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Twelve Angry Men and Defence Mechanisms: A Psychoanalytic Study of Characters Three and Ten

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Abstract

This research presents a psychoanalytic study of the prominent Defence Mechanisms used by Characters Three and Ten in Reginald Rose's play, Twelve Angry Men. Based on Freudian theory, the study explores how these two characters use the prominent defence mechanisms to maintain their psychological balance during a murder trial. The analysis shows that their behaviour is driven by hidden internal conflicts rather than logical evidence. Through focusing on these specific characters, the research fills a gap in previous studies which often focus on legal or social aspects rather than a Freudian psychological perspective. The research relies on analysing the play's text through Freud's concepts of defence mechanisms (Repression, Denial, Rationalisation, Displacement, and Projection) focusing on the role of Character Eight in dismantling these mechanisms by reconstructing the evidence. The analysis reveals that the collapse of these characters' defences leads to an admission of reasonable doubt, which confirms the importance of psychological awareness in the justice process and adds to the academic discussion by shedding light on unconscious dynamics in drama.

1. Introduction

Reginald Rose (1920–2002) was a famous American writer. He started his career during the 'golden age' of television. Before becoming a writer, he served in the United States Army from 1942 to 1946. In 1951, he wrote his first important play, The Bus to Nowhere (1951). Rose was interested in writing about social problems like injustice and prejudice. He wrote his most famous work, Twelve Angry Men (1954). He also wrote other successful works such as The Wild Geese (1978) and The Sea Wolves (1980). His stage plays included Dear Friends (1968) and This Agony, This Triumph (1972). He won many awards for his work, including four Emmy Awards, an Academy Award nomination, and the Writers Guild of America's Laurel Award in recognition of his distinguished career (Longman, 2023).

Reginald Rose's inspiration for his play Twelve Angry Men came from his service on a jury in early 1954. Rose participated in a manslaughter case, and all the jurors were white and male.

This event impressed him deeply, and he realized that no one truly knows what happens inside a jury room except the jurors themselves. This experience moved him to write the first draft of the play in just five days. He wanted to capture the 'mentally claustrophobic' feeling of twelve men locked in a room to decide a person's life. Initially written as a teleplay in 1954, his work became a masterpiece that explores the reality of the American legal system (Rose & Price, 2017). The critically acclaimed drama Twelve Angry Men was initially written by Reginald Rose in 1954 as a teleplay for a television anthology series; the definitive theatrical rendition is the stage adaptation, crafted by Sherman L. Sergel in 1955. This subsequent version, directly derived from the teleplay, has since become the canonical text for theatrical performance and literary analysis (Rose & Sergel, 1955).

The plot of the play is set in the context of a strong dramatic conflict when a jury of twelve men gathers on a hot summer afternoon in New York City in the cramped courtroom. These characters are saddled with the serious responsibility of judging the case of a nineteen-year-old boy for first-degree murder of his father as a result of eyewitness accounts and circumstantial evidence. Prior to the jury's adjournment for the consideration of the case in the privacy of the jury room, the judge outlines the moral context of the story when he states the jurymen's moral responsibility to declare the suspect 'not guilty' if there were reasonable doubts about the case, but the declaration of 'guilty' would automatically mean the execution of the suspect.

In the transition from the discussions to the jury room, the characters begin deliberating a case they initially believe is 'open and shut.' They attempt a quick vote to reach a swift conviction; however, the results reveal eleven votes for 'guilty' and one lone voice for 'not guilty.' This unexpected dissent reveals that the themes go beyond the realm of legal justice into the forays of the human psyche. "The story brings into perspective how informational influence and social influence can be powerful in changing a person's beliefs. Informational social influence theory studies how humans draw conclusions depending on the information they receive from another person" (as cited in Khelifa, 2021, p. 131). This initial dissent by Character Eight changes the direction of the play from a simple judicial review into sharp confrontations that systematically deconstruct the testimonies of the witnesses. Carefully, the plot questions first, the reliability of the single knife 'murder weapon' by proving it is a common item rather than a unique one. Second, the 'eyewitness testimony' of the elderly man, by questioning his physical ability to reach the door in seconds with a leg injury. Finally, the 'visual testimony' of the woman, by revealing she could not have seen the crime clearly without her prescription glasses.

Amidst all this evidence, Character Ten and Character Three appear to be the least influenced by the evolving reality of the case. While the opinions of other characters tend to change as doubts grow in their minds, Character Ten sticks to his stand, employing racist rhetoric about the defendant belonging to a 'dangerous' social and ethnic group. Then, Character Three, who tends to come across as the most aggressive antagonist, shifts his anger from a rational discussion of evidence to a personal emotional experience, especially when he thinks of his own relationship with his son. Shelah and Marsih (2022) assert that "Defence mechanisms can be found not only in people in real life but also in characters in literature." Through treating these characters as literary characters whose reactions reflect unconscious psychological processes, the analysis applies Freud's theory of defence mechanisms to explain their anger, prejudice, and resistance to changing the verdict.

This dogged commitment to a belief, irrespective of the destruction of tangible evidence through Character Eight's rational constructs, reveals a level of adherence to a dramatic narrative that could, by its very own chronology, only offer a rational explanation for engaging with deeper, unseen drivers. It is with this aspect of the play that the need to employ a psychoanalytic approach is fundamental. As Anna Freud (1993) asserted, the "ego's struggle against painful or unendurable ideas or affects." This struggle is manifested in the psychological shields of the characters, who employ various 'mechanisms of defence' as a

means for "the protection of the ego against instinctual demands." The actions of Characters Three and Ten are, in this regard, less a product of a logical juror decision and more a function of these psychological shields, which they must employ to preserve their psychic homeostasis.

These dynamics become apparent from the very beginning of the deliberations, when the twelve characters cast their first vote on the boy's guilt. The emotional breakdowns of Characters Three and Ten reveal not only personal anger and prejudice but also unconscious defence mechanisms that enable them to cope with their inner conflicts. Character Three's repeated outbursts and final collapse suggest mechanisms such as Repression, Denial, Rationalisation, Displacement, and Projection, whereas Character Ten's hateful speeches can be read as forms of Denial and Projection. According to Khelifa (2021), "Prejudice is evident in the play in many ways, as the twelve judges make decisions in a biased manner." This pervasive prejudice is closely related to the characters' attempts to rationalise their judgments and protect their self-image, which can be read as manifestations of various defence mechanisms.

This research applies Freudian theory to explain the hidden motives of Characters Three and Ten in Twelve Angry Men. It shows that their aggressive behaviour is a way to protect their ego from inner pain. The study finds that Character Three uses his defence mechanisms against the defendant to deal with the unresolved conflict with his son. At the same time, Character Ten uses denial and projection to hide his deep fears and prejudices. Character Eight plays a key role by deconstructing the evidence, which forces these suppressed feelings to surface. Ultimately, the study reveals that their judgment was entirely dependent on their repressed emotions, and once these defences collapsed, the truth was finally accepted.

This research uses the Freudian psychoanalytic perspective to explain the unconscious motivational impulses that Characters Three and Ten reveal in the play. It postulates that the two characters' unyielding, hostile attitudes are not conventional depictions of their personal anger but, instead, are multi-layered manifestations of unconscious defence mechanisms developed to shield the ego from deeply internal psychological conflict. The presented analysis demonstrates that Character Three projects his hostile, unresolved conflict with his son through the use of defence mechanisms onto the defendant, seeking psychological relief by demanding the harshest punishment possible. Further in this study, the rhetoric of Character Ten is analysed as a representation of denial and projection; namely, his defence mechanisms create a pseudo-logical veil to mask feelings of personal inferiority and a subconscious fear. The paper attempts to prove that the final collapse of these antagonists points to the destruction of their psychological defences in the face of truth. The paper proposes the following questions in an attempt to achieve its aim:

1. What are the prominent defence mechanisms that can be clearly seen in Characters Three and Ten?

2. How does Character Eight manage to break through the defence mechanisms of Characters Three and Ten, and dismantle these mechanisms by reconstructing the evidence?

2. Previous Studies

Khelifa (2021) examines in his study A Socio-Psychological Study of the 12 Jurors in the Play Twelve Angry Men the complex connection between literature and social psychology in his literary analysis of Reginald Rose's play. His analysis focuses on the concepts of conformity and prejudice within the characters, critiquing how the jurors' behaviours are constructed based on social-psychological schools of thought. The study reveals that social-psychological components, such as conformity and prejudice, are the fundamental causes of the judicial injustices faced by minorities and economically marginalised populations, emphasising how the jurors' reliance on schemas, heuristics, and informational social influence led to flawed decision-making.

In the study "12 Angry Men" Movie Analysis through Persuasion Communication, Çakır (2024) analyses the film from the perspective of communication and persuasion. This research

explores how the jury's decision-making process is influenced by interaction and purposeful activities. Using content analysis, the study examines persuasion strategies and cinematic techniques employed to convey psychological messages. It concludes that the film's screenplay and character deployment are meticulously designed to demonstrate how persuasion processes function within a specific social setting.

Drawing on Karl Llewellyn's theory, the study The Jury as Lawmaker: Legal Realism and Deliberation in Reginald Rose's Twelve Angry Men highlights the Legal Realism viewpoint in the play. The authors contend that while simultaneously criticising legal formalism, the play promotes a legal system that adjusts to actual social and ethical dimensions rather than abstract theoretical concepts. Their analysis demonstrates how the jurors' behaviours and decision-making processes are shaped by real-world issues and societal needs, aiming to prove that justice is an attainable reality when legal practitioners acknowledge the human factors influencing the law (Wahab & Muhi, 2025).

Despite all of these studies, there is a noticeable dearth of research that particularly applies a psychoanalytic lens to the various defence mechanisms in this play. Although many studies have been carried out on the general activity of a jury and its environment, none have directly studied the subconscious triggers that could be significant for certain protagonists. Therefore, this research can be considered a good addition to the general body of scholarship. Through studying Characters Three and Ten in isolation, the research seeks to establish that it is personal psychological traumas and inner defence mechanisms rather than merely social or legal ones that form the core drivers of resistance to justice.

3. Methodology

The theory of psychoanalysis was developed by Freud in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While treating patients with conditions such as hysteria and neurosis, Freud noticed that the behaviours and emotions of these individuals were greatly influenced by thoughts and feelings, which he termed the "unconscious mind." Freud believed that many of our actions are driven by repressed desires within the unconscious, especially those related to sexual and aggressive drives. Through his work, Freud used methods to treat patients such as free association — allowing people to speak freely — dream interpretation, and the analysis of slips of the tongue, now known as Freudian slips. He also introduced the idea of repression, where painful memories and uncomfortable desires are moved out of the conscious mind. This concept became a fundamental part of psychoanalytic theory (Mistry et al., 2024).

Tyson (2023) argues that the unconscious is a dynamic entity that engages us at the deepest level of our being. It comprises a large portion of painful thoughts and feelings, such as wounds, fears, guilty desires, and unresolved conflicts that an individual does not want to acknowledge because they would overwhelm their mind. The unconscious is formed through the repression of these painful psychological events and feelings, expunging them from consciousness. However, much of what an individual forgets is stored in the preconscious mind, which they can readily access or remember when there is a reason to do so, as these memories are not repressed. These thoughts are not part of the unconscious. While an individual may find difficulty retrieving such thoughts, it does not mean they are inaccessible. The concept of the preconscious enhances the distinction between memories that are simply forgotten and those that are repressed because they are too painful to remember. Repression does not eliminate painful experiences; rather, it makes them organisers of current experience. Without admitting it to themselves, individuals behave unconsciously to express conflicted feelings toward the painful experiences and emotions they repress.

It is recognised that the unconscious is dynamic and organises current experiences. Sometimes, these defences begin to weaken temporarily, at which point anxiety is felt. When defences start to break down, the 'return of the repressed' occurs; this conflict between the repressed desire to emerge and the mind's attempt to hide it generates anxiety. This anxiety is not merely a feeling; rather, it can inform individuals about themselves and signal that core

issues are about to surface into consciousness. When anxiety overwhelms an individual, the Ego hastens to activate defence mechanisms, which keep the contents of the unconscious within the unconscious, or the individual feels unable to endure the repressed and thus keeps it suppressed using these defensive mechanisms (Tyson, 2023).

Repression

Repression is a dynamic psychological process in which the Ego pushes unacceptable impulses originating from the Id into the unconscious, with the aim of preventing the disturbance of psychological balance. These impulses usually manifest in the form of primitive negative desires that urge the Id to seek immediate and direct gratification; however, repression is limited to drowning them in the depths of the unconscious, where they may reappear indirectly or subconsciously (Nanang Purwo & Andayani, 2022). A person faces psychological tensions, which may be due to internal conflicts or environmental stressors, due to an inability to recall or be conscious of certain inclinations, emotions, thoughts, or experiences that are painful or unacceptable. Repression is considered a defence mechanism that works to isolate these contents from the field of consciousness, thereby protecting the person from directly confronting what they are currently experiencing or what they have previously experienced. An individual may experience a certain affective state, an internal tendency, or a specific desire; however, the awareness of the nature of this state — that is, the perception or meaning associated with it — remains absent from conscious perception. While the emotional charge is clearly experienced, the perceptual and cognitive components associated with it remain outside the scope of awareness (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021).

Denial

Denial is a psychological state in which an individual refuses to acknowledge reality or truth when faced with overwhelming facts (Shelah & Marsih, 2022). The individual deals with emotional conflicts, as well as internal or external stressors, by refusing to acknowledge certain aspects of external reality or personal experiences that are apparent to others. The subject categorically denies the existence of a feeling, a behavioural response, or an intention — whether in the past or present — even in cases where its presence is considered highly probable from an observer's perspective. Furthermore, the individual remains unaware of both the ideational and emotional content of what is being denied. This excludes 'psychotic denial,' in which the subject refuses to recognise a physical object or an event occurring within their immediate field of perception (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021). Denial can be considered the most widely used and common defence mechanism, for which Freud provided clear examples, such as soothing children by claiming that medicine is not bitter to encourage them to deny the source of anxiety (the bitter taste). It is also regarded as a primary mechanism alongside repression, wherein the id seeks direct gratification through the ego (Nanang Purwo & Andayani, 2022).

Rationalisation

Rationalisation is a psychological defence mechanism wherein the Ego substitutes unacceptable, genuine motives with concealed justifications (as cited in Shelah & Marsih, 2022, p. 47). The individual deals with emotional conflicts as well as internal or external stressors by devising explanations for their own behaviour and that of others that appear acceptable and reassuring, even if they are inaccurate. Rationalisation is the process in which an individual provides an explanation that appears logical and acceptable for a specific action, substituting the true motive of their behaviour. This motive is often selfish, self-serving, or difficult for the individual and others to acknowledge socially, even while being obvious to others. The hidden motive does not necessarily involve selfish feelings — it could also mean that the individual has feelings of love or care, which might not be comfortable for them to admit. It is assumed that the individual does not know, or may not fully know, their motive, as their level of awareness is limited to the apparent reason, which might be socially acceptable.

These alternative and declared reasons are not linked to any direct personal satisfaction, which contributes to concealing the primary or true motive, while the associated feelings may still appear indirectly (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021).

Displacement

Displacement is one of the psychological defence mechanisms, defined as the transfer of behaviours or feelings from one person to another, often someone who is less threatening. In psychoanalytic theory, displacement is classified as a defence mechanism through which individuals find a space to discharge their internal tensions; for example, by directing hostility and fear toward a less threatening target (Shelah & Marsih, 2022). Displacement is also seen as a transfer of what the mind uses to alleviate tension toward something safer. For example, when a child hates their mother, they may redirect that hatred toward another person because hating the mother is considered immoral (Nanang Purwo & Andayani, 2022). Displacement allows for the discharge of an affect, impulse, or action toward another person or object that bears some resemblance to the original object that initially triggered it. While the impulse or affect is expressed in its full intensity, it is misdirected toward a target that provokes less conflict. Thus, displacement allows for greater expression and gratification than many other defence mechanisms (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021).

Projection

Projection is a simple defence mechanism that relies on the individual's attempt to attribute their own failures, dilemmas, or even negative impulses to others. This psychological defence serves as a mechanism to avoid confronting personal mistakes and evading responsibility for them (Shelah & Marsih, 2022). Di Giuseppe and Perry (2021) assert that the individual resorts to dealing with emotional tensions and internal and external stressors by projecting their unacceptable emotions, impulses, or thoughts onto others. The individual avoids acknowledging their own private experiences or internal intentions by attributing them to others, who are often individuals by whom the subject feels threatened and with whom the subject feels a sense of emotional affinity. In projection, the individual represses feelings of guilt or repressed impulses resulting from an internal obsession, then projects them onto others to alleviate this burden from themselves. For example, a person whose pride is hurt due to feelings of hostility they hold toward someone else may resort to accusing others — and even that person — of the same hatred. Projection is considered a secondary defence mechanism that allows the Id to deal with the pressures of the Super-ego, which imposes adherence to morals, laws, and standards. This also includes its interaction with other defence mechanisms (Nanang Purwo & Andayani, 2022).

Psychoanalysis theory emphasises that the unconscious mind is a dynamic entity linked to the deepest levels of our being, as a large portion of it consists of painful thoughts and feelings such as wounds, fears, guilty desires, and unresolved conflicts, which the individual avoids acknowledging for fear that they would overwhelm their consciousness. The Ego hastens to activate defence mechanisms, which keep the contents of the unconscious within the unconscious, or the individual feels unable to endure the repressed and thus keeps it suppressed using these defensive mechanisms (Tyson, 2023). In the play Twelve Angry Men, these concepts are essential for understanding the hidden motives behind the reactions of Characters Three and Ten. In the following analysis, we will explore how specific defence mechanisms, such as Denial, Rationalisation, Displacement, and Projection, are used by the characters. Although Characters Four and Ten changed their opinions together in the end following the debunking of the woman's testimony (the eyeglasses story), Character Four remains outside the scope of this research because he changed his opinion in response to the logic of the physical evidence without suffering from any inferiority complex. In contrast, Character Ten's concession at that exact same moment came as a result of conflict and an inferiority complex; conceding for him was not merely a change of opinion, but rather meant a complete destruction

and collapse of his psychological defences. These defence mechanisms are essential components that will be dealt with in the next section to analyse the characters' behaviours in depth.

4. Analysis

The play begins in a room with twelve characters on a hot day in America. The characters start voting on the innocence or conviction of the nineteen-year-old defendant in a case of premeditated murder. The first vote ends with eleven votes in favour of convicting the defendant, and one person votes that the child is innocent, who is Character Eight. The scene begins with Character Eight's attempt to cast doubt on the evidence, pointing out that the defendant is innocent until proven guilty. At this point, Character Three feels threatened because this scepticism destabilises his psychological balance, which is built upon the necessity of convicting the defendant. Consequently, Character Three begins to present the facts based on the witnesses' testimonies, relying on the testimony of the old man who claims to have heard the sound of a falling body and seen the boy running away.

> THREE. Okay, let's get to the facts. Number one: let's take the old man who lived on the second floor right underneath the room where the murder took place. At ten minutes after twelve on the night of the killing he heard loud noises in the upstairs apartment. He said it sounded like a fight. Then he heard the kid say to his father, "I'm gonna kill you." A second later he heard a body falling, and he ran to the door of his apartment, looked out and saw the kid running downstairs and out of the house. Then he called the police. They found the father with a knife in his chest.
>
> FOREMAN. And the coroner fixed the time of death at around midnight.
>
> THREE. Right. Now what else do you want? (Rose & Sergel, 1955, p. 18).

Character Three tries to repress the intense feelings of resentment he harbours toward his son by providing interpretations of the old man's testimony in his pursuit of a truth that may appear logical, even if inaccurate. However, in essence, this character is rationalising his hostility toward his son. He uses the defence mechanism of Rationalisation to give a logical and acceptable explanation for the witness's testimony. He substitutes the real motive with a justification for the animosity behind his behaviour toward the son who abandoned him. He needs the perceived accuracy of this evidence to maintain his psychological balance through the Ego, making his motive fundamentally selfish and difficult to admit. This way, he will continue thinking of himself as a just man and not as a resentful man driven by suppressed feelings. These suppressed feelings come from his son, who abandoned him and struck him years ago. Through this rationalisation, he masks his personal desire for revenge as a pursuit of objective justice (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021).

Character Eight attempts to refute the evidence and tries to change the opinions of the other characters. Meanwhile, Character Three speaks about the bitterness of his failed and harsh relationship with his son, recalling disappointing memories of when his son ran away from a fight at the age of eight, and how he subsequently decided to raise him with extreme toughness. Character Three speaks about children who are the same age as his son — a son who struck him on his face when he was fifteen years old. He also explains that he has not seen his son for three years.

> THREE. You're right. It's the kids. The way they are — you know? They don't listen. [Bitterly.] I've got a kid. When he was eight years old he ran away from a fight. I saw him. I was so ashamed. I told him right out, "I'm gonna make a man out of you or I'm gonna bust you up into little pieces trying." When he was fifteen he hit me in the face. He's big, you know? I haven't seen him in three years. Rotten kid! I hate tough kids! You work your heart out…. [Pauses.] All right. Let's get on with it. … [Gets up and goes to window, very embarrassed.] (Rose & Sergel, 1955, p. 21).

Character Three uses two defence mechanisms in this scene, which are Repression and Projection. He represses feelings of guilt and his failed experience with his son resulting from

his son striking and abandoning him. These feelings are heavy on the Ego, so they are pushed into the unconscious so that he can continue with his life. These feelings and experiences with his son begin to appear indirectly and unconsciously due to internal conflicts and external pressures from Character Eight. Character Three resorts to dealing with these repressed feelings and external pressures by projecting them onto the generation of young people who are the age of his son. Instead of saying that he is a failed father and that he lacks a sense of responsibility, he continues to repress feelings of guilt toward his son and then projects them onto others to ease the pressure on himself (Nanang Purwo & Andayani, 2022; Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021).

In the next scene, the tension escalates as one of the characters changes his vote to the innocence of the child. Consequently, Character Three explodes and looks at Character Five as someone who changed his vote secretly and does not want anyone to know. Character Three states that everything must be clear within the voting room. Moreover, he looks at Character Eight and accuses him of being cunning because he is changing the characters' opinions toward the innocence of the child. He also accuses the child of being a poor little murderer.

> THREE [standing up angrily]. What do you mean? There are no secrets in here! I know who it was. [Turns to FIVE.] What's the matter with you? You come in here and you vote guilty and then this — [Nods toward EIGHT.] — slick preacher starts to tear your heart out with stories about a poor little kid who just couldn't help becoming a murderer. So you change your vote. If that isn't the most sickening — [FIVE edges away in his chair.] (Rose & Sergel, 1955, p. 27).

Character Three uses the defence mechanism of Displacement here. He begins by displacing the anger he harbours for his son onto Character Five, Character Eight, and also the accused child. He is unable to direct his anger toward his son who struck him and fled; therefore, he displaces this anger toward Character Eight, whom he describes as a manipulative speaker, and toward Character Five, who in his view naively believed the story. Furthermore, he displaces his anger from his son onto a less threatening person — the defendant — as he sees the image of his disobedient son in him, thus punishing his son through the defendant and describing him as a young killer. He finds in shouting a space to discharge his internal tensions (Shelah & Marsih, 2022).

Character Eight talks about the old man's testimony and tries to change the characters' opinions. Character Three explodes in anger, stating that all the talk is deception, and tries to seek help from Character Four, but he does not respond. Character Three sees that he has become alone and has started to lose the collective support with which he used to justify his aggression. He attacks Character Eight, claiming that his stories are fictional. He begins to speak to everyone, saying that the child is guilty and must be punished, and that they must not let him slip through their hands.

> THREE [infuriated]. Assumed? Now, listen to me, you people. I've seen all kinds of dishonesty in my day but this little display takes the cake.
>
> EIGHT. What dishonesty?
>
> THREE [to FOUR]. Tell him! [FOUR turns away and sits silently. THREE looks at him and then strides to EIGHT.] You come in here with your heart bleeding all over the floor about slum kids and injustice and you make up these wild stories, and you've got some softhearted old ladies listening to you. Well, I'm not. I'm getting real sick of you. [To ALL.] What's the matter with you people? This kid is guilty! He's got to burn! We're letting him slip through our fingers (Rose & Sergel, 1955, p. 42).

The silence from the others represented a direct threat to Character Three's Ego. Character Three discharges his emotional impulse and aggressive drive stemming from his son onto the defendant, who happens to be of a similar age. Character Three directs this intense impulse or drive with full force onto the defendant, who represents a less threatening conflict; thus, the defence mechanism of displacement operates to satisfy these unconscious drives more deeply and extensively than other mechanisms. The displacement reaches its climax here when he

shouts, as the anger was directed toward his son whom he cannot reach, so Character Three displaces it onto the defendant by demanding his execution by burning. This reflects the scale of the anger he has for his son; he sees in the defendant's execution a burning of the painful past that his son caused him (Shelah & Marsih, 2022; Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021).

Character Eight informs Character Three that he is left alone because the votes have become eleven votes in favour of the child's innocence and one vote in favour of convicting the defendant. Character Three insists on his opinion and does not accept to back down because he believes the child is guilty based on the witnesses' testimony. They ask him to speak about his arguments, and he insists that he has spoken about that previously. Character Eight asks him to speak again with all the details. He informs Character Four that Four is the one who presented all the arguments and cannot vote for innocence, and considers the defendant a killer who will be walking the streets and must die. Character Four informs him that he was wrong and now has a doubt in the witnesses' testimony. Character Three remains insistent on his opinion, but in the end, he admitted the child's innocence.

> THREE [pleading]. Listen. What's the matter with you? You're the guy. You made all the arguments. You can't turn now. A guilty man's going to be walking the streets. A murderer! He's got to die! Stay with me!
> FOUR [rising]. I'm sorry. I'm convinced. I don't think I'm wrong often, but I guess I was this once. There is a reasonable doubt in my mind.
> EIGHT. We're waiting. [THREE turns violently on him.]
> THREE [shouting]. You're not going to intimidate me! [They are all staring at THREE.] I'm entitled to my opinion! [No one answers him.] It's gonna be a hung jury! [Turns abruptly and sits in his chair again.] That's it! (Rose & Sergel, 1955, pp. 62–63).

Despite Character Three remaining alone and the dismantling of all the testimonies, he insists on denying the reality and the facts that might be painful and conclusive. Character Three uses Denial, attempting to escape reality by asking to go to the judge and declaring that the jury does not reach a verdict, in order to deal with internal and external conflicts, or certain aspects that might be clear to the other characters but which he insists on denying. He tries to plead with Character Four, asserting that Four is the one who denied the doubt in the testimonies and should not withdraw. Character Three categorically denies the existence of doubt in the testimonies. This mechanism works with Repression to keep Character Three's Ego balanced so he does not collapse, because his collapse is the collapse of his relationship with his son and the satisfaction of the Id (Shelah & Marsih, 2022; Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021; Nanang Purwo & Andayani, 2022).

This scene discusses Character Eight's dismantling of all the testimonies and giving reasons that the defendant is innocent, convincing most of the characters to change their opinions toward the child's innocence, while Characters Three, Four, and Ten insist on convicting the child. Character Ten talks about the child, asserting that his words should not be believed because he lives in the slums, and that the dwellers of these areas are violent. He claims that human life does not make a difference to them and they do not need a reason to kill someone because they are bad. He says that the residents of these slums are without feelings and there is not a good person among them, warning the others about them. Character Four tells him to stop this talk and not to speak at all ever again.

> TEN. I don't understand you people. How can you believe this kid is innocent? Look, you know how those people lie. I don't have to tell you. They don't know what the truth is. And let me tell you, they don't need any real big reason to kill someone, either. You know, they get drunk, and bang, someone's lying in the gutter. Nobody's blaming them. That's how they are. You know what I mean? Violent! Human life don't mean as much to them as it does to us. Hey, where are you all going? Look, these people're drinking and fighting all the time, and if somebody gets killed, so somebody gets killed. They

> don't care. Oh, sure, there are some good things about them, too. Look, I'm the first to say that. I've known a few who were pretty decent, but that's the exception. Most of them, it's like they have no feelings. They can do anything. What's going on here? I'm speaking my piece, and you — listen to me! They're no good. There's not a one of 'em who's any good. We better watch out. Take it from me. This kid on trial…
>
> FOUR. I've had enough. If you open your mouth again I'm going to split your skull. [Stands there and looks at him. No one moves or speaks. TEN looks at FOUR and then looks down at table.] (Rose & Sergel, 1955, pp. 59–60).

Character Ten uses two defence mechanisms in this scene, which are Denial and then Projection. Despite the dismantling of the evidence and the change of opinions of eight characters, Character Ten uses Denial to maintain his psychological balance and avoid accepting the facts presented by Character Eight, which might be painful and unacceptable to him. Therefore, conflict arises between the Id and the Superego due to the presence of clear facts that cannot be ignored, and Denial becomes a weak defence mechanism that Character Ten cannot sustain; thus, the role of Projection comes in. Character Ten tries to project his failures and negative impulses onto the slums and avoids facing the painful mistakes that confront him, so he begins by projecting everything negative from a failed experience he went through during the years he lived in the slums. He harbours hostility toward this class, projecting his repressed impulses and internal intentions onto the child who lives in these same slums (Shelah & Marsih, 2022; Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021).

Character Eight is not just an ordinary character; he tries to dismantle the testimonies as well as the psychological state of Characters Three and Ten, whose prominent defence mechanisms have been previously discussed. After the vote for convicting the accused boy stands at eleven votes to one in favour of innocence, Character Eight begins to break the defence mechanisms by starting with the testimony of the rare knife, which is believed to be the weapon the boy used to kill his father. The characters start talking about the knife as conclusive and strong evidence, claiming it is rare and cannot be found in ordinary markets. However, Character Eight tells them that it is possible the boy lost the knife and that another person took it and killed the man, but they insist on their opinion. Character Eight pulls out a knife similar to the killer's knife and leaves all the characters surprised and unable to believe it.

> FOUR [holding up knife]. Everyone connected with the case identified this knife. Now are you trying to tell me that someone picked it up off the street and went up to the boy's house and stabbed his father with it just to be amusing?
>
> EIGHT. No. I'm saying that it's possible that the boy lost the knife, and that someone else stabbed his father with a similar knife. It's possible. [Four flips knife open and jams it into wall.] (Rose & Sergel, 1955, p. 23).

Character Eight begins to break the first defence mechanisms, which are Rationalisation and Denial. Character Three clings to the rarity of the knife as conclusive evidence to justify his hostile stance and to replace a true motive with hidden justifications. Then, Character Eight pulls out an exactly identical knife and breaks the defence mechanism of the other characters, including Character Ten. This act shatters the sense of security among the characters, as Character Three uses the knife as logical evidence. Character Eight represents the logic that destroys the denial of Characters Three and Ten and creates doubt. Doubt is the enemy of defence mechanisms, and as soon as doubt enters, the defences begin to collapse (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021; Shelah & Marsih, 2022).

Character Eight begins by questioning how the old man could have reached the door, opened it, and seen the boy running quickly down the stairs. Character Eight imitates the movements of the crippled man, while the other characters try to force him to speed up, considering that the man tried to hurry because of the shouting. He continues to imitate the man until Character Two is asked to stop counting and stops at thirty-nine seconds. Everyone

is surprised by the large discrepancy between the testimony of the crippled old man and the truth presented by Character Eight. Character Eight tries to explain the old man's walk, but Character Three becomes extremely angry and says that everything Character Eight says is just a deception to make them change their opinions. He asks Character Four for help because Four spoke about those slums where such children live. Character Four surprises him with silence; then Character Three says that the boy is guilty and a killer and that he must be punished. Character Eight says that the boy is not a criminal yet until the charge is proven. Character Eight and Character Three begin a verbal altercation where Character Eight tells Character Three that he relies on personal revenge motives and not facts. Character Three tries to attack Character Eight, but two of the characters hold him, and he screams saying that he wants to kill Character Eight, but Character Eight tells him that he cannot do that.

> EIGHT [his voice strong]. You want to see this boy die because you personally want it — not because of the facts. You are a beast. You disgust me.
>
> THREE [shouting]. Shut up! [Lunges at EIGHT, but is caught by two of the JURORS and is held. He struggles as EIGHT watches calmly. Then he screams.] Let me go! I'll kill him! I'll kill him!
>
> EIGHT [softly]. You don't really mean you'll kill me, do you? [THREE stops struggling now and stares at EIGHT, and all the JURORS watch in silence.] (Rose & Sergel, 1955, p. 43).

The process of rationalisation starts fading since Character Three creates excuses that seem complicated for the actions taken by the old man. He uses an excuse to cover up his real intentions when he claims that the walk took the old man twenty seconds as opposed to fifteen. The crippled man's entire story is brought down to dust by Character Eight through the act of mimicking his footsteps. This scene illustrates the climax of dismantling the defence mechanisms, where Character Three faces the breaking of the mechanisms of Displacement and Repression. Character Three displaces his repressed feelings toward his son onto Characters Four and Eight, and onto the defendant — a boy the same age as his son — because he is a less threatening target for breaking his psychological balance and discharging his internal tensions. Repression also works to push unacceptable motives into the unconscious to prevent disturbance. Character Three does not want to punish the defendant; instead, he wants to displace his anger from his son toward this boy. Character Eight describes Character Three as a beast and tries to bring those repressed feelings to the surface. Character Eight proves that the phrase 'I'll kill you,' used as evidence against the boy, is said but cannot be acted upon. At this point, the defences collapse because Character Three says the same words, creating a contradiction in his speech that destroys the mechanisms of displacement and repression. As Character Eight states, Character Three does not want to uncover the facts but rather to satisfy personal desire (Nanang Purwo & Andayani, 2022; Shelah & Marsih, 2022).

Character Eight tries to talk about the boy, stating that he is not guilty, and for him to be guilty, he would have to be both stupid and smart at the same time. He reminds them of the testimony of the old man who lied about the time, and by debunking these pieces of evidence, some characters change their opinions in favour of the boy's innocence. Then, Character Four forces Character Ten to be silent because he exaggerated in talking about the slums and how they kill without any reason. At this point, only Characters Four, Ten, and Three remain; they move on to analyse the woman's testimony. Character Four says it is the strongest of the testimonies, as she claimed she saw the boy from her window stabbing his father with a knife. Character Eight notices Character Two when he removes his glasses, as there are marks of glasses on the top of his nose like those of the woman. He begins by asking Character Two if he wears his glasses while sleeping, and his answer is no. Thus, Character Eight demonstrates that the woman was lying in her bed ready for sleep and was therefore not wearing glasses. He adds that at the time she witnessed the incident, it coincided with the passing of a train, and due to the darkness and the speed of the train, the image was blurry and she could not have

seen anything clearly. In this way, Character Eight debunked this testimony, and Characters Four and Ten admitted there was a reasonable doubt and changed their votes in favour of the defendant's innocence, leaving only Character Three.

> EIGHT. Does anyone think there still is not a reasonable doubt? [Looks around room, then squarely at TEN. TEN looks down at table for a moment; then he looks up at EIGHT.]
>
> TEN. I will always wonder. But there is a reasonable doubt (Rose & Sergel, 1955, p. 62).

Character Eight dismantles all the testimonies and leaves Character Ten with no shield to hide behind, which breaks the mechanism of Projection and the Denial of facts. Character Ten tries to deny the facts presented by Character Eight because they are painful and destabilise his psychological state. He does not want to accept obvious truths, which cause an inner conflict and a deep disturbance. Rather than accepting his own personal failings, he resorts to projection as a means of protecting himself from any blame. He projects the unappealing qualities that he sees in those slums onto the accused who lives in them. Character Eight remains silent to let him reveal his personal prejudice and his desire for revenge rather than looking at the facts. Finally, the dismantling of the woman's testimony leaves the characters with no protective mechanism, so they decide to admit the defendant is innocent (Shelah & Marsih, 2022; Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021).

In this final scene, after Character Eight dismantles all the testimonies, every character admits the boy's innocence except Character Three. Character Three insists that the defendant is guilty and tells Character Four that he should not change his mind because of the arguments. Character Nine tells Character Three that he must have reasonable arguments to stand alone, or he must change his vote toward innocence. Character Five points out that he is now all alone, and Character Eight tells him they are waiting for his final vote. Character Three is on the verge of tears and finally breaks his silence. He shouts loudly that the boy is not guilty, with a crying tone in his voice.

> EIGHT [to THREE]. They're waiting. [THREE sees that he is alone. He moves to table and pulls switch knife out of table and walks over to EIGHT with it. THREE is holding knife in approved knife-fighter fashion. THREE looks long and hard at EIGHT and weaves a bit from side to side as he holds knife with point of it in direction of EIGHT's belly. EIGHT speaks quietly, firmly.] Not guilty. [THREE turns knife around and EIGHT takes it by handle. EIGHT closes knife and puts it away.]
>
> THREE. Not guilty! [THREE walks out of room. EIGHT glances around quickly, sighs, then turns and moves out through door.] (Rose & Sergel, 1955, p. 63).

The play reaches the climax of dismantling defence mechanisms through Character Eight, who deconstructs all testimonies and changes the opinions of eleven characters, especially Characters Ten and Three. Character Eight breaks the final defence mechanism of Character Three, which is Repression. Character Three attempts to push his pain stemming from his son and originating in the Id into the unconscious to maintain psychological balance and prevent disturbance. Repression serves as the foundation for all other defence mechanisms; once Character Eight breaks this mechanism, everything ends with Character Three changing his vote to not guilty (Nanang Purwo & Andayani, 2022).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that the resistance of Characters Three and Ten in the play Twelve Angry Men is not limited to personal obstinacy or judicial bias, but is rather an embodiment of unconscious defence mechanisms such as Repression, Denial, Rationalisation, Displacement, and Projection that protect the Ego from painful truths or psychological and social failures. Character Three's behaviour is a clear displacement of repressed anger directed toward the defendant instead of confronting it with his son, while Character Ten utilises defence mechanisms to justify his class-racial bias instead of accepting

the evidence. The research reveals that Character Eight plays the role of the psychological catalyst that exposes psychological failures and pushes the two characters to confront the return of the repressed. The collapse of these defence mechanisms constitutes a decisive turning point in the text and represents the necessity of combining judicial and psychological analysis to understand the characters' decisions. These results emphasise the need to adopt a psychological perspective in literary and legal studies, as the research proves that true justice is not achieved solely by reviewing physical evidence, but by understanding unconscious forces that shape human perception.

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