
**ANNICK’S ANXIETY AND DEFENSE MECHANISMS IN
TREES OF PEACE (2022)**

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ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis karakter Annick dalam film *Trees of Peace* (2022), yang diangkat dari peristiwa nyata Genosida Rwanda, dengan menggunakan teori psikoanalisis Sigmund Freud, khususnya konsep kecemasan dan mekanisme pertahanan diri. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan Teknik analisis isi, di mana data diperoleh dari dialog, adegan, tindakan, dan ekspresi tokoh Annick dalam film. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Annick mengalami tiga jenis kecemasan, yaitu kecemasan realistis, neurotic, dan moral, yang timbul akibat tekanan psikologis dan trauma dari kekerasan yang dialaminya. Untuk menghadapi kecemasan tersebut, Annick secara tidak sadar menggunakan berbagai mekanisme pertahanan diri seperti penyangkalan, represi, proyeksi, regresi, rasionalisasi, perpindahan, dan sublimasi, sementara mekanisme pembentukan reaksi tidak ditemukan. Ketidakhadiran mekanisme ini menunjukkan bahwa Annick lebih mengandalkan pertahanan yang bersifat emosional dan spontan dibandingkan dengan pertahanan yang menekan dorongan moralnya. Dengan mengaitkan teori Freud pada konteks genosida, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa trauma sejarah yang ekstrem dapat membentuk respons psikologis individu serta memperkaya kajian sastra dan psikologi melalui representasi konflik batin manusia dalam karya film.*

Kata kunci: *Annick, kecemasan, mekanisme pertahanan, psikoanalisis, *Trees of Peace**

ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the character Annick in the film *Trees of Peace* (2022), which is based on the real events of the Rwandan Genocide, by applying Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, particularly the concepts of anxiety and defense mechanisms. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method using content analysis, with data derived from Annick’s dialogue, scenes, actions, and expressions in the film. The findings reveal that Annick experiences three types of anxiety – realistic, neurotic and moral anxiety – arising from psychological pressure

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and trauma caused by the surrounding violence. To cope with these anxieties, Annick unconsciously employs several defense mechanisms such as denial, repression, projection, regression, rationalization, displacement, and sublimation, while reaction formation is notably absent. The absence of this mechanism indicates that Annick relies more on emotional and spontaneous defenses rather than those involving moral inversion or impulse suppression. By connecting Freud’s psychoanalytic framework to the context of genocide, this research demonstrates how extreme historical trauma shapes individual psychological responses and contributes to both literary and psychological studies by revealing how film can portray the unconscious conflicts and inner struggles of the human mind under traumatic circumstances.

Keywords: Annick, anxiety, defense mechanisms, psychoanalysis, *Trees of Peace*

A. INTRODUCTION

Genocide is one of the most horrific crimes against humanity, as it not only targets the physical survival of its victims but also destroys the social, cultural, and psychological foundations of a community (Lemkin, 2008). Survivors often experience long-term psychological effects, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and emotional numbness (Staub, 2003). These effects arise from prolonged fear, the loss of loved ones, and witnessing mass violence (Herman, 1992). The 1994 Rwandan Genocide exemplifies such a tragedy, in which approximately 800,000 *Tutsi* and moderate *Hutu* were killed within 100 days (BBC News, 2019). Leaving deep psychological scars, particularly on women and children. Understanding the psychological aftermath of genocide through film is essential not only for historical remembrance but also for revealing how human consciousness and defense mechanisms operate under trauma.

Literature and film play an important role in representing and preserving the memory of such trauma. Through narrative, characterization, and symbolism, these media allow audiences to understand the psychological dimensions of historical suffering (Klarer in Mufidah, 2022). *Trees of Peace* (2022), directed by Alanna Brown, explores these dimensions by portraying four women hiding for 81 days during the Rwandan Genocide. Among them, Annick – a pregnant woman married a *Tutsi* man – emerges as a complex character combining fear, guilt, and empathy. Her inner conflict between hope and despair makes her an ideal subject for psychoanalytic analysis. Analyzing Annick’s psyche thus matters not only for understanding her individual trauma but also for examining how film can represent the unconscious processes of fear, guilt, and self-preservation, contributing to broader discussions of trauma representation and psychological realism in film.

Freud’s psychoanalytic theory explains how the unconscious, id, ego, and superego shape individual responses to anxiety (Freud in Barry, 2002). Anxiety arises when the ego perceives threats from internal impulses or external dangers (Arbiser & Schneider, 2018). To protect itself, the ego unconsciously employs

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defense mechanisms such as denial, repression, projection, regression, displacement, rationalization, and sublimation (Tyson in Sarijaloo, 2016). In the context of genocide, these mechanisms not only reflect individual coping strategies but also humanity’s broader struggle to survive amidst moral and existential chaos (McLeod in Nur, 2022). During genocide, the confrontation with death, guilt, and loss overwhelms the ego, forcing individuals to rely on defense mechanisms as a means of psychological survival. Linking Freud’s defense mechanisms to genocide trauma thus provides a deeper understanding of how extreme violence affects psychological behavior.

Analyzing Annick’s character is significant not only for film studies but also for broader discussion on trauma representation and psychological realism in film. Her character illustrates how individuals internalize fear, guilt, and survival instincts under extreme situations. Moreover, since *Tress of Peace* is based on real events, the film bridges historical trauma and psychological theory, showing how film narratives can reflect the unconscious dimensions of human suffering. Her psychological journey demonstrates how extreme suffering blurs the boundaries between fear and conscience, revealing the complex interplay between morality and survival.

This research formulated to answer the questions: (1) How are the types of anxiety experienced by Annick and her defense mechanisms portrayed in *Trees of Peace* (2022)? The purpose of this research is to identify and analyze Annick’s types of anxiety and defense mechanisms based on Freud’s psychoanalytic theory. Theoretically, this research provides insights into the application of Freudian concepts in analyzing trauma and survival strategies in film narratives. Practically, it helps readers and educators understand various forms of anxiety and defense mechanisms through concrete representations in film, while also enriching the fields of psychology and literary studies.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Films as Work of Literature

Literature refers to written works created for their artistic or aesthetic value, distinguishing them from functional texts such as newspapers, legal documents, of academic writing (Klarer, 2011). The term emphasizes the crafted nature of texts, where words combine like threads in a fabric to produce meaning, while also considering historical, cultural, and contextual factors (Klarer, 2011). Although literary studies traditionally focus on written texts, films are increasingly recognized as a branch of literature, sharing narrative, thematic, and artistic qualities (Klarer in Rezeki et al., 2023). *Trees of Peace* (2022) exemplifies this, exploring survival, trauma, sisterhood, and resilience during the Rwandan Genocide. Through its emotional depth and character development, particularly of Annick, the film conveys profound human experiences, demonstrating that film, like written literature, can function as a medium of literary expression.

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2. Characters and Characterization in Film

Characters are essential elements of a story, conveying messages through their actions, expressions, and interactions. According to Gill, character is a person in literary work, while characterization refers to the methods used to create and develop the character (Indriani et al., 2019).

Characterization in film involves not only what characters do but also how they are presented and represented (Carolina et al., 2021). Boggs and Petrie (2008) explain that characterization can be built through various ways:

- a. Characterization Through Appearance – characters’ physical traits, clothing, and movement give immediate impressions of identity and personality (Sari, 2017)
- b. Characterization Through Dialogue – speech, word choice, tone, and grammar reveal thoughts, emotions, social status, and education (Sari, 2017)
- c. Characterization Through External Action – actions reflect personality traits and values (Sari, 2017)
- d. Characterization Through Internal Action – thoughts, desires, fear, and memories reveal hidden emotions (Sari, 2017)
- e. Characterization Through Reactions of Others – how other characters perceive or comment on a character adds insight into their personality (Sari, 2017).
- f. Characterization Through Contrast (Dramatic Foils) – contrasting characters highlight differences and emphasize traits (Sari, 2017)
- g. Characterization Through Caricature and Leitmotif – exaggeration of traits or repeated motifs creates memorable characters (Sari, 2017)
- h. Characterization Through Choice of Name – names can reflect traits, cultural references, or symbolic meaning (Sari, 2017).

3. Psychology in Literature

Psychology offers a framework to analyze literature by examining human behavior, personality, inner conflict, trauma, and mental processes. It explores both external actions and internal thoughts, dreams, and desires, helping uncover deeper meanings and understand the human conditions (Holland in Çakırtaş, 2019).

Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis is fundamental for understanding personality. He highlighting the role of the unconscious, distinguishing between the unconscious proper and the preconscious, Freud’s structural model includes the id (instincts, pleasure principle), ego (rational, reality principle), and superego (moral, social norms). Imbalance among these structures can cause disturbances such as anxiety, which is key in developing neurotic and psychotic behaviors.

4. Anxiety

Freud defined anxiety as an unpleasant condition with bodily sensations that alert the ego to danger (Freud, 2001). It may not have a specific cause and acts as a psychological alarm signaling imbalance in personality (Freud in Schultz, 2004). He identified three types of anxiety:

- a. Realistic anxiety arises from external threats and triggers appropriate fear responses (Ewen, 2003). For example: a character becomes anxious when a cat bites his hand, leading to anger and violent behavior (Andriana & Kasprabowo, 2020).
- b. Neurotic anxiety stems from internal conflict between the id and ego, with imagined or unknown threats (Feist, 2006). For example: fear and hatred of a harmless cat reflect internalized anxiety (Andriana & Kasprabowo, 2020).
- c. Moral anxiety results from conflicts with the superego, causing guilt and shame (Ewen, 2003). For example: harming the cat triggers remorse for violating moral principles (Andriana & Kasprabowo, 2020).

Each type of anxiety activates different defense mechanisms depending on the ego's ability to manage internal or external pressure. For instance, realistic anxiety may lead to denial or displacement to avoid real danger; neurotic anxiety often results in repression or projection to control forbidden impulses; while moral anxiety commonly triggers rationalization or reaction formation as the ego struggles to reduce guilt and preserve self-image.

5. Defense Mechanisms

Defense mechanisms are unconscious strategies used by the ego to protect individuals from anxiety, stress, or internal conflict (Schultz, 2004). They help manage impulses or desires that threaten psychological stability (Feist, 2006). These defense mechanisms function as adaptive responses that correspond to different anxiety sources. Key mechanisms include:

- a. Repression – Suppressing painful memories or impulses into the unconscious (Feist, 2008). For example: Claireece suppresses trauma from her mother's abuse (Supiansyah et al., 2022).
- b. Reaction Formation – Acting opposite to true impulses to reduce anxiety (Schultz, 2004). For example: Claireece and her mother act warmly despite abuse (Supiansyah et al., 2022).
- c. Denial – Refusing to acknowledge reality to avoid distress (Alwisol in Warkey, 2020). For example: Claireece ignores home abuse, focusing on trivial matters (Supiansyah et al., 2022).
- d. Projection – Attributing one's own unacceptable feelings to others (Feist, 2008). For example: Claireece directs anger over her HIV diagnosis onto her teacher (Supiansyah et al., 2022).
- e. Regression – Reverting to earlier, childlike behavior under stress (Feist, 2008). For example: Gilmore reacts violently in hockey tryouts, as in childhood (Siregar et al., 2022).
- f. Rationalization – Justifying behaviors with acceptable but false explanations (Siregar et al., 2022). For example: Gilmore reassures himself after mistakes (Siregar et al., 2022).

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- g. Displacement – Redirecting impulses from a threatening object to a safer target (Schultz, 2004). For example: Claireece lashes out at her teacher instead of her mother (Supiansyah et al., 2022).
- h. Sublimation – Transforming negative impulses into productive actions (Siregar et al., 2022). For example: Gilmore channels anger into focus and performance (Siregar et al., 2022).

6. Previous Studies

This research reviews previous studies that apply Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, particularly anxiety and defense mechanisms. The first study by Andriana (2020) analyzed *The Black Cat* by Edgar Allan Poe, focusing on the main character’s realistic, neurotic, and moral anxiety, as well as defense mechanisms like displacement, denial, projection, acting out, and symbolization. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected from the text through reading, classification, and interpretation, showing how behaviors reflect psychological aspects.

The second study by Ali (2023) examined *The Leap* by Jonathan Stroud, analyzing the main character Charlie’s anxiety and defense mechanisms after her friend’s death. Using a psychological approach and Freud’s theory, data were collected via close reading and categorized according to anxiety types and defense mechanisms, revealing how these factors shape her behavior. The present study differs in its object of analysis. While previous studies focus on written texts—a short story and a novel – this research examines a film, *Trees of Peace*, analyzing Annick’s character. The film provides a visual depiction of psychological resistance, empathy, and emotional strength, offering insights into coping with anxiety in extreme situations. Additionally, since the film is based on real events, it highlights the broader psychological impact of historical tragedies like the Rwandan Genocide.

By combining previous findings with Freud’s framework, this research not only explores how anxiety arises in the context of film, but also analyses how certain defense mechanisms emerge in response to different types of anxiety, thereby providing a more integrated psychological interpretation of Annick’s character.

C. METHOD

This research employs qualitative research, focusing on understanding meaning, exploring experiences, and analyzing small samples (Leavy, 2017). Qualitative research is descriptive, presenting data in words or images rather than numbers (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). Recent literature also emphasizes that qualitative data are non-numerical and often expressed through text or visuals (Timonera, 2024). The film *Trees of Peace* (2022) is suitable for this approach as it allows in-depth analysis of characters’ experiences, emotions, and narrative. Additionally, this study uses Freud’s psychoanalytic approach for literary analysis (Barry, 2002). This method examines characters’ anxiety and defense mechanisms by exploring their unconscious thoughts, dialogue, actions, and relationships, revealing how they cope with fear, loss, and hope in the film.

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1. Data and Data Source

The data were collected from dialogues and scenes in the film *Trees of Peace* (2022), including words, phrases, and sentences that reflect the character Annick’s anxiety and defense mechanisms. The film, directed by Anna Brown, has a runtime of 1 hour and 38 minutes and is available on Netflix.

2. Research Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the key instrument, directly involved in collecting and analyzing data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). Observation served as the main instrument, focusing on Annick’s anxiety and defense mechanisms throughout the film.

3. Data Collection

Qualitative data can include visual and textual materials, such as videos and images (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the researcher collected data from the film by watching it multiple times, capturing relevant scenes as images, taking notes on dialogues, narration, and scenes that depict anxiety and defense mechanisms, and organizing the findings in a data collection table. This approach enables a detailed exploration of meanings beyond the textual content alone.

4. Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study followed the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of three interconnected steps: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the condensation stage, the researcher selected and focused on film scenes and dialogues where Annick exhibited anxiety or used defense mechanisms, ensuring that only relevant and meaningful data were retained. Next, data display involved organizing these findings into structured formats, such as tables or charts, categorizing types of anxiety (realistic, neurotic, moral) and defense mechanisms (repression, denial, rationalization, etc.). According to Freud’s theory, and interpreting them within the narrative context. Finally, conclusion drawing summarized Annick’s experiences and coping strategies, directly addressing the research questions. Freud’s psychoanalytic theory is particularly suitable for this study because it explains the unconscious processes behind anxiety and defense mechanisms, offering a deeper understanding of how individuals psychologically respond to extreme trauma, which other frameworks focusing solely on behavioral or external trauma may not fully capture. Unlike cognitive or trauma-focused frameworks that emphasize observable symptoms such as fear or avoidance, Freud’s theory allows for the investigation of hidden motives, repressed emotions, and inner conflicts that shape Annick’s behavior. This makes it particularly relevant for analyzing film characters whose psychological struggles are expressed symbolically through dialogue, images, and emotional tension.

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D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this research, Annick’s character in *Trees of Peace* (2022) was analyzed using Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, focusing on her behaviors, expressions, and dialogues that reflect psychological conflict during the Rwandan Genocide. Anxiety, an unpleasant emotional and physical state signaling danger, is divided into realistic, neurotic, and moral types, functioning as the ego’s alarm system (Freud in Schultz, 2004). Defense mechanisms are unconscious strategies employed by the ego to reduce anxiety and cope with internal tension (Schultz, 2004). In the film, Annick experiences anxiety while hiding in a basement, feeling fear, guilt, and helplessness, and she unconsciously uses mechanisms like prayer and emotional suppression to manage her distress.

1. Realistic Anxiety

Realistic anxiety arises from actual external threats, involving fear of tangible dangers in the environment (Ewen, 2003). This type of anxiety is triggered by real situations that can be perceived and assessed, causing reactions appropriate to the level of danger (Schultz, 2004). Further evidence of Annick’s realistic anxiety is shown in the following dialogue:

(01:20:22 - 01:20:06)

Mutesi: [gasps] *A woman is hiding. A woman is hiding.*

Jeanette: *She can join us. We can call her.*

Annick: **No, no, no, no. It’s unsafe.**

Jeanette: *We cannot leave her.*

Annick: *Not with our voices.*

In this dialogue, Annick immediately rejects Jeanette’s idea of calling out to the other women who are being chased by the military. Annick’s repeated dialogue of “No, no, no, no” shows a strong emotional reaction driven by fear, which is a clear sign of realistic anxiety. At that moment, Annick believed that making noise could attract the dangers and expose their hiding place, which would put their safety at risk if it were to become known to the military. In this scene, Annick’s ego rejects the idea of calling the woman, realizing the noise could expose them to the danger, while her superego strengthens her responsibility to keep the group safe. Her repeated refusal clearly expresses her realistic anxiety, showing how her ego and superego control her instincts in order to ensure survival. This moment reflects of characterization through dialogue because Annick’s fear is directly expressed through her words. Her repeated refusal shows how real and intense the danger feels to her.

2. Neurotic Anxiety

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Neurotic anxiety is described as concern over an unknown danger (Feist, 2006). Neurotic anxiety is a battle between the id and ego (Schultz, 2004). The quote describes neurotic anxiety as a complicated form of anxiety that stems from internal psychological conflict. It is an inner battle between the id (a representation of primitive drives and uncontrollable impulses) and the ego (the personality system whose role is to control and balance these drives). Annick’s neurotic anxiety is exemplified in the following dialogue:

(00:31:53 – 00:31:39)

Francois: *I cannot stay. Annick: Then I'll come with you. -[Francois] No, please. Please. Please, you will stay here.*

Annick: ***You cannot leave me to rot while you help them. How can you do that to me? Hmm? You cannot help them while we starve!*** -[Francois] *Annick, they are dying.*

In this dialogue, Annick experiences neurotic anxiety, fearing emotional loss and abandonment by her husband despite no immediate external threat. Her id drives a need for security and attachment, her ego struggles to balance fear and reality, and her superego imposes moral expectations, creating internal conflict. Her explosive reaction reflects intense inner distress, expressed through dialogue that reveals her fear and insecurity.

3. Moral Anxiety

Moral anxiety arises from actions or desires that conflict with one’s moral ideals, causing guilt and shame (Ewen, 2003). It reflects a struggle between the id and superego, where the ego fails to follow moral rules while the superego acts as a moral guide (Schultz, 2004). This anxiety signals internal conflict within the personality structure. Further evidence of the moral anxiety experienced by Annick is evident in the following dialogue:

(01:16:24 - 01:15:42)

Annick: *Dogs. Are they [dogs snarling]*

Jeanette: *It was Akimana Murenzi. She and her husband ran the main bakery. And the two who killed her... [sniffing]... they were still practically boys. Pascal, he used to sing in the choir. He had the most beautiful voice.*

Mutesi: *You did this. You didn't want her here. She's dead because of you.*

Jeanette: *No. we are alive because of her.*

Annick: *—[sobbing] She was... she was... She was pregnant. Why didn't you say she was pregnant?*

In this dialogue, Annick struggles with guilt over not saving a pregnant woman. Her anxiety stems from an internal moral conflict between what she believed was right (helping) and her actual inaction. Her words, “Why didn’t you say she was

pregnant?” reveal intense guilt and regret. The id reflects her instinct to survive, the ego mediates between self-preservation and moral awareness, and the superego imposes moral judgment, explaining her emotional collapse. This dialogue highlights her inner conflict and moral anxiety.

4. Denial

Denial is refusing reality, can lead to imagination or delusion, whereas denial involves ignoring external dangers (Alwisol in Warkey, 2020). Denial is a way for a person to reject the reality that exists, which can trigger the mind to escape into imagination or even delusion. In this case, a person creates an alternative reality that is psychologically acceptable to avoid the real reality that provides a sense of security or comfort. Annick’s denial can be seen through the dialogue:

(01:30:26-01:31:14)

Annick: *Mutesi. Mutesi!* [whimpering] *This room is for storing things, not intended for people to be inside.* [grunting, panting] *It locks when the door closes. We are safe. Francois say it will end quickly. The UN will come. Belgian troops are here.*

In this dialogue, when Mutesi protests about their situation, Annick replies, “Francois will give us everything we need. And it will end.” Annick denies their real danger and convinces herself that help will come, using this belief to ease her anxiety. Her id expresses a desire for safety, while her ego reduces fear by rejecting reality. Meanwhile, her superego encourages hope and responsibility toward the group. Through this denial, Annick maintains optimism and emotional stability, showing her defense mechanism and inner conflict through dialogue.

5. Repression

Repression is the most basic defense mechanism, occurring when the ego pushes unwanted impulses into the unconscious to avoid anxiety or guilt (Freud in Feist, 2008). It also involves denying painful memories or situations to protect the ego from psychological discomfort (Siregar, 2022). Annick’s repression can be seen through the dialogue:

(01:22:51- 01:22:32)

Jeanette: *So, we clap first, and then right hand meets once in the middle, and then the left. Yes.*

Peyton: *Oh my gosh, you’re good.*

[both chuckling]

[Mumbling]

[Peyton laughs]

[Annick shushing]

[gun firing outside]

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[Annick whispering] *I'm serious. This is not a time for games.*

In this dialogue, Annick shows that she is trying hard to keep herself in control by refusing entertainment or fun. She wants to remain serious for fear of losing focus on the danger. Her reaction is not out of anger at others, but rather as a way to restrain herself from being caught off guard. This shows that Annick's ego is struggling in the midst of fear and uncertainty. Annick suppresses her natural feelings, such as wanting to laugh, feel safe, or bond with others, because she believes that it could make her weak and less alert. This moment shows that traumatic experiences make a person build rigid defenses in order to survive in stressful and dangerous situations. This moment reflects characterization through internal action, as Annick's inner struggle to suppress her emotions shows how fear controls her behavior.

6. Displacement

Displacement is the defense mechanism where id impulses are directed from a dangerous or unreachable target to a safer or more accessible one (Schlutz, 2004). In other words, when someone cannot express anger or frustration toward the real source, they transfer those feelings to a less threatening substitute. Annick's displacement can be seen through the dialogue:

(01:20:22 - 01:20:06)

Mutesi: [gasps] *A woman is hiding. A woman is hiding.*

Jeanette: *She can join us. We can call her.*

Annick: *No, no, no, no. It's unsafe.*

Jeanette: *We cannot leave her.*

Annick: ***Not with our voices.***

In this dialogue, Annick feels terrified by the threat of armed militia outside but cannot express her fear directly. Instead, she channels it into refusing to save a woman being chased, saying, “No, no, no, no. It's unsafe” and “Not with our voices.” Her fear of the militia is displaced onto a safer, controllable situation. Annick's ego rejects the rescue idea to avoid danger, while her superego reinforces her duty to protect the group. Her repeated refusal reveals realistic anxiety, showing how she controls her fear through rational restraint and self-protection.

7. Rationalization

Rationalization is a defense mechanism in which a person provides a seemingly logical but false explanation for their behavior to make it appear acceptable (Siregar, 2022). It often occurs when someone acts impulsively or for reasons they are unwilling to admit, creating an excuse to justify their actions. Annick's rationalization can be seen through the dialogue:

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(00:31:40 – 00:31:35)

Francois: *I cannot stay.*

Annick: *Then I'll come with you.* - [Francois] *No, please. Please. Please, you will stay here.*

Annick: ***You cannot leave me to rot while you help them. How can you do that to me? Hmm? You cannot help them while we starve!*** -[Francois]

Annick, they are dying.

Annick: *Our boy is dying!*

In this dialogue, Annick uses rationalization to justify her fear. When she says, “You cannot help them while we starve!”, it appears logical, but she is actually hiding her fear of being left alone and losing Francois, the person she relies on for safety. Instead of expressing fear or sadness directly, she disguises them as reasonable concern. Annick’s ide reflects her instinctive fear of loss, her ego rationalizes it by arguing logically, and her superego creates guilt for prioritizing her own safety. This tension leads her to mask fear with logic, revealing her inner conflict through dialogue.

8. Regression

Regression is a type of defense mechanism in which a person facing stress or anxiety reverts to earlier, often childish, behaviors instead of coping maturely (Feist, 2008). It occurs when the ego acts immaturely to manage overwhelming feelings, returning to a safer, less stressful state of mind (Siregar, 2022). Annick’s regression can be seen through the dialogue:

(00:31:28 – 00:31:11)

Francois: *I love you ma puce.*

Annick: ***No. No, Francois, no.***

Francois: *Annick. Annick. Annick.* - [sobbing]

Francois: *Listen to me. Listen to me. Listen to me. You are mine always, eh? And I am yours. -They can never change that.* - [sobbing hysterically]

[Francois] *I love you, ma puce.*

In this dialogue, when Annick cries hysterically and repeatedly says, “No. No, Francois, no,” she shows regression, reacting like a frightened child afraid of being left alone. Her desperate pleas and emotional breakdown reveal deep dependency and an inability to face separation. Annick’s ide dominates, seeking immediate comfort and safety, while her ego weakens under fear, and her superego is suppressed by emotion. This imbalance causes her to revert to a childlike state. Through her words and tone, Annick’s fear of abandonment and emotional dependence on Francois becomes clearly visible.

9. Projection

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Projection is a defense mechanism where a person sees their own unwanted feelings or impulses as if they belong to someone else (Feist, 2008). This happens when people cannot accept their own emotions, so they transfer or blame those feelings onto others (Warkey, 2022).

(01:15:43 - 01:15:42)

Annick: –[sobbing] *She was... she was... She was pregnant. Why didn't you say she was pregnant?*

In this dialogue, Annick faces intense guilt after learning that the woman she refused to save was pregnant. Instead of admitting fault, she projects her guilt onto others by asking, “Why didn't you say she was pregnant?” the question serves as a defense mechanism, allowing her to transfer moral responsibility to her friends and ease her emotional burden. Through projection, Annick unconsciously protects her from overwhelming guilt and psychological breakdown. Her id seeks self-protection from pain, her ego uses projection to maintain emotional balance, and her superego condemns her inaction, creating deep inner conflict.

10. Sublimation

The ego redirected id's impulses into socially acceptable actions. This protection allows individuals to redirect their negative emotions into helpful pursuits, preventing them from becoming harmful (Siregar et al., 2022).



Figure 1. (00:55:14 – 00:53:13)

Annick unconsciously employs the defense mechanisms of sublimation. Rather than expressing her fear or anger destructively, she transforms those feelings into positive and meaningful act – reading and reflecting on the book's message. The act of reading the book becomes her way of finding comfort, reaffirming her moral values, and transforming her pain into emotional and spiritual strength. Through sublimation, Annick not only protects her mental state but also strengthens her role as a symbol of endurance and faith amid suffering. This moment demonstrates characterization through action. Annick's engagement with the book, her reflective expressions, and calm yet emotional responses show her inner transformation.

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E. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the character Annick in film *Trees of Peace* (2022) experiences severe psychological distress due to a genocidal situation full of fear and danger. Using Sigmund Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis, specifically the concepts of anxiety and defense mechanisms, the researcher found that Annick’s emotional reactions and the way she behaves while in hiding can be explained as a form of unconscious effort to protect herself mentally.

Annick experienced three types of anxiety: realistic anxiety (due to real threats from outside, such as gunshots and fear of being found), neurotic anxiety (due to inner conflict and fear of being abandoned by her loved ones), and moral anxiety (due to guilt after not helping a woman who being chased by the military). These three forms of anxiety show that fear does not only come from the environment, but also from within, especially when values and actions are not aligned.

To cope with the pressure, Annick unconsciously uses several defense mechanisms, such as repression (suppressing feelings), denial (rejecting reality), projection (blaming others for her own feelings), regression (returning to childlike patterns), rationalization (seeking justification), displacement (venting emotions to other things) and sublimation (channeling anxiety into positive activities like reading). All of these show that Annick is trying hard to stay mentally afloat even though she is physically and emotionally in a very depressed condition.

This finding also shows that Annick’s character is shaped by the pressure of the external environment and the inner pressure she experiences. Her reactions in the form of fear, guilt, and the urge to survive show that trauma greatly affects a person’s psychological condition. In addition, through characterization techniques such as dialogue and internal action, Annick’s anxiety and inner struggles are clearly portrayed her words and emotional reactions help reveal her mental state and psychological depth. By finding the types of anxiety and defense mechanisms that arise, it can be understood how a person tries to protect themselves mentally in a very extreme situation. Annick’s attitudes and behaviors reflect the inner human need to feel emotionally safe, even in times of real physical danger. This finding also shows that not everyone uses all types of defense mechanisms, and in Annick’s case, the forms that emerge are more emotional and spontaneous than symbolic or constructive. Ultimately, Annick’s character provides a powerful illustration of how psychological defenses are an important part of surviving trauma.

The overall result of this analysis shows that Annick’s response to the extreme situation is very human and in line with Sigmund Freud’s theoretical explanation. She is not only trying to survive physically, but is also struggling to maintain her mental stability. Through Annick’s character, it shows how humans under extreme pressure will use various ways to protect themselves psychologically.

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