion. Instead of responding with care or guilt, he stays calm and shifts the conversation to make Venetia seem drunk and irrational. This reflects the dominance of the id, showing no emotional concern, while the ego helps him manipulate the moment. The absence of the superego highlights his lack of guilt or moral awareness. This is an example of characterization through dialogue, as his words reveal emotional detachment and control.

b. Lack of Remorse

Remorse is the feeling of guilt or regret after doing something wrong, but Oliver shows none in the scene after Venetia's funeral. When Sir James asks him to leave *Saltburn*, Oliver refuses and insists that Elspeth still needs him. He responds with confidence, showing no guilt or awareness of the harm he has caused, which reflects his complete lack of remorse.

Sir James : *How long are you planning on staying with us? Because Elspeth would not let you go.*

Oliver : *Um, I'm happy to stay as long as she needs me to.*

Sir James : *Very kind of you, but I'm not sure that good for her. Or us think it is time for you to go home. Discreetly, tonight, to cause her the least anxiety. I hope you understand.*

Oliver : ***I'd go in a heartbeat if I could. I just don't think I can leave her in state.***

Sir James : *You would not go?*

Oliver : ***I do not see how I can!***

The dialogue in scene 01:52:09 – 01:54:09 shows Oliver's lack of remorse. He expresses no guilt for the deaths of Sir James's children and insists on staying at *Saltburn* with calm, polite excuses. This reflects the dominance of the id, prioritizing his own desires. His ego helps him appear reasonable, but the absence of the superego is clear as he shows no guilt or moral

awareness. This moment represents characterization through dialogue, as his words reveal emotional detachment and a lack of responsibility.

c. Superficiality

Superficiality is when someone displays shallow knowledge or emotion to impress others without genuine sincerity. In one scene, Oliver impresses Sir James by talking about the Palissy plate. However, his knowledge is not genuine emotional depth; he just learned it to gain approval and fit into the upper-class circle, showing a calculated but superficial behaviour.

Farleigh : *What are this?*
Elspeth : *Ugh, the Palissy plates.*
Oliver : *Do you mean Bernard Palissy? The 16th century Huguenot ceramicist?*
Sir James : *Yes. Do you know him?*
Oliver : *I've always loved his work but I've never seen anything of his in real life.*

The dialogue in 00:46:51 – 00:47:05 reveals Oliver's superficiality, as he uses recently learned information about the Palissy plate to impress Sir James. His behaviour shows a desire to appear cultured and gain social approval, despite lacking genuine interest or depth. In this scene, his id seeks validation and acceptance from the upper class, while his ego helps manage his image by using superficial knowledge to fit in. The superego is inactive, as he shows no concern for honesty or integrity, focusing only on the impression he makes rather than the truth behind it.

Another example of Oliver's superficiality appears when he tells Professor Ware that he read all fifty books on the summer reading list, including the King James Bible. He says it with calm confidence, even though the professor is surprised and skeptical. Oliver's exaggerated claim, presented without hesitation, shows he wants to appear intelligent and dedicated, even if it means pretending. This reflects a carefully crafted image rather than genuine depth.

Professor Ware : *So, how did you get on with the summer reading list?*
Oliver : *Yeah. Ok, I think. I read it all.*
Professor Ware : *All of it? Fifty books on there! Are you mad?*
Oliver : *I thought we were supposed to.*
Professor Ware : *The King James Bible is on there! Are you telling me you spent your summer reading the Bible? The reading list is optional! I've not read half the books on there.*

The dialogue in 00:06:37 – 00:06:56 shows Oliver's superficiality as he claims to have read all fifty books on the summer reading list to impress Professor Ware. His calm and confident tone suggests he was more focused on appearing intelligent than being honest. His id seeks recognition, and the ego manages this by crafting a believable response. The superego is absent, as there is no sign of guilt or concern for truth. Both this and the Palissy plate dialogue are examples of characterization through dialogue, where Oliver uses exaggerated knowledge to shape how others perceive him.

d. Irresponsibility

Responsibility means being accountable for what we do, while irresponsibility is when someone avoids taking the blame. In this scene, Oliver secretly put a large number of drugs into Felix's drink after his love was rejected. When Felix died, Oliver did not admit what he did. Instead, he blamed Farleigh, saying it was his fault for bringing the drugs. Even though Oliver is the one who caused it, he avoided responsibility and used the moment to make Farleigh look guilty and get him completely out of *Saltburn*.

Oliver : *I wouldn't throw stones if I was you, Farleigh.*
Sir James : *What is he saying?*
Farleigh : *I. I've no idea*
Oliver : *What I'm saying is that I'd feel guilty too...
If I was the one racking up lines the night someone died.*
Sir James : *Is that true? Search Farleigh's room*
Farleigh : *...no..*

The dialogue in 01:40:20 – 01:40:55 shows Oliver's irresponsible behaviour. Instead of admitting that he had caused Felix's death by drugging him, he shifted the blame to Farleigh, saying it was his fault for bringing the drugs. His id was focused on protecting himself, and his ego helped him twist the situation in a way that sounded believable to others. The superego, which should make him feel guilty or responsible, did not appear at all, he showed no guilt, regret, or sense of morality. This scene is an example of characterization through dialogue, as Oliver's words clearly reflect how he avoids accountability and uses others to cover up his own actions.

e. Impulsive Behaviour

Impulsivity is when someone acts suddenly without thinking about the consequences. In one scene, Oliver drank water from the bathtub where Felix had just masturbated. This extreme and spontaneous act shows his impulsive nature; he followed his urge without thinking about how disturbing or inappropriate it was.



Figure 2. Oliver sipping Felix's Bathtub water

In scene 00:49:35 – 00:50:18, Oliver's impulsive behaviour is shown when he secretly drank the bathwater that Felix had masturbated in. This strange and extreme action showed that he was driven by his obsession with Felix and did not think about how wrong or inappropriate it was. His id was in control, pushing him to follow his desire without thinking. His ego helped him to stay hidden, but it wasn't strong enough to stop him. His superego was not working, as he showed no guilt or sense of right and wrong.

The second example of Oliver's impulsive behaviour appears when he desecrates Felix's grave. This act is not only reckless but also deeply disturbing. It shows how Oliver's strong and uncontrollable desire to feel close to Felix led him to behave in an extreme and inappropriate way. His actions reflect a loss of self-control and a serious lack of respect, driven by a need to possess Felix even after his death.



Figure 3. Oliver unleashing all his lust into Felix's grave

Oliver's impulsivity in scene 01:42:59 – 01:45:47 was shown through his reckless act of desecrating Felix's grave. He acted without thinking, driven by obsession and the need to feel in control. This showed how his id dominated his behaviour, pushing him to follow his desires without care for consequences. His ego failed to stop him, and his superego was absent, as there was no guilt or moral awareness.

From both scenes, this behaviour can be categorized as characterization through external action, where Oliver's extreme and uncontrolled actions reveal his impulsive nature and deep emotional instability.

f. Compulsive Lying

Lying means intentionally giving false information, often to hide the truth or gain something. People who lie without guilt can do it easily and convincingly. In one scene, Oliver lied about not having money to buy drinks when invited to join Felix's group at a bar. He claimed he would pay later, but in reality, he had the money. This lie was meant to make Felix feel sorry for himself and help him fit in with the group.

Oliver : *It's my round. I can't... I can't go back and ask them for money.*

Barman : *Not my problem.*

Felix : *Thought you might need a hand with these ones, mate. Oh, and you dropped this on the floor by your feet. I was going to nick it, but I thought I'd do the right thing.*

Oliver : *Thank you. I'll, um, pay it back*

Felix : *Don't know what you're talking 'bout, mate*

The dialogue in scene 00:14:41 – 00:15:22 showed Oliver's compulsive lying. He lied about not having money, even though he did, to make Felix feel sorry for him. This unnecessary lie was used to create a false image and gain sympathy. His id pushed him to seek attention and acceptance, while his ego helped by crafting a believable story. The superego, which should have made him feel guilty or honest, was absent. This is an example of characterization through

dialogue, where Oliver's words revealed his tendency to lie to gain emotional advantage and social approval.

g. Manipulative

Manipulative refers to someone's behaviour when they try to influence or control others unfairly or dishonestly to get what they want. In the scene where Oliver secretly let the air out of Felix's bike tire, he created a problem and then appeared as the one offering help. This act made Felix admire and trust him more. Oliver used the situation to gain praise and affection, not through honesty, but through manipulation.



Figure 4. Oliver leaking the air out of Felix's bike tire

The scene in 01:59:34 – 01:59:41 showed Oliver's manipulative behaviour. He secretly caused a problem by letting the air out of Felix's bike tire, then pretended to help by offering his own bike. This made Felix admire and trust him, not knowing Oliver had planned it all. His id desired closeness and attention from Felix, and his ego carried out a calculated plan to meet that desire in a socially acceptable way. His superego was absent, as he felt no guilt for the deception. This is an example of characterization through external action, as Oliver's true nature was shown through what he did rather than what he said.

The second example of Oliver's manipulative behaviour appears when he lied to Felix about his parents. After a fight, Oliver claimed that his father had died and his mother was a drug addict, even though both were actually alive and well. He told this false story to gain sympathy and emotional support from Felix.

Felix : *Ollie-what is happening? Hey, come here. How did it happen?*
Oliver : *Cracked his head on the pavement. Probably drunk, knowing Dad.*
Felix : *Jeez, I'm... I'm so sorry, Ollie, that's... Is your mum alright?*
Oliver : *She was completely incoherent which is...pretty normal for her*
Felix : *They're going to have to let you skip exams. You're in no state to do them now. You've got to go home.*
Oliver : *No. I can't miss the exams. I'm not like you Felix. This is all I have.*

The dialogue in 00:25:02 – 00:25:00 showed Oliver's manipulative behaviour through a calculated lie. He pretended that his father had died and his mother was struggling with addiction to gain Felix's sympathy and emotional support. This manipulation reflected Oliver's id, which desired closeness from Felix, and his ego, which crafted the lie to make Felix care for him. His superego was absent, as he showed no guilt for using false emotions. This moment represents

characterization through dialogue, where Oliver's words reveal his intention to control others emotionally.

The third example of Oliver's manipulative behaviour appeared in the scene where he met Elspeth six months after being sent away from *Saltburn*. Although it seemed like a random and happy coincidence, Oliver had secretly planned the meeting. He had been observing Elspeth, learning her routine, and waiting at the *café* she often visited until she arrived.



Figure 5. Elspeth seeing Oliver alone at the Cafe

The scene in 01:55:42 – 01:56:45 clearly showed Oliver's manipulative behaviour. He made it seem like he met Elspeth by accident, when in fact he had planned it all. This showed how he carefully controlled the situation to gain her trust. His id wanted to return to *Saltburn*, and his ego helped him achieve that by managing his behaviour to appear natural. The superego was absent, as he showed no guilt for invading privacy and deceiving Elspeth. This is an example of characterization through external action, as his action of planning things in secret and pretending that things happened by chance revealed that he was someone who tried to control how others see him to get what he wanted.

2. Discussion

Saltburn (2023) presents Oliver Quick as a psychopathic character, who has disturbing behaviour that reflects several traits identified by Verstappen (2011), such as lack of empathy, remorse, superficiality, irresponsibility, impulsivity, compulsive lying, and manipulateness. These traits are shown through various scenes and dialogues that can be analysed using Freud's tripartite model id, ego, and superego. Most of Oliver's psychopathic traits involve both the id, which drives selfish desires, and the ego, which helps him control his image and manipulate others. Traits like lack of empathy and impulsivity are mainly driven by the id, although in some cases, the ego is also involved in helping him act more carefully. Across all the characteristics, Oliver shows no presence of the superego, which in Freud's theory controls a person's sense of guilt and morality. Oliver never shows remorse or guilt, suggesting that he lacks an internal moral guide. Not all psychopathic characteristics were shown in Oliver's character. He did not display antisocial behaviour, such as breaking rules or disobeying authority. Instead, he followed rules to gain acceptance, especially from Felix's family.

This research also compares Oliver's behaviour with Esther, the main character in the film *Orphan*, as discussed in the previous study by Pujimahanani and Aningsih (2019). Esther also shows several psychopathic traits such as compulsive lying, manipulateness, lack of empathy, and lack of remorse. For example, Esther lies about her identity by pretending to be a 9-year-old

girl when she is actually a 32-year-old woman. She manipulates others and shows no guilt when hurting people around her. This is similar to Oliver, who lies about his background to gain sympathy and carefully controls how others see him. Both characters use lies not just to protect themselves, but also to control others emotionally. These examples show how both characters are influenced by the id (desire for power or attention) and use their ego to carry out their goals in a way that appears normal or even admirable. In both characters, the superego is missing, as neither shows any sign of guilt or moral awareness.

In addition, the previous study by Fuady and Suhendar (2019) analysed the psychopathic tendencies of the characters David and Emily in *Hide and Seek* movie. Their research used Freud's psychoanalysis theory to examine psychopathic tendencies and how the id, ego, and superego operate in both characters. David, who suffers from dissociative identity disorder (DID), shows clear psychopathic behaviours under his alter ego "Charlie." His id-driven aggression and lack of remorse when committing violent acts are balanced only temporarily by his ego, which tries to maintain a normal life. Emily, his daughter, also shows signs of emotional disturbance as a result of trauma. She lies and hides information to protect herself and her father, her behaviour driven by the id, while her ego works to help her appear normal.

These comparisons reveal that although the characters have different backgrounds and psychological conditions, they share common patterns in how their psychopathic traits are portrayed. They are all driven by unconscious desires (id), carry out their actions through rationalization and social control (ego), and lack moral restraint or remorse (superego). However, unlike Esther, David, and Emily, whose psychopathy is tied to trauma, violence, or mental illness, Oliver's behaviour is not driven by such causes. His psychopathy is a more subtle and calculated behaviour driven by jealousy and a desire for social status.

By comparing Oliver with Esther, David, and Emily, this research shows how psychopathic traits can be expressed through different personalities and narrative styles. While Esther and David's psychopathy is more visible and direct through their violent actions, Oliver conceals his behind charm, politeness, and strategic behaviour. These findings suggest that psychopathic characteristics in fiction can take many forms. While some psychopathic characters are openly dangerous, Oliver hides their true nature behind socially acceptable behaviour. This highlights the complexity of psychopathic portrayals in film. Because of this, films like *Saltburn* can influence how viewers understand psychopathy in real life. Oliver's polite and intelligent appearance conceals his dangerous tendencies, which may lead audiences to underestimate or misinterpret psychopathic behaviours, especially when they are not accompanied by physical violence or clear antisocial acts. This underscores how fictional portrayals can shape public perceptions of mental health and psychological disorders.

E. CONCLUSION

This research examines the psychopathic traits of Oliver Quick, the main character in *Saltburn* (2023), who is portrayed as manipulative, emotionally detached, and driven by jealousy and a desire for social status. Using Verstappen's psychopath theory and Freud's psychoanalysis tripartite model (id, ego, and superego), the research analyses how Oliver's actions and dialogue reflect his psychopath characteristics. This research identified seven psychopathic characteristics in Oliver based on Verstappen's theory: lack of empathy, lack of remorse, superficiality,

irresponsibility, impulsivity, compulsive lying, and manipulateness. These characteristics were then interpreted through Freud's tripartite model. The findings show that Oliver's behaviour is mainly influenced by the id and the ego, while the superego associated with morality and guilt is nowhere to be found, which further strengthens the idea that he lacks a good moral compass or sense of guilt.

Unlike typical portrayals of psychopaths in media who often appear violent or have tragic pasts, Oliver's character is more subtle. He hides his harmful traits behind charm, calculated behaviour, and emotional control. This shows that psychopathic behaviour can appear in socially acceptable or even attractive ways, challenging the usual stereotypes. Because films can shape how people view mental health, characters like Oliver may influence public understanding of psychopathy. When such traits are hidden behind politeness and intelligence, audiences might overlook the danger they represent. Therefore, this research not only offers a psychological reading of a fictional character but also highlights how the media can shape perceptions of psychopathy in society.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, M. H., & Harpham, G. (2015). *A glossary of literary terms*. Cengage Learning.
- Anderson, N. E., & Kiehl, K. A. (2014). Psychopathy: Developmental perspectives and their implications for treatment. *Restorative Neurology and Neuroscience*, 32(1), 103–117. <https://doi.org/10.3233/RNN-139001>
- Andrew, D., Murphy, A. D., Manvell, R., Sklar, R., & Stephenson, R. (2024). *Film*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/art/motion-picture>
- Arimawati, U., Alfian, & Mariana, T. (2020). Psychopath behaviour in the Orphan film by Jaume Collet Serra. *English Language, Linguistics, Literature, and Education Journal (ELLTURE JOURNAL)*, 3(1), 1–69.
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Sorensen, C. (2010). *Introduction to research in education* (8th ed.). Wadsworth.
- Boggs, J., & Petrie, D. W. (2017). *The art of watching films* (7th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.
- Bryman, A. (2004). Qualitative research on leadership: A critical but appreciative review. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15(6), 729–769. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2004.09.007>
- Camp, J. P., Skeem, J. L., Barchard, K., Lilienfeld, S. O., & Poythress, N. G. (2014). Psychopathic predators? Getting specific about the relation between psychopathy and violence. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 8(1842), 1219–1231. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031349>
- Coulson, A. (1978). On project appraisal and appraisers: Editorial. *The IDS Bulletin*, 10(1), 2–6. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.1978.mp10001001.x>
- Dar, A. (2022). On the relationship between literature and psychology. *International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences*, 4(8), 284–292. <https://doi.org/10.51594/ijarss.v4i8.382>
- Dobie, A. B. (2012). Theory into practice in introduction to literary criticism. In *Intervention in School and Clinic* (3rd ed., Vol. 31, Issue 1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/105345129503100110>
- Fuady, D. A., & Suhendar. (2019). An analysis of David and Emily Callaway's psychopath problems in Hide and Seek movie viewed from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory. *Jell (Journal of English Language and Literature) STIBA-IEC*, 4, 57–67.

<https://doi.org/10.37110/jell.v4i02.81>

Gill, R. (1995). *Mastering english literature* (2nd ed.). Macmillan Education.

Hochswender, K. M. L. (2018). *Thrilled or chilled: Exploring factors of horror movie enjoyment*.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2018

Jons, M., & Nafisah, N. (2019). Film studies : An introduction Nia Nafisah abstract. *Movie*, 2(1), 1–9.

Klarer, M. (2004). *An introduction to literary studies*. Routledge.

Kuzmicheva, S. (2024). *The debate over books vs. movies*. C MAGAZINE.
<https://cmagazine.org/2024/10/23/books-vs-movies/>

Lapsley, D. K., & Stey, P. (2012). *Id, ego, and superego*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-375000-6.00199-3>

Lorimer, L. T., & Hamlen, N. (1995). *Grolier encyclopedia of knowledge*. Danbury: Grolier Incorporated.

Nurse, D., & Wimmer, J. (2023). *Characterization in literature | Definitions, types & examples*. Study.Com. <https://study.com/academy/lesson/characterization-definition-examples>.

Octavita, A. I., Yuliana, T.I., Ghufon, M. A., & Ulfa, R. N. (2023). Psychopath analysis in Sweeney Todd movie. *Candradimuka: Journal of Education*, 1(2), 50–59.
<https://doi.org/10.60012/cje.v1i2.47>

O'Toole, M. E., Logan, M., & Smith, S. (2012). Looking behind the mask implications for interviewing psychopaths. *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, 81, 14.
<https://leb.fbi.gov/articles/featured-articles/looking-behind-the-mask-implications-for-interviewing-psychopaths>

Olsson, M. (2021). *Representation of psychopathic characteristics in fiction : A transitivity analysis of the protagonist's external and internal dialogue in the tv-series You: Vol. Independen*. Linnaeus University.

Reams, J. (2015). Characterization in film. In *Techniques of Acting*.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003540649-11>

Rusyidi, M.I.R., & Wedawati, M.T. (2022). Ester's psychopath behaviour in *The Orphan* movie. *Lensa: Kajian Kebudayaan, Kesusastraan, dan Budaya*, 12(1), 33-45
<https://doi.org/10.26714/lensa.12.1.2022.33-45>

Silva, S., & Lindberg, S. (2024). *What Is Psychopathy?*
<https://www.healthline.com/health/psychopath#what-is-it>

Stanek, B. (2023). *What is a psychopath?* Forbes Health.
<https://www.forbes.com/health/mind/what-is-a-psychopath/>

Verstappen, S. H. (2011). *Defense against the psychopath*. Woodbridge Press.