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The Psychology of Crime and Punishment in Detective Fiction: A Sigmund Freud Analysis of Guilt in "And Then There Were None" by Agatha Christie

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Dedication

This research is dedicated with all my heart to my beloved family, whose boundless love and unwavering support have been my pillar through every challenge. To my dear husband, ***Mohamed Bachir***, for being my rock, for standing by me with endless patience and belief in me, even when I doubted myself. To my precious son, ***Mohamed Adem***, whose innocent smile and pure heart have been the light in my darkest moments, reminding me every day of the beauty of perseverance and the power of love.

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the psychological dimensions of crime and punishment in Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* by the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis. Focusing on the notion of guilt, the study uses Sigmund Freud's theories particularly the structural model of the psyche (id, ego, and superego) and the mechanisms of defense to analyze the internal struggles of the characters. The setting of this novel serves as a symbolic psychological space where repressed guilt reappears leading to mental breakdowns, hallucinations, and ultimately, death. Based on Freud's key concepts and works, this study reveals how each character unconsciously employs specific defense mechanisms to suppress their feelings of guilt. As the narrative takes place, these psychological defenses progressively collapse under the pressure that grows, revealing the destructive impact of the unconscious mind. This research aims to bridge Freudian theory with certain modern psychological approaches to deepen the comprehension of guilt mechanisms and the development of criminal behavior within the literary context. This psychoanalytic reading shows how Christie transforms the detective genre into psychological dimensions, where justice is done not through legal means, but through the haunting voice of the superego. This work ultimately contributes to broader discussions on guilt, morality, and the human psyche in twentieth-century detective fiction.

Key Terms:

Freudian Psychoanalysis, Guilt, Defense Mechanisms, Id-Ego-Superego, Detective Fiction.

ملخص

يتناول هذا البحث العلمي الأبعاد النفسية للجريمة والعقاب في رواية ثم لم يبقَ أحد لأجاثا كريستي من خلال عدسة التحليل النفسي الفرويدي. بالتركيز على مفهوم الذنب، تعتمد الدراسة على نظريات سيغموند فرويد لا سيما النموذج البنيوي للنفس (الهو، والأنا، والأنا العليا) وآليات الدفاع لتحليل الصراعات الداخلية للشخصيات. وتعدّ البيئة والإعداد بمثابة مساحة نفسية رمزية يظهر فيها الذنب المكبوت من جديد، مما يؤدي إلى الانهيارات النفسية، والهوسات، وفي نهاية المطاف، الموت. واستنادًا إلى المفاهيم والأعمال الأساسية لفرويد، تكشف هذه الدراسة كيف أن كل شخصية تستخدم – دون وعي – آليات دفاع نفسية معينة لقمع مشاعر الذنب. ومع تطور السرد، تنهار هذه الدفاعات تدريجيًا تحت ضغط متزايد، كاشفةً عن الأثر التدميري للعقل اللاواعي. ويهدف هذا البحث إلى الربط بين النظرية الفرويدية وبعض المقاربات النفسية الحديثة لتعميق الفهم حول آليات الذنب وتطور السلوك الإجرامي ضمن السياق الأدبي. وتبرز هذه القراءة التحليلية النفسية كيف تحوّل كريستي الرواية البوليسية إلى مجال نفسي، حيث يتحقق العدل ليس عبر الوسائل القانونية، بل من خلال الصوت المؤرق للأنا العليا. وتسهم هذه الدراسة في نهاية المطاف في إثراء النقاشات الأوسع حول الذنب، والأخلاق، والنفس البشرية في أدب الجريمة في القرن العشرين.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

التحليل النفسي الفرويدي، الذنب، آليات الدفاع، الهو، الأنا، الأنا العليا، أدب الجريمة

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General Introduction

Detective fiction has experienced enormous transformation since its origins in the nineteenth century. What began as a form focused primarily on puzzles, logic, and the restoration of social order has gradually evolved into a narrative space for exploring the complexities of human psychology, morality, and guilt. In contemporary iterations, this genre often exceeds mere entertainment to probe deeply into the emotional and mental landscapes of its characters. Among the writers who have contributed significantly to this development is Agatha Christie, whose works continue to captivate researchers and readers alike not just for their narrative brilliance but also for their delicate psychological insight.

This psychological shift in crime fiction is best illustrated by *And Then There Were None* (1939). The novel deviates from the traditional detective-centered model by directing the narrative's attention inward, towards the characters' internal conflict, the consequences of their covert crimes. The characters' internal fragmentation is what asks critical attention as the plot develops and the outside mystery grows more intense because of its distinct structure, isolated location, and lack of an outside investigator, the book becomes a deep psychological analysis of guilt, denial, repression, and the desire for punishment.

This dissertation discovers these psychological dimensions through the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis, applying Sigmund Freud's key concepts including the id, ego, and superego, repression, defense mechanisms, and the death drive (Thanatos) to analyze the characters' behavior and their psychological breakdown. Each major character is treated as a case study in unconscious guilt and moral struggle, with particular emphasis on how suppressed emotions resurface and reappear in the form of hallucinations, anxiety, and eventual self-destruction. To complement this classical framework, the research also draws on modern psychological theories such as cognitive dissonance, criminal psychology, and neurocognitive perspectives, giving a layered and interdisciplinary approach to interpretation.

The purpose of this work is not only to supply a psychoanalytic reading of Christie's

novel but also to contribute to broader literary discussions on the intersections between crime, psychology, and moral accountability. While the novel has often been praised for its narrative structure and suspense, relatively little attention has been given to the profound psychological forces at play within its characters. By focusing on guilt as both a psychological burden and a narrative engine, this dissertation reveals the deeper existential dimensions of the novel

Eventually, this study positions *And Then There Were None* as a work of psychological depth and complexity, in which justice is delivered not through institutional means, but through the manifestation of internal judgment and moral reckoning. via its engagement with Freudian and modern psychological theories, this research reveals how Christie's novel mirrors the inescapable nature of guilt and the intricate workings of the human psyche when faced with repressed realities.

Statement of the Problem

And Then There Were None the most famous book of the British writer Agatha Christie is renowned for its innovative narrative and compelling plot, its psychological dimensions especially in connection to guilt, punishment, and moral struggle have received limited and few academic attentions. Specifically, there is a deficiency of exploration into how Freud's psychoanalytic theories such as guilt, repression, and the dynamics of the id, ego, and superego can lead and illuminate the characters' motivations and psychological deterioration. These aspects are important to the novel's development, yet their deeper significance remains ignored. This research aims to bridge this gap by applying Freudian psychoanalysis to investigate how guilt and punishment manage on both a personal and collective level within the novel of *And then there were none* by Agatha Christie. By analyzing the characters' unconscious desires, repressed emotions, and internal conflicts, this research will explore how psychological forces affect character behavior and the plot of the novel.

Research Question:

How can Freud's theories of guilt reveal the deeper psychological motivations behind the characters actions and the novel's development?

Sub-questions:

- How does Freudian theory elucidate the psychological dynamics of guilt in *And Then There Were None*?
- In what ways do guilt and repressed desires influence the characters' behaviors and interactions?
- How does the novel portray punishment as a psychological and moral resolution?
- Are Freudian theories alone sufficient for analyzing guilt in *And Then There Were None*, or do modern psychological theories provide a deeper understanding?

Aims of the study :

This study aims to:

- Analyze the role of guilt in shaping the characters' actions and psychological deterioration in *And Then There Were None*.
- Apply Freudian concepts of the id, ego, and superego to understand internal psychological conflicts within the novel.
- Examine how Christie employs punishment as both a psychological and narrative mechanism.
- Contribute to detective fiction studies by offering a psychoanalytic perspective on one of Christie's most celebrated works.
- Evaluate the adequacy of Freudian theories in analyzing guilt and explore modern psychological approaches

Research Methodology

In this work I adopt a qualitative research methodology, primarily based on textual analysis to examine the psychological dimensions in *And Then There Were None* by Agatha Christie.

-Theoretical Framework:

The analysis is based in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, focusing on the interplay between unconscious desires, moral consciousness, and behavioral repression. Concepts from modern psychology, such as cognitive dissonance and moral disengagement will be incorporated to expand upon or critique Freudian interpretations where appropriate.

- Primary Source:

And Then There Were None (1939), Agatha Christie's best-selling detective novel, serves as the central text for this analysis due to its intricate exploration of psychological tension and moral ambiguity.

- Secondary Sources:

Academic journals, scholarly books, and peer-reviewed articles focusing on Freudian theory, literary psychoanalysis, and Christie's fiction.

Contemporary psychological interpretations that allow for comparative insight with Freudian views.

Analytical Approach:

This work employs close reading to identify significant passages in which psychological tension, guilt, or repression is evident. Thematic coding will be applied to categorize textual evidence according to key psychoanalytic themes such as justice, punishment, denial, and the manifestation of the unconscious. Characters will be examined for signs of internal conflict, mechanisms of guilt, and psychological breakdowns. Additionally, the narrative structure and shifts in perspective will be analyzed to trace how Christie conveys psychological depth.

This multifaceted methodological approach ensures a nuanced and layered interpretation of

the novel's psychological underpinnings.

Significance of the Study This research will:

- Enhance understanding of the psychological dimensions of detective fiction, particularly in Christie's work.
- Demonstrate the relevance of Freudian theory in literary analysis, offering deeper insights into character motivations and moral struggles.
- Provide a nuanced exploration of how guilt functions as both a narrative device and psychological force in *And Then There Were None*.
- Contribute to interdisciplinary discussions on the relationship between psychology and literature, enriching the academic discourse on crime fiction.
- Bridge literary and psychological studies, deepening appreciation for Christie's artistry and the psychological complexity of her storytelling.

Literature Review:

Detective fiction has long provided a means to explore the multifaceted interaction between psychology, morality, and justice. While Agatha Christie's books are renowned for their complex plots, few scholarly articles have employed systematically Freudian psychoanalytic theory to analyze her works. This review integrates research in four key areas: the psychological dimensions of detective fiction, the intersection between psychoanalysis and detective stories, Freudian psychoanalysis in literary criticism, and the examinations of guilt in *And Then There Were None*.

1) Psychological Dimensions of Detective Fiction:

The enduring popularity of detective fiction is often explained through its high engagement with human psychology. Julian Symons emphasizes the genre's capacity to

describe psychological conflict, particularly in characters driven toward violent acts by forces beyond their control. Symons acknowledges, "The private face of violence fascinates me," and it is his interest in the internal conflict leading to criminality (20). This focus on the psychological aspects of crime underscores the genre's capacity to mirror societal anxieties of guilt and punishment.

Similarly, Merja Makinen talks about how detective fiction resists moral judgments, creating psychological tension so that the narrative remains engaging (112). Through placing characters in morally dubious situations, detective fiction compels the reader to make challenging moral decisions.

2) The Intersection of Psychoanalysis and Detective Narratives:

The relationship between detective fiction and psychoanalysis is highly entwined as both disciplines are founded on the revelation of hidden things. Amy Yang argues that detective fiction had a significant role in Freud's development of psychoanalytic theory, in particular, in the works of Edgar Allan Poe and Arthur Conan Doyle. Freud's research style in the unconscious mind mirrors that of the detective attempting to solve the crime, underpinning the reciprocal relationship between literature and psychology (Yang 598).

3) Freudian Psychoanalysis in Literature:

Freudian psychoanalytic theory has exerted considerable influence on literary critique, offering mechanisms for the critique of unconscious desire, repressed guilt, and moral conflicts. Peter Barry discusses how Freudian id, ego, and superego categories provide a structure for character drive and narrative examination (92). The application of Freudian analysis can take place in literature, particularly on deconstructing character psychology, writer's intention, and symbols within texts (Niaz et al. 35).

4) Guilt in *And Then There Were None*:

Guilt is the central theme in *And Then There Were None*, as the novel centers on ten

strangers invited to a remote island, each harboring a dark secret. The perpetrators of past crimes have either escaped justice or been acquitted. Shafira Aulia analyzes the psychological impact of guilt in the novel, arguing that fictional characters are just as susceptible to Freud's psychoanalytic mechanisms as real individuals. Her study concludes that the characters' conscious attempts to conceal their crimes result in unconscious psychological consequences; the shame is repressed but eventually resurfaces through various psychological symptoms (Aulia 72).

Dr. Divyasree highlights the recurring themes of justice and guilt in Christie's works, emphasizing the psychological complexity of her characters and their internal moral dilemmas (8). While previous studies have acknowledged guilt as a central theme, few have explored it through a Freudian lens. This research aims to bridge that gap by examining how guilt in *And Then There Were None* operates as a psychological force that transcends conventional notions of crime and punishment. Through a psychoanalytic reading of Christie's characters, this study offers a fresh perspective on the intersection between detective fiction and psychological literature.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Foundations and Freudian Framework

Introduction

One of the most influential figures in is the British writer Agatha Christie she was Known as the "Queen of Crime," Christie crafted complex narratives style that dig beyond the surface mystery to explore the deeper psychological forces that drive human behavior. her books , often perceived as conventional crime novels, are in fact complex studies of morality, guilt, and the unconscious mind. Among her most famous works, *And Then There Were None* stands out for its unique blending of suspenseful storytelling with profound psychological inquiry into guilt, repression, and the desire for punishment.

The intersection between crime fiction and psychology gives rich ground for critical exploration. Detective fiction by tradition highlights logic, reason, and the eventual restoration of moral order. However, as psychoanalytic theory gained prominence in the early twentieth century, authors progressively incorporated psychological complexity into their narratives. Psychological approaches to literature, particularly those grounded in Freudian psychoanalysis, illustrate the hidden motivations and unconscious desires that drive characters' actions. They offer a powerful framework for recognizing the symbolic dimensions of justice, crime and punishment.

The aim of this chapter is to lay the theoretical groundwork for a psychoanalytic reading of *And Then There Were None*. Through an examination of Sigmund Freud's theories of the unconscious mind, the structural model of the psyche, defense mechanisms, and the death drive, this chapter will expose and reveal the psychological mechanisms underpinning the novel's portrayal of guilt and self-destruction. Freud's insights, along with the elaborations of later psychoanalysts such as Anna Freud, supply essential tools for interpreting the psychological disintegration of Christie's characters under extreme circumstances. Eventually, this theoretical foundation will show that *And Then There Were None* transcends the detective genre's conventional limits. It becomes, through its

engagement with Freudian concepts, a study of the human mind's capacity for denial, repression, and the inescapable drive toward self-destruction .

1.1 The Psychological Turn in Detective Fiction: Christie, Freud, and the Evolution of the Genre:

The evolution of detective fiction from puzzle-based mysteries and investigation to psychological narratives represents a significant and notable transition in literary history . one that Agatha Christie helped shape through works like *And Then There Were None and murder in the orient express*. While early detective fiction, represented by figures such as Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, emphasized rational deduction and the restoration of order, writers in the interwar and postwar eras began to explore subjectivity, guilt, and repression as fundamental narrative forces. Julian Symons, in *Bloody Murder*, highlights this evolution, noting that "the detective story became, in the hands of its more ambitious practitioners, a form for exploring human motivation and mental aberration." (157). Christie's novel *And Then There Were None* reflects this shift by presenting a closed-circle mystery in which each character is haunted by unresolved guilt, transforming the crime itself into a psychological reckoning rather than just puzzling or solving a crime.

This enormous change aligns with broader intellectual movements of the time particularly the growing influence of Freudian psychoanalysis. As Susan Rowland explains, many detective novels from the mid-twentieth century onward began to draw on Freudian concepts such as the unconscious, repression, and moral anxiety, thus transforming the detective plot into a metaphor for inner psychological inquiry (102). In *And then there were none* Justice Wargrave assumes and adopt the role of both executioner and the judge, exposing each character's hidden trauma and forcing them into confrontation with their past. This procedure matches with the Freudian model of psychoanalysis, where the repressed guilt returns under symbolic forms like dreams, symptoms, or, in this case, murder. The

isolated island becomes a liminal space where the superego is free from the societal norms.

Moreover, modern critics such as Tzvetan Todorov and Peter Brooks have interpreted detective fiction as structurally akin to Freudian case studies, where the narrative drive stems from the desire to know and the unearthing of buried truths. Brooks, in *Reading for the Plot*, suggests that narrative tension mimics Freudian “repetition compulsion,” moving toward the resolution of trauma through narrative closure (102). *And Then There Were None* exemplifies this through its layering of confessions, clues, and psychological downfall, each bringing the reader and the characters closer to the primal scene of guilt.

In this regard, Christie’s work stands not simply as a triumph of narrative building, but as a foreshadowing of the genre’s deeper involvement with psychology. It occupies an important location in the history of detective fiction, spanning the gap between classical mystery and the psychologically rich novels that followed.

1.2 Christie and the Evolution of Detective Fiction: Bridging Classic and Psychological Modes:

The queen of crime Agatha Christie occupies a crucial and convenient place in the historical arc of detective fiction, serving as a transitional figure between the classical genre “Golden Age” and its later, more psychologically complex work evolution. Her novels, especially *And Then There Were None*, show how traditional detective structures marked by logic, order, and resolution can be interwoven with deeper explorations of the psychology of the human being. As Julian Symons notes in *Bloody Murder*, early detective fiction functioned as a “game” between author and reader, but Christie introduced moral ambiguity and psychological introspection that hinted at the darker, more existential direction the genre would later take (131). This is remarkably evident in *And Then There Were None*, where justice is no longer served by the state or legal system but performed through a private, almost mythic trial.

Susan Rowland supports this view, claiming that Christie’s work helped pave the

way for modern crime fiction's use of psychoanalytic and feminist frameworks to understand character motivation and narrative structure (97). By integrating Freudian concepts like repression, guilt, and the return of the repressed, Christie's narrative transcends conventional entertainment and becomes a space for talking and confronting the psychological burdens of modern life. In this way, her fiction acts as a bridge between the formulaic mysteries of the early 20th century and the psychological dimensions.



Fig.1. At the heart of London's theatre district stands a memorial of the best-selling author and playwright Agatha Christie, honoring her contribution to British theater.

<https://wanderwomenproject.com/places/agatha-christie-memorial/>.

1.3 And Then There Were None: A Departure from Tradition

The traditional detective novels focus on the logical process of solving a crime, on the other side Agatha Christie in her book *And Then There Were None* centers on the psychological depth of the characters. The plot centers around ten strangers who are invited to an isolated island under various pretexts. As the guests settle in, they discover that their mysterious host accuses each of them of committing murder in the past. Stranded on the island with no means of escape, the tension rises as the characters are systematically killed off one by one, mirroring the eerie nursery rhyme in the novel.

With no detective to manage the investigation, the novel shifts its focus from external resolution to internal disintegration, particularly the characters' repressed guilt,

anxiety, hallucination, and self-destruction (Christie 10).

In the novel's plot each character is eliminated at specific time according to the nursery rhyme, all these events create an gloomy atmosphere amplifying the sense of dread and horror. As scholar Gillian Gill argues, Christie's technique "transforms the classical whodunit into a psychological morality play," where punishment is inevitable and self-inflicted through guilt (Gill 123).

Furthermore, Christie's fiction "encourages readers to become psychoanalyst" tracing signs of repression and guilt beneath the surface of seemingly orderly lives (Light 79). By deviating from the traditional detective figure and instead emphasizing the mental and emotional states of her characters, Christie redefines the detective genre as a vehicle for psychological exploration rather than just crime solving.



Fig.2. A scene from René Clair's 1945 adaptation of *And Then There Were None*, showing the guests examining the table of soldier figurines. Each figure symbolizes a life to be lost, echoing the Ten Little Soldiers rhyme and underscoring the growing sense of guilt and inevitability.

Source: Clair, René, director. *And Then There Were None*. United Artists, 1945. Still image from "And Then There Were None (René Clair, 1945)." The Film Sufi, 23 Oct. 2021

<http://www.filmsufi.com/2021/10/and-then-there-were-none-rene-clair-1945.html>.

1.4 Freudian Psychoanalytic Theory:

The psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud has developed through many periods of time, each period marked by increasingly complex understandings of the human psychological depth. A major divergence occurs between his early structural model and his later introduction of the death drive, both concepts must be explicitly characterized to avoid conceptual blurring. *In The Ego and the Id* (1923) Freud systematizes the conceptualization of the mind's architecture that has evolved steadily through his works and for which he is best known, the tripartite schema of id, ego, and superego. The id comprises our unmediated impulses, the ego our judging and thinking self, and the superego our conscience (Sugarman105). This model focuses on dynamic intrapsychic conflict, especially how guilt and repression emerge from the ego's attempts to reconcile the demands of the id and superego.

However, Freud's later work, especially *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), offers an expansion of the psychoanalyst's theories on the role of libido in human behavior and motivation. In his early works, Freud emphasized that sexual libido and pleasure-seeking were driving forces in human behavior, this idea was expressed through the "pleasure principle," the theory that pleasure-seeking is a driving force of the human unconscious.

Beyond the Pleasure Principle responds to Freud's contemporary critics, who argued that he placed too much emphasis on libido. Freud presents the pleasure principle as part of an entire system of the psyche that drives human behavior by processing external stimuli and maintaining equilibrium (Freud 45)

Scholars such as Todd Dufresne argue that this move toward dualism between Eros (life instincts) and Thanatos marks Freud's transition from a biologically anchored psychology to a speculative metapsychology (112). Therefore, recognizing Freud's work needs careful attention to the specific theoretical frameworks he presents in different texts,

avoiding the temptation to blend early and late models without recognizing their distinct implication and norms.

1.4.1 Freud's Topographical Model: Conscious, Preconscious, and Unconscious Mind .

Sigmund

In The Interpretation of Dreams (1899) Sigmund Freud introduced his topographical model, divided the human psyche into three levels of mental activity: the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious. Each model plays a crucial role in shaping and forming the human being's psyche.

The conscious mind represents present awareness what one is actively thinking or sensing, and it is considered the smallest part of the psyche, often described as the "tip of the iceberg" (Freud 605). Laplanche and Pontalis describe that the conscious contains all mental content of which we are aware, but that much of the psyche operates below this level (45).

The preconscious is defined by Sigmund Freud in his book *A general introduction to psychoanalysis* is like a mental waiting room, in which thoughts remain until they "succeed in attracting the eye of the conscious" (306). Roudinesco emphasizes that the preconscious acts as a buffer zone, mediating between deep unconscious drives and conscious thought processes (112).

The unconscious, corresponding to Freud, is the largest and most influential domain. It hides repressed desires, dreadful and painful memories, and instinctual drives especially related to sexuality and aggression that are hidden from conscious awareness due to their disruptive nature. Freud famously called the unconscious "the real dynamic force of mental life" (*Interpretation* 607). Peter Gay emphasizes that Freud's iceberg metaphor powerfully illustrates the unconscious's predominance beneath the surface of conscious life (342).

Together these three layers interact dynamically within the psyche, with the unconscious exerting the strongest influence while remaining the least accessible. Freud's model laid the

groundwork for later psychoanalytic theory and remains central to understanding human psyche (McLeod).

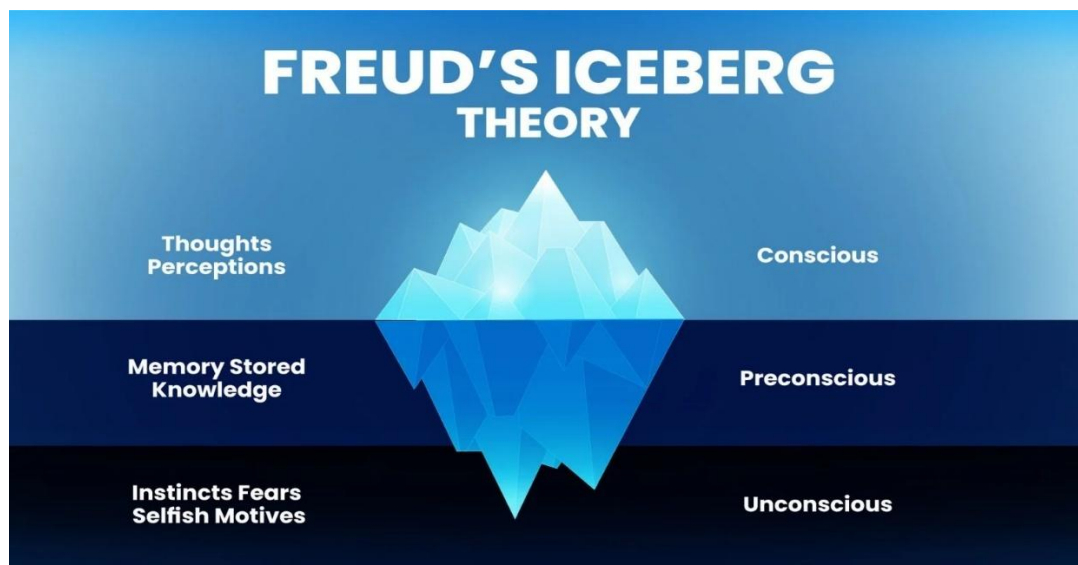


Fig. 3. Freud's Iceberg Theory illustrates the structure of the mind, dividing it into three levels: the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. This visual metaphor helps conceptualize how hidden instincts and fears influence the characters' behaviors in *And Then There Were None*.

Source: McLeod, Saul. "The Unconscious Mind." Simply Psychology, 2023

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/unconscious-mind.html>.

1.4.2 Introduction to Freud's Structural Model: Id, Ego, and Superego

In the ego and the id 1923 Sigmund Freud had released his structural model of the human psyche, representing a core framework in psychoanalytic theory that explains the dynamic organization of the human mind. As reported by Freud, the psyche is composed of three interacting agencies: the id, the ego, and the superego. This structure illustrates the ongoing tension and conflict within the mind, creating human behavior, personality, and psychological development (Freud 18). Comprehending this model is essential and crucial for analyzing complex mental phenomena such as guilt, repression, and moral anxiety and all sides of the human psyche.

1.4.2.1 The Id in Freud's Structural Model:

In Freud's structural theory of the psyche, the id represents the most instinctual primal element. It functions entirely on an unconscious level, guided by the pleasure principle, which seeks to immediately satisfy essential drives such as hunger, thirst, and sexuality (Freud 18). Unconcerned with logic, mortality, or reality, the id instinct on gratification without regard for potential outcomes, Freud described the id as a "cauldron of seething excitations" filled with energy striving for immediate release.

In And Then There Were None, the behaviors of several characters reveal the influence and the significant impact of the id, reflecting unconscious drives and desires seeking immediate satisfaction over ethical or social boundaries. For example, Philip Lombard's commitment to deceive, manipulate, and even kill others to ensure his own survival indicate the dominance and the authority of id impulses. His actions are rooted by primal instincts of self-preservation, without regard for ethical considerations, embodying Freud's idea of the id as a force governed purely by the pleasure principle (Freud 18). Lombard's contempt for rules and morality reveals the unrestrained power of the id under severe situations.

1.4.2.2 the Ego in Freud's Structural Model

Within Freud's structural model of the psyche the ego emerges as the rational and conscious component of the psyche that balancing the conflicting demands of id and the super ego, the ego seeks to satisfy the id's desires in socially acceptable and realistic ways, delaying satisfaction when necessary (Freud 22). Freud describes the ego as the "executive" of the personality that balances primal urges with moral standards and practical consideration (Freud 23).

In And Then There Were None, Vera Claythorne serves as compelling illustration of the ego in action, as she battles to maintain control through logical reasoning, her ego start to fade under pressure, demonstrating the fragile balance of the ego at the end of the story the superego wins when she commits suicide.

1.4.2.3 Superego in Freud's Structural model

The superego represents the internalized system of ethical standards and moral values. It works as a critical and evaluative agency, generating feelings of guilt and shame when its standards are violated when they are upheld (Jones 135). The superego appears through socialization processes, incorporating parental and cultural expectations to regulate impulses originating from the id (Laplanche and Pontalis 250).

In Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*, the concept of the superego is vividly illustrated through the characters internal struggles with guilt, Judge Wargrave represent the superego's by orchestrating the punishment of those he views guilty , reflecting Freud's notion of the superego's punitive function in maintaining moral order beyond legal systems (Greenberg 120).

Freud's Structure of the Human Psyche



Id:
Instincts



Ego:
Reality



Superego:
Morality

Fig. 4. This image visually depicts Freud's tripartite model of the psyche: the Id, driven by instinctual desires; the Ego, balancing reality; and the Superego, embodying moral conscience. These forces shape human behavior and internal conflict, central to the analysis of guilt in *And Then There Were None*.

Source: McLeod, Saul. "The Psyche in Psychoanalytic Theory." Simply Psychology, 2023, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/psyche.html>.

1.5 Defense mechanisms in Freudian theory:

Defense mechanisms are psychological strategies that they are unconsciously used to protect a person from anxiety arising from unacceptable thoughts or feelings. According to Freudian theory, defense mechanisms involve a distortion of reality in some way so that we are better able to cope with a situation (McLeod). Sigmund Freud identified repression as the most fundamental of these mechanisms, describing it as “the cornerstone on which the whole structure of psychoanalysis rests” (Freud148) Repression functions by pushing distressing thoughts, memories, or desires out of conscious awareness, allowing the individual escape emotional discomfort.

Following the steps of her father, Anna Freud further developed and classified these mechanisms in her influential book *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* (1936). Her classification includes mechanisms such as projection, denial, displacement, and reaction formation, all of which can be noticed in the novel’s characters as they cope with guilt, fear, and self-punishment.

1.5.1 Key defense mechanisms evident in Christie’s novel include:

- Repression: Several Characters suppress memories of their past crime, maintaining a mask of innocence.
- Denial: other characters refuse to recognize their guilt even when directly confronted with accusations.
- Rationalization: Many characters attempt to justify their actions by reframing them as necessary, inevitable, or out of their control.
- Projection: some Characters project and displace their guilt onto others, fostering suspicion and hostility.
- Displacement: rather than confronting their own guilt, characters redirect their intense emotions toward the guests.

As the narrative unfolds, these defense mechanisms erode under mounting external and internal pressures, exposing the raw guilt and unconscious drives that the characters have long sought to hide.

1.6 Death drive (Thanatos):

In his later work later work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud introduced the concept of the death drive, or Thanatos, unlike Eros which pushes us toward love, growth, and creation Thanatos pulls us in the opposite direction toward destruction, revealing an unconscious wish to escape life's tensions and suffering (Freud 38). Freud described this drive as responsible for behaviors that appear irrationally self-destructive, including repetitive trauma and self-punishment (Freud 42).

The death drive is identified as a force that underlies not only individual pathology but also collective aggression and violence. As Elisabeth Roudinesco explains, Thanatos manifests in social phenomena such as war and group hostility, suggesting that self-destructive impulses are deeply embedded in human nature (Roudinesco 115). Moreover, psychoanalytic theorists like Julia Kristeva have explored the death drive's connection to the concept of "jouissance" a paradoxical pleasure derived from pain and suffering linking self-punishment to complex psychic mechanisms involving desire and guilt (Kristeva 56).

Modern research further explains on how the death drive operates in clinical settings, especially regarding trauma and self-harm. Studies show that self-punishing behaviors often stem from unconscious drives to expiate guilt or resolve internal conflicts rooted in early childhood incidents. (Schwartz 92).



Fig. 5. This figure illustrates Freud's concept of the death drive (Thanatos), the unconscious instinct toward aggression, destruction, and a return to an inorganic state. In *And Then There Were None*, this drive manifests in the characters' self-destructive behaviors and unconscious guilt responses.

Source: "Freud's Death Drive (Thanatos): Definition & Concept." Study.com, <https://study.com/learn/lesson/freud-death-drive-thanatos.html>. Accessed 24 May 2025.

1.6.1. the death drive in *And Then There Were None*:

The novel's narrative arc vividly reflects the work of Thanatos, several characters seem to unconsciously accept their own deaths.

- 1) General Macarthur resigns himself to death with a sense of fatalistic inevitability (Christie 78).
- 2) Dr. Armstrong's paranoia and self-sabotaging behavior accelerate his demise (Christie 150).
- 3) Vera Claythorne ultimately enacts her own death as an unconscious act of expiation for her crime (Christie 248).
- 4) Justice Wargrave orchestrates a theatrical suicide, fulfilling his own death wish under the guise of moral justice.

Conclusion

This chapter has created a psychoanalytic framework for interpreting *And Then There Were None*, revealing the novel's significant engagement with Freudian concepts of the unconscious, repression, guilt, the death drive, and the organization of the psyche. Freud's ideas provide a powerful interpretative lens through which the characters' psychological degeneration can be viewed as the collapse of defense systems and the reappearance of repressed guilt amid extreme solitude.

Christie's protagonists are not only victims of external pressures but active actors in their own psychological breakdown. Their repression, denial, and rationalization delay but cannot prevent the return of the repressed. As the death drive manifests itself, each character's destiny appears less the outcome of external justice and more the fulfillment of an unconscious need for punishment and expiation. Thus, Christie's *And Then There Were None* defies the detective genre's usual limitations. It delivers a fascinating psychological scenario in which shame is not simply an emotional burden but a driving, destructive force. Through the application of Freudian theory, the novel emerges as a comprehensive study of the human mind's fight with conscience, repression, and the inexorable consequences of internalized guilt. In showing these unconscious patterns, Christie's work connects with broader modernist worries about the fragility of the self and the complexity of human motivation. Far from being a mere riddle to be solved, *And Then There Were None* takes readers into the maze of the human psyche where remorse festers, suppressed memories reemerge with vengeance, and the desire for death prevails over the resolve to survive.

Chapter 2: Guilt, Punishment, and Psychological Unraveling

Introduction :

In And Then There Were None, Agatha Christie develops a psychic landscape where remorse becomes an active and destructive force. This chapter tackles a textual analysis of the work through a Freudian lens, concentrating on how guilt shapes character behavior, generates internal conflict, and leads to psychological degradation. Central to this analysis is the exploration of Freud's defensive mechanisms such as repression, denial, and projection as they emerge in the characters' responses to the crimes they have committed and the rising fear of vengeance.

The narrative's limited location and slow exposure of guilt-inducing pasts create a pressure-cooker scenario in which each character is forced to confront their conscience. This chapter analyses how psychological defenses first function as coping techniques but gradually crumble under stress, revealing the deeper layers of the mind regulated by Freud's paradigm of the id, ego, and superego. As the defenses fail, punishment is internalized, and each character begins to unravel emotionally and mentally, long before any external power enacts justice.

This psychoanalytic analysis underlines how Christie's work not only examines moral duty but also illustrates the enormous influence of unacknowledged guilt on the human mind. The chapter contends that the characters' spiral into fear, paranoia, and madness is not only a product of external threat, but a consequence of unresolved psychological conflict making the novel a fertile site for Freudian inquiry.

2.1 The Characters and Their Crimes

In And Then There Were None every character in the story is guilty of a crime that went unpunished by the legal system. Although they initially deny their crimes, their unconscious guilt emerges as they become trapped on the island.

- 1) Vera Claythorne: Allowed a child to drown to secure a romantic future (Christie 45).
- 2) Dr. Armstrong : Killed a patient due to negligence while intoxicated (Christie 78).
General
- 3) Macarthur : Sent his wife's lover to his death in war (Christie 90).
- 4) Emily Brent : Dismissed a pregnant servant, leading to her suicide (Christie 112).
- 5) Philip Lombard: Left 21 men to die in the wilderness for self-preservation (Christie 95).
- 6) Justice Wargrave : Used his legal position to execute a possibly innocent man (Christie 210).

2.2 A textual Analysis of Guilt through Freudian Psychoanalysis in And Then There Were None

2.2.1 Vera Claythorne

In the novel, Vera Claythorne's psychological breakdown and collapse vividly illustrates Sigmund Freud's theory of guilt as a product of internal conflict between the ego and the superego. Through her repression, hallucinations, and ultimate self-destruction, anxiety, Vera becomes a perfect example of how unconscious guilt can dominate the human psyche.

2.2.1.1 Repression and the Return of the Repressed:

According to Freud, guilt arises from the tension between the ego and the superego often resulting in repression (Freud 19). Vera primarily suppresses her guilt over Cyril Hamilton's death by convincing herself that she went to save the boy. However, this repressed guilt inevitably resurfaces and reappears leading her to mental breakdown. Upon her arrival on the island, Vera is haunted by disturbing memories:

- "A rope...a noose...a drowned boy's face under the water blue, swollen, terribly fish-like" (Christie 92).

- “Vera claythorne lay in her bed , eyes wide open ..whispering to herself :Hugo, Hugo why do I feel you are near to me tonight ...then Cyril , yelling as he held her hand: Miss vera let’s go swimming” (Christie83)
- “Then they heard the sound of laughter and turned sharply, Vera was laughing and screaming hysterically ...they looked at her, unaware that calm, rational girl had just lost her min "(Christie 175)
- " but the smell of the beach was not imaginary it was real.... there was someone in the room ...I had heard somethingas she stood there, she felt cold, damp hand, reeking of the sea, touch her throat " (Christie203)
- “Miss claythorne , can I swim out of the rock? Was it her voice that had said. Yes, Cyril, you can swim ? " (Christie 213)

2.2.1.2 Symbolism and the Superego’s Punishment:

With the development of the plot, Vera’s guilt becomes increasingly evident through symbolic triggers. Her intense terror upon encountering seaweed in her room reflects deep psychological trouble:

- “Her eyes, staring ahead of her, saw something a rope hanging from the hook in the ceiling a rope with a noose” (Christie 214).

The seaweed and noose function as potent symbols of her buried guilt and the moral reckoning enforced by her superego. In psychoanalytic terms, the dominance of the superego punishes the ego through anxiety, hallucinations, and symbolic visions.

2.2.1.3 Death as Unconscious Atonement:

Freud argues that overwhelming guilt may drive individuals toward self-punishment and self-destruction as a form of unconscious punishment. Vera’s final act of suicide represents the

ultimate picture of Freud's concept of the death drive.

"Suddenly she had strong feeling that Hugo was in the house. yes, Hugo was upstairs, she said to herself don't be silly, you are just imagining things" (Christie 246)

"She moved forward like a sleepwalker. Her eyes, wide and frightened, stared at the waiting noose. And the voice went on persuasive and soft 'Do it now... You've got to... It's the only thing you can do...' Slowly, unwillingly, like an automaton, Vera lifted her hands "(Christie 264)

Her language conveys a surrender to forces beyond her conscious control. The compulsion to hang herself aligns with the Freudian concept that the psyche may seek relief from guilt through self-inflicted punishment.

Vera Claythorne's psychological journey is a tragic illustration of how unresolved guilt when left to fester beneath the surface can culminate in psychological collapse and self-destruction. Her case stands in stark contrast to that of Justice Wargrave, whose response to guilt takes a far more calculated and controlled form, as will be explored next.

2.2.2 Justice Wargrave

Justice Wargrave's psychological complexity in *And Then There Were None* gives a rich foundation for a Freudian understanding of guilt, particularly in its rationalized forms. Although Wargrave maintains an outside look of calm and justification, a deeper psychoanalytic reading exposes a secret internal fight among buried guilt, a controlling superego, and the performance of death as final moral judgment.

2.2.2.1 sublimation and Rationalization of Guilt:

Freud states that guilt may be disguised by sublimation the process of diverting unwanted emotions into socially acceptable behaviors or rationalization, where people rationalize something not ethical. Wargrave persuades himself that organizing the deaths serves justice rather than cruelty:

- “It was my ambition to invent a crime that no one could solve” (Christie 256).
- “ I had wanted to commit a crime that no one could solve, but then, is there an artist who does not wish to have his work recognized (christie275)
- “it was fascinating psychological experiments "(christie 275)
- “I could be an artist to crime (Christie 263)
- “I have always been fascinated by crime and punishment (Christie 262)
- “ I experience a great sense of elation when I see someone die or when I cause their death (Christie 263)
- “I was born with other traits besides my romantic fancy. I have a definite sadistic delight in seeing or causing death” (Christie 257).

In this chilling confession, Justice Wargrave reveals the sadistic impulse behind is orchestrated murders, his ability to act and deceive others while arising pleasure from murder places him in alignment with freud’s concept “psychopathic superego " a moral authority twisted into enacting punishment without remorse.

2.2.2.2 The Role of the Superego:

Wargrave’s superego exercises total control over his psyche, compelling him to assume the roles of judge, jury, and executioner. Freud’s theory posits that an overdeveloped superego may externalize itself by seeking to control and punish others as a way to manage internal guilt.

“justice had to be done ...even if the law couldn’t do it " (Christie 263)

This line reveals Wargrave’s deep identification with the superego. he believes in justice as an absolute moral law, even when the legal system fails.

2.2.2.3 Guilt and the Orchestrated Death:

Despite his rationalizations, Wargrave's meticulous planning of his own death indicates a repressed need for atonement. He arranges his suicide to coincide precisely with the final administration of justice, implying an unconscious acknowledgment of his guilt:

- "At the end, I shall have my own death arranged" (Christie 259).

From a Freudian perspective, this final act symbolizes the psyche's demand for self-punishment. Wargrave's carefully orchestrated demise serves as a delayed self-execution, his superego insisting that he pay the same penalty he imposed on others.

In contrast to Vera Claythorne's emotional turmoil and impulsive suicide, Justice Wargrave's response to guilt is marked by cold rationalization and calculated control. This stark difference highlights the varied ways in which guilt can manifest psychologically, setting the stage for the more pragmatic survival instincts exhibited by Philip Lombard.

2.2.3 Philip Lombard

in And Then there Were None , Philip Lombard emerges as character governed by the Freudian concept the id , unlike characters who grapple with guilt , Lombard often exhibits bold indifference to conventional morality .his action , speech , and attitudes consistently reflect a personality shaped more by impulse and the pursuit of gratification than ethical constraint

2.2.3.1 Denial and the Weak Superego:

In Lombard's case, the superego appears underdeveloped by the id's primitive instincts for survival and self-interest. When confronted with his crime the abandonment of a native African tribe, which led to their deaths he expresses no guilt and regret.

- "Self-preservation's a man's first duty. And natives don't mind dying, you know. They

don't feel about it as Europeans do" (Christie 83).

This part of the novel perfectly exemplifies Lombard's Id driven instincts. Survival is his concern even above mortality.

2.2.3.2 The Id's Domination and Moral Disengagement:

In the novel, Lombard's actions are primarily guided by the id's instincts. Freud explains the id as operating on the "pleasure principle," seeking immediate gratification without regard to morality or ethical norms. Lombard's readiness to employ violence, his cavalier attitude toward danger, and lack of moral introspection align with this concept.

"The whole thing's fantastic mad! But that's no reason why it shouldn't be true" (Christie 142).

This statement underscores his pragmatic, almost emotionless, approach to the deadly situation on the island.

2.2.3.3 Guilt Revealed at the Point of Death:

Despite his outward denial, Lombard's final moments suggest an unconscious recognition of guilt. When Vera Claythorne turns a gun on him, his reaction is telling:

- "Lombard's lips drew back from his teeth in a snarl. His whole face was a mask" (Christie 261).

This vivid animalistic description aligns Lombard with primal instinct pure id. This defensive aggression in the face of death may reveal a latent, final confrontation with the guilt he long repressed.

Philip Lombard's portrayal illustrates Freud's theory of a weak superego overwhelmed by the id's impulses. His rationalizations, moral disengagement, and ultimate psychological

collapse reveal that even deeply buried guilt exerts a powerful influence during moments of crisis. Unlike the calculated Justice Wargrave or the emotionally overwhelmed Vera Claythorne, Lombard's survival-driven denial offers a starkly different mode of grappling with guilt, which prepares us to examine Emily Brent's rigid moralism and its psychological consequences.

2.2.4 Emily Brent

Emily Brent in the novel embodies a rigid personality shaped by her strict religious beliefs. From a Freudian psychoanalysis, Brent's personality is dominated by overbearing superego that enforces harsh ethical judgement and represses emotional vulnerability.

2.2.4.1 Religious Rationalization as a Defense Against Guilt:

- "Beatrice Taylor must have been very wicked to have behaved as she did" (Christie 125).
- Emily Brent said sharply, "it was her sin that brought about her deathif she behaved like decent, respectable women nothing had happened " (Christie 108)
- "Then she turned her face to Vera, there was no sign of guilt in her eyes, instead they were hard and shone with righteousness "(Christie 108)

Her belief on religious moralism operates as a rationalization that protects her from confronting her own cruelty, Brent projects her need for justification onto divine reasons to escape guilt

2.2.4.2 Guilt-Induced Vulnerability and Death:

Although Brent maintains a rigid moral exterior, her unconscious guilt weakens her psychologically, she starts to feel anxiety and see hallucination.

- "Miss Brent murmured, I remember as saying that to hang on the wall of my room: your sin will always find you out"(Christie 105)

- “Then, in shaky hand, she wrote : the murder is Beatrice Taylorsuddenly , she started, what I have written? I must be going mad! " (Christie 82)

In comparison with Philip Lombard’s pragmatic denial and survival instinct, Emily Brent’s reaction to guilt is marked by inflexible moralism and deep suppression. This contrast reveals the varied psychological methods people employ to deal with guilt, prompting us to investigate General Macarthur’s unique acceptance and resignation toward his history.

2.2.5 General Macarthur

General Macarthur’s portrayal in *And Then There Were None* exhibits Freud’s idea of guilt originating from moral conflict and repressed memories. Unlike many who resist or explain guilt, Macarthur eventually confessed his guilt and accepted his faith.

2.2.5.1 Repressed Guilt and the Weight of Memory:

Freud suggests that repressed guilt resurfaces through anxiety, melancholy, or self-destructive. Firstly, Macarthur shows stoic denial regarding his crime sending his wife’s lover, Arthur Richmond, to his death during the war. However, as the story progresses, his suppressed guilt reappears:

- “It’s all come back to me... the feeling that it’s no good, that one’s got to go through with it all” (Christie 109).
- “Sensing that people were talking behind his back as if they had heard some rumor....how painful it to feel that people talking about you "(Christie 81)
- “Tonight, a hidden voice proclaimed that hidden story (Christie 81)
- “Did I show enough anger and contempt without felling guilt or confusion " (Christie 82)

All these parts of the novel demonstrate that General MacArthur was struggling from psychological side, he was thinking that people knows his secret that’s what he make him comfortable and living with doubt , in the island her repressed guilt start to resurface he started feels anger and hearing haunted voice of his unconscious.

2.2.5.2 Withdrawal and the Death Drive (Thanatos):

In the light of Freudian theory, unresolved guilt may trigger Thanatos the unconscious death drive as a path to seek relief. Macarthur slowly separates himself from the other characters, submitting to his destiny with silent acceptance.

- “There’s no boat coming. We’re all going to die. I’m the only one who sees it clearly...”
(Christie 112).
- “no one is going to leave the island, you know that , but what you don’t know is about salvation " (Christie 124)

His passive withdrawal reflects a subconscious embrace of death as atonement, highlighting the destructive power of guilt.

a comparison with Emily Brent’s suppression and Philip Lombard’s denial, Macarthur’s journey indicates a clear admission of guilt leading to psychological paralysis and death. This sets the scenario for understanding Dr. Armstrong, whose relationship with guilt entails a novel interaction between denial and self-awareness.

2.2.6 Dr. Armstrong

Dr.Armstrong , one of the central figures in the novel, exemplifies the complex psychological mechanisms used to repress guilt and avoid moral responsibility , A respected doctor with a hidden past, Armstrong’s character reveals a classic internal conflict between the unconscious id represented by his past with alcohol and the judging superego, which demands moral atonement.

2.2.6.1 Repression and the Ego’s Self-Deception:

Freud maintains that suppression acts to keep unpleasant guilt out of conscious awareness Armstrong represses his culpability for the patient’s death, concealing it behind his professional identity and minimizing the accident.

- “Bad luck...these things happen. A surgeon’s not a god. He can’t always bring off miracles”
(Christie 91).

This defensive mechanism protects his self-image by hiding the full scope of his moral failing, insulating his ego from the superego's severe and harsh judgment.

2.2.6.2 Anxiety and Loss of Rational Control:

As events develop, Armstrong's psychological stability deteriorates. Freud notes that repressed guilt often arise when anxiety increases, the ego can no longer contain unconscious conflict. Armstrong's growing paranoia, erratic decisions, leading to his breakdown:

- "He felt the strain yes, but it was more than that. Something was wrong..." (Christie 174).

His anxiety is not simply a reaction to external threats but an expression of internal disorder as his buried guilt surfaces, threatening his ego's stability.

2.2.6.3 Projection and the Transfer of Guilt:

Throughout the course of the novel, Armstrong projects his guilt onto others, especially Lombard, he accused him of all the crimes .

- "He and the judge had decided that Lombard was the most likely suspect" (Christie 198).

By externalizing his own guilt, Armstrong evades addressing his moral flaws, however this method paradoxically leads him into catastrophic peril.

Dr. Armstrong's psychiatric deterioration underscores Freud's idea that repressed guilt destabilizes the mind. His use of denial, anxiety, and projection as protection strategies finally fails, resulting in his death.

2.3 Defense Mechanisms Manifested in And Then There Were None

In Freudian psychoanalysis, defense mechanisms are defined as unconscious strategies employed by the ego to reduce anxiety caused by internal conflicts between the id, ego, and superego. these mechanisms often distort, deny or manipulate reality in order to protect the individual from psychological distress. Anna Freud, in her foundational work the ego and the mechanisms, emphasizing their role in ego functioning.

In And Then There Were None, various characters unconsciously rely on such mechanisms to shield themselves from the psychological disintegration brought on by guilt.

1) Repression

Freud in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* defines repression as “the forgetting or ignoring of memories that are too painful to confront” (222). In the novel:

-Vera Claythorne represses the memory of her involvement in Cyril’s drowning, keeping it buried until it emerges through episodes of paranoia and hallucination.

-General Macarthur represses guilt over sending his wife’s lover to his death, yet his mental decline and fatalistic musings reflect the inner remorse he cannot fully repress

-Philip Lombard suppresses guilt over leaving African tribesmen, rationalizing his acts while unconsciously denying their moral implications and he was dominated by his instinct of survival.

2) Projection

Projection is “the act of attributing one’s own unacceptable thoughts or emotions to others” (Freud 29).

-Vera Claythorne externalizes her guilt by suspecting others , thus projecting her internal conflict onto those around her .

-Justice Wargrave justifies his own sadistic impulses by labeling them as acts of noble justice

3) Denial

Freud defines denial as “refusing to acknowledge reality or facts in order to avoid distress” (Freud 25).

- Emily Brent denies her role in the death of Beatrice Taylor, masking her actions in rigid morality.

- Philip Lombard denies guilt or any wrong doing , portraying his actions as acts of necessary survival rather than moral failure .

4) Rationalization

- Anna Freud characterizes rationalization as “recasting objectionable conduct in a favorable light to avoid guilt” (A Freud 47).
- Lombard justifies abandoning men in the jungle by emphasizing the harsh conditions of his situation.
- Wargrave rationalizes his serial murders by presenting them as logical extension of justice, thereby masking his sadism under a veil of order and mortality

5) Reaction Formation

Reaction formation entails expressing the opposite of one’s unacceptable feelings to hide internal conflicts (A Freud 67).

Emily Brent exemplifies this defense by adopting excessively moralistic and judgement stance, which serves to suppress any trace of guilt or compassion regarding Beatrice’s tragic end.

6) Displacement

Freud in *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* describes displacement as the redirection of emotional responses from threatening target to less dangerous substitute (255).

- General MacArthur displaces his guilt onto abstract thoughts of death, allowing him to avoid confronting the real source of his torment.

2.4 Punishment and the Superego:

2.4.1 Justice Wargrave as the Embodiment of the Superego:

According to Freud in his book *The Ego and the Id*, the superego acts the internal moral authority, incorporating with social values and ideals, it frequently produces toward self-punishment (56). Justice Wargrave personifies the superego in its extreme form, as he both judges and executioners of those he thinks are guilty.

2.4.2 Wargrave’s Psychological Motivation:

Wargrave’s acts are driven by a desire to enforce moral order and punish those who have escaped the legal system. His behavior aligns with the superego’s strict, punitive nature,

which seeks to control the id's impulses (Freud 78).he rationalizes his murders as necessary acts of justice, casting himself as an agent oof moral balance:

“I was born in sense of justice that is strong in some of us and absent in others. I have always felt that murder is an art, and I was, in a sense, an artist in crime” (Christie 265).

This part of the novel reveals a deep internal contradiction, Wargrave frames his sadistic acts as noble justice, exposing the tension between his moral idealism and sadistic urges.

2.4.3 The Role of Punishment in the Novel:

Punishment operates not only as plot device but also as psychological imperative in the novel, echoing Freud's view that guilt, whether conscious or unconscious, demands retribution. Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents* posits that punishment, either self-inflicted or externally imposed functions to relieve internalized guilt (89). In *And Then There Were None*, each character's death serves as retribution for their past crimes:

-Vera Claythorne : ultimately commits suicide, illustrating the triumph of the superego over her repressed guilt (Christie 210).

-General Macarthur: passively awaits his fate, suggesting a deep, perhaps unconscious acceptance of punishment (Christie 78).

-Dr. Armstrong: overwhelmed by fear and guilt , falls victim to Wargrave's manipulation, showing vulnerability to moral judgment (Christie 150).

These outcomes align with Freud's assertion in *Beyond the pleasure principle* that the superego enforce justice even if results in self-destruction (42)

2.4.4- Psychological Impact of Punishment

As narrative progress and punishment is gradually executed, the psychological toll on the characters becomes increasingly evident. Each one follows a subtle trajectory of psychic disintegration marked by the stages of guilt As punishment unfolds, the characters undergo psychological deterioration:

-Denial then Rationalization then Acceptance, finally Each character moves through stages of

guilt, ultimately accepting their fates (Christie 112).

-Hallucinations and paranoia: Many characters experience Freudian symptoms of repressed guilt, such as Vera's hallucinations of Cyril the boys that she let him die (Christie 210).

-Projection of guilt onto others: Freud demonstrates in *The Ego and the Id* that projection as a defensive technique, when people attach their own guilt to other sources (56). Philip Lombard's nonchalant rejection of his previous wrongdoing demonstrates this tendency (Christie 95). These responses confirm Freud's claim in his book *The Uncanny* that the human psyche cannot escape guilt, since it resurfaces via punishment or self-destruction (241).

2.5 The island as psychological space:

In *And Then There Were None*, the island is more than just a setting it becomes a symbolic space from the human psyche, where the characters are cut off from society and forced to face their guilt. Freud's in *The Interpretation of Dreams* explains that when people are isolated, without everyday distraction, hidden thought and feeling often come back to surface resurface (210). On the island, there is no one to help the characters deny or explain their action, so they begin to feel guilt more deeply .

As paranoia increases, the boundaries between reality and hallucination blur, reflecting Freud's theories on hysteria and suppressed trauma (Freud 56).

- The island setting acts as a microcosm of the superego, intensifying the characters' internal moral reckoning.
- Symbolizes isolation and introspection → The lack of external distractions forces the characters to confront their guilt (Christie 10).
- Acts as a closed system of justice → The island becomes a courtroom where the superego (Wargrave) enforces punishment (Christie 120).
- Amplifies the return of the repressed → Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* suggests that isolation increases the resurfacing of buried guilt, leading to hallucinations and

paranoia (210).

As Todorov argues, detective fiction often transforms settings into psychological landscapes, where mystery and guilt intertwine (50). Christie's island functions in this manner mirrors the characters' subconscious turmoil and chaos.

2.6 Narrative Structure and Psychological Unraveling:

2.6.1 Christie's Narrative Techniques:

Agatha Christie builds her novel in a way that increases psychological tension and supports the central themes of justice, guilt, and punishment.

2.6.1.1 Suspense and Pacing

Christie's grasp of suspense generates an increasing feeling of inevitability, echoing the characters' psychological breakdown. The progressive elimination of characters, echoing the lines of the nursery rhyme, produces suspense and fear. The characters' falling numbers deepen their paranoia and anxiety, as they recognize death is coming up .

Christie's manipulation of pacing ensures that the reader experiences the same psychological distress as the characters, reinforcing Freud's concept of shared trauma (The Interpretation of Dreams 210).

2.6.1.2 Unreliable Narrator

Unlike traditional detective fiction that features clear detective figures, in this novel Agatha Christie uses a fragmented unreliable narrative, which adds to the psychological confusion. The third person omniscient narrator offers only limited access to the characters inner thought, making it hard for the reader to guess who the killer is.

2.6.1.3 The Nursery Rhyme as a Structural Device:

"The ten Little soldiers " nursery rhyme functions as both a narrative tool and a psychological catalyst in *And Then There Were None* . it predicts each character's death,

creating a sense of inevitability. More than just plot structure, the rhyme acts on deeper psychological level, serving as a constant, subconscious reminder of the characters' guilt , reinforcing Freud's concept of the return of the repressed (The Uncanny 241).

By embedding the mechanism of punishment within the structure itself, Christie ensures that the narrative reflects the characters' subconscious fears.(see appendix A)

2.7 Outline of the psychological unraveling of the characters:

Character	Crime	Psychological response	Freudian concept	Death
Vera Claythorne	Letting boy drown	Denial , rationalization , hallucination , suicide	Return of the repressed , the death drive	Hang her self
Philip Lombard	Abonding native men to death	Self-justification , No guilt	Dominated id	Shot by vera
General Macarthur	Sent a young officer to death	Isolation ,quiet acceptance ,depression	Death drive	Killed by blow
Emily Brent	Caused a girl's suicide	Moral rigidity ,religious justification , hallucination	Return of the repressed	Injected with poison
Justice Wargrave	Orchestrate the death of characters	Calm control , obsession with justice, sadistic desires	Superego obsession	Suicide staged like murder
Dr. Armstrong	Led patient to death	Nervousness, confusion	Repression , return of the repressed	Drown by Wargrave

2.8 The Final Revelation and Its Psychological Implications

2.8.1 Wargrave's Confession and the Role of the Superego

With the confession of Justice Wargrave's he reveals that he sees himself as the embodiment of justice:

His arrangement of the murders reflects the superego's demand for order and punishment (Christie 210).

His pleasure in executing justice by his own hand suggests a pathological superego that has overtaken his ego, aligning with Freud's theory of moral fanaticism.

2.8.2 The Psychological Resolution of the Novel

In this novel the characters' psychological journeys demonstrate that guilt is not easily silenced; even when deeply repressed, it lingers in unconscious mind, waiting to resurface .

Conclusion:

Through a Freudian psychoanalytic perspective, this chapter has shown how *And Then There Were None* delicately weaves guilt, retribution, and psychological breakdown into its narrative framework. The characters, each carrying the weight of a hidden crime, demonstrate a spectrum of defensive mechanisms suppression, denial, projection, and displacement which first function as psychological shields but finally crumble under the load of solitude and terror. Freud's structural description of the psyche id, ego, and superego were important in unravelling the mental battles that arise when the characters are forced to confront their pasts.

As the island tears away social norms and exterior barriers, guilt emerges not only as a thematic issue but as a driving psychological force. The collapse of mental barriers and the consequent psychological unraveling reveal the novel's deeper investigation of conscience and revenge. Christie does not depend simply on outward punishment; instead, she permits shame to work as an internal executioner, progressively undermining the characters' sanity.

This chapter has therefore argued that Christie's work operates not just as a gripping mystery but also as a case study in the psychological implications of guilt. In doing so, it lifts

And Then There Were None above the domain of traditional detective fiction, providing readers a unique insight into the human brain when faced with moral failure and existential anxiety.

Chapter3: Bridging Freudian Theory and Modern Psychological Approaches

Introduction:

The foundational framework for analyzing guilt and punishment in *And Then There Were None* is grounded in Freudian psychoanalysis, while contemporary psychological theories enhance understanding of character behavior and moral decision-making. The analysis in this chapter expands through integration of Cognitive Dissonance Theory, Criminal Psychology and Neurocognitive Psychology to explore how guilt functions at conscious and unconscious levels to affect decision-making and generate emotional responses and psychological unraveling. By combining Freudian theory with modern psychological perspectives, this analysis demonstrates how Christie's novel not only explores classic psychoanalytic concepts of guilt but also anticipates contemporary research on morality, self-justification, and cognitive processing.

3.1 Cognitive Dissonance Theory and Guilt

3.1.1 Overview of Cognitive Dissonance

The theory of Cognitive Dissonance developed by Leon Festinger during 1957 explains how people feel psychological discomfort when their actions go against their personal values and self-perception. People typically resolve cognitive dissonance by changing their beliefs, downplaying the moral significance of their actions, or blocking their memories of the experience (Festinger 3).

The concept of unconscious repression in Freudian theory explains how human beings suppress distressing thoughts to protect their ego while Festinger's model explains these phenomena through cognitive processes. Both theories propose that people alter their perceptions of reality to shield themselves from inner conflict; yet Freudian theory emphasizes subconscious instincts while cognitive dissonance theory prioritizes deliberate efforts to make sense of the situation (Freud 147; Festinger 3).

3.1.2 Application to *And Then There Were None*

The book *And Then There Were None* demonstrates through Christie's characters how cognitive dissonance and repression work together to keep guilt under control:

Vera Claythorne starts by explaining Cyril's death as an accident because she wants to protect her image of being blameless. Her mind continuously dwells on the boy and her hallucination marks the emergence of guilt that she had suppressed (Christie 45).

Dr. Edward Armstrong tries to avoid guilt by assigning blame to outside forces which is a denial technique resembling what Freud described as repression (Christie 78).

The most powerful example of moral disengagement comes from Emily Brent. She explains Beatrice Taylor's suicide as a divine punishment which enables her to avoid feeling responsible for the death. Her inability to feel guilty demonstrates how people maintain inner peace by using extreme explanations for their actions (Christie 112).

The unconscious suppression of guilt through Freudian theory exists parallel to Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory which shows how characters make deliberate rationalizations. The removal of moral justification opportunities on the island triggers characters to lose their psychological defense mechanisms which result in a mental collapse or obsessive behavior or self-destruction. The author presents the human battle with guilt by combining current cognitive theories with classic psychoanalytic principles.

3.2 Criminal Psychology and the Psychology of Guilt

3.2.1 Criminal Psychology and Moral Justification

The field of criminal psychology focuses on studying the mental operations and motivation factors as well as conduct patterns of people who commit crimes. Researchers pay special attention to how feelings of guilt and remorse alongside rationalization lead to specific behavioral outcomes. The research shows that people who do wrong sometimes experience acute moral conflict while others who lack guilt tend to have psychopathic tendencies according to Bartol and Bartol (56).

The discipline examines the lasting psychological effects that result when criminals avoid being caught which include long-term anxiety along with paranoid symptoms and self-destructive behaviors. The work of Albert Bandura presents moral disengagement as a critical idea because it shows how criminals separate their bad actions from personal responsibility by justifying them as reasonable or necessary (194).

3.2.2 Application to *And Then There Were None*

This classic mystery by Agatha Christie examines criminal behavior through detailed character examinations of guilt acceptance and denial:

The character Justice Wargrave demonstrates psychopathic behavior patterns throughout the story. He plans and executes a series of murders to fulfill his sense of justice while showing no authentic regret. His moral justification matches the psychological distance that highly disciplined criminals feel towards their actions (Christie 210; Hare 34).

The character Philip Lombard uses a rational explanation to explain why he abandoned the African men for his own survival. This rationalization demonstrates Bandura's theory of moral disengagement, where people downplay their harmful actions and place blame on outside influences (Christie 95; Bandura 196).

The character Vera Claythorne in the text symbolizes the emotional aftermath of guilt that remains unresolved. Vera uses rational arguments at first to justify Cyril's death but her increasing distress triggers persistent thoughts and hallucinations and results in her final act of suicide which matches Freud's idea that buried guilt frequently emerges through self-destructive actions (Christie 210; Freud 62).

The criminal psychology perspective provides a more comprehensive approach for analyzing how individuals either internalize guilt or deflect it compared to Freud's focus on subconscious guilt suppression. Christie demonstrates a psychological variety through her characters which spans from denial and rationalization to collapse and self-destruction thus confirming that guilt will always find a way to manifest itself regardless of how it handled.

3.3 Lacanian Psychoanalysis and the Concept of Guilt

3.3.1 Lacan's View of the Psyche and Guilt

The Lacanian approach to psychoanalysis extends Freud's basic theories by redirecting attention toward linguistic arrangements and personal identity formation. According to Lacan, people remain incomplete because they experience a primary deficiency that emerges from unfulfilled desires. The structural absence of something vital in human experience affects the way people build self-conceptions and their views of others according to (Lacan 2).

Guilt enters the picture when an individual does not meet the requirements set forth by the Other which designates social conventions and linguistic standards in Lacanian *terms*, *The Other* defines who people are and guilt arises when they discover contradictions between their true selves and their societal roles based on Fink's research (89). The island in *And Then There Were None* functions as a stage where the absence of traditional societal structures exposes the internal dilemmas of each character. The island setting allows characters to break free from legal constraints, yet they remain confined by their personal systems of morality and self-understanding.

3.3.2 Guilt and the Mirror Stage

The mirror stage from Lacan points to a fundamental developmental phase in childhood where children establish their first connection with their own reflections. The fragmented self-attempts to match its idealized reflection of perfection which it believes exists in the mirror image. According to Lacan in *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, the ideal image remains in a state of perpetual misrecognition since it does not match with reality (1). The characters in Christie's novel develop guilt because of their self-image misalignment. The character Vera Claythorne demonstrates compassion and selflessness yet the reality of her involvement in Cyril's death contradicts her self-perception. Emotional collapse and hallucinations emerge in Vera's behavior as signs of her ego breakdown. The character Emily

Brent maintains a figure of religious purity yet her mistreatment of Beatrice Taylor demonstrates a deep moral inconsistency which she denies. The gap between self-perception and actual behavior constitutes the essence of Lacanian guilt.

3.3.3 The Real and Guilt

The Real serves as the most complex concept in Lacan's theory because it denotes realities that language cannot fully represent. The Real functions as a disruptive force which exposes the illusions of self and reality by causing trauma and creating anxiety and hallucinations (Evans 162). The characters from *And Then There Were None* experience the Real when they must deal with their past atrocities.

Vera's hallucinations about Cyril serve as a direct encounter with the Real. Her mind reaches its breaking point when it can no longer understand or hide her guilt through language or morality. Wargrave shows desperate dedication toward justice because he needs to establish order over the irrational core of traumatic events. His disclosure at the conclusion reveals the Real foundation of his organized presentation through a deep-seated motivation that defies reason. The characters experience a symbolic breakdown when they lose their social positions and become isolated from society's structures which previously gave meaning to their behavior. The only thing left to them is the most basic form of guilt: existential guilt which arises when they face their inner fragmented identities.

Freudian philosophy bases its understanding of guilt on the confrontation between the superego and unconscious desires however Lacanian psychoanalysis extends this idea by introducing structural and linguistic elements to the inner dilemma. The main concept of guilt in Freudian theory occurs as an effect of unresolved Oedipal experiences and moral pressures which stem from early life and instinctual instincts (Freud 44). Lacan presents guilt as an outcome of human alienation within the symbolic order including language and societal norms and legal frameworks (Lacan 2). Freud's approach highlights the repressed material and its recurrence as the fundamental causes of neurosis whereas Lacan focuses on how

subjects cannot fully embody their ideal selves due to the symbolic norms established during the mirror stage. According to Lacan, human guilt arises from two sources: psychological conflicts.

The Lacanian framework enhances the examination of characters from *And Then There Were None* by revealing the enduring presence of guilt when societal condemnation is absent. Characters remain troubled because they are unable to uphold stable personal identities during the decline of the symbolic system which Freud would identify as their repressed memories. Lacanian theory integrates Freudian concepts through a different perspective that emphasizes linguistic systems and individual identity and social structures which shape guilt experiences.

3.4 Neurocognitive Psychology and the Brain's Role in Guilt

3.4.1 The Neuroscience of Guilt

Neurocognitive psychology studies the brain locations which influence how people manage emotions and make moral choices and experience guilt. Guilt processing occurs within the Anterior Cingulate Cortex (ACC) among other brain regions according to research. The Anterior Cingulate Cortex (ACC): Decety and Cowell mentioned that this area functions as a critical center for emotional regulation together with guilt perception (45).

Research shows that the Prefrontal Cortex (PFC) serves as the brain area responsible for both moral reasoning and self-control of impulsive behavior (Decety and Cowell 50). Unresolved or repressed guilt transforms brain activity patterns which result in stress as well as anxiety and distortions in cognitive processing.

3.4.2 Application to And Then There Were None

Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* features characters who behave in ways that correlate with psychological studies of guilt:

The character Vera Claythorne goes through hallucinations that researchers would connect with heightened ACC activity as a result of her failure to suppress past experiences of trauma and unresolved guilt (Christie 210). General Macarthur demonstrates an attitude of passive acceptance of death that researchers might link to PFC dysfunction because this condition limits his ability to control thoughts and counteract severe feelings of despair (Christie 78). Emily Brent demonstrates an absence of guilt which possibly shows reduced ACC activity because these people maintain strict moral rules and avoid feelings of emotional discord (Christie 112).

Freudian theory classifies guilt as a combination of unconscious conflicts from the id, ego and superego while neurocognitive psychology identifies the brain areas which process moral conflict and guilt. The guilt experience according to Freud results from the superego punishing the ego for violating social norms which causes anxiety as well as repression and defense mechanism usage (Freud 45). Modern neuroscience demonstrates how the ACC and PFC become active when people experience moral conflict which supports Freud's theory about biological mechanisms behind emotional responses. For instance, the hallucinations of Vera Claythorne would lead Freud to see them as repressed memories which are associated with enhanced ACC functions demonstrating the brain's handling of concealed guilt. General Macarthur's acceptance of death can be understood through both Freudian death drive theory (Thanatos) and the weakening of PFC functions which leads to ethical collapse and impulsive behavior. This alignment of Freudian psychological theory with contemporary neuroscience reveals how subconscious struggles and brain processes create an advanced comprehension of guilt's mental and neurological consequences.

3.5 Justification for a Blended Approach to Literary Analysis

The combination of Freudian and contemporary psychological theories enables a broader examination of human behavior and character motivations. Through Freudian psychoanalysis experts discover mechanisms for revealing hidden psychological processes

including defense systems that manage feelings of guilt. The framework of Freudian psychoanalysis benefits from modern psychological theories which extend it through cognitive, emotional, and neurological explanations to better understand the complex nature of human behavior.

Through this approach we can evaluate both the subconscious elements together with the mental processes and moral judgment and emotional reactions which shape mental conditions. The analysis framework creates space for investigating modern psychological approaches in literature because it generates new ways to examine enduring themes of guilt and punishment and self-destruction.

Through *And Then There Were None*, characters lose composure through unconscious memories and active attempts to explain their behaviors. The analysis of cognitive dissonance and neurocognitive psychology reveals how characters manage their internal struggle between their actions and their moral standards, but Lacanian psychoanalysis explains their fundamental disconnection from their ideal self.

Findings:

This research reveals that *And Then There Were None* goes beyond classic detective fiction norms when it emphasizes psychological guilt instead of crime solution. The novel becomes a powerful illustration of moral judgment and psychological breakdown through the application of both Freudian psychoanalysis and contemporary psychological concepts.

Guilt as the Catalyst of Psychological Disintegration

Freud's explanations about repression stands as the reason why individuals start by denying their guilt before eventually experiencing paranoia together with hallucinations and breakdowns. In the novel Vera Claythorne experiences visions of Cyril which symbolize her repressed memories while General Macarthur shows a deadly calm that indicates the death drive. The dynamic psychological force of guilt functions as an active element which propels characters toward their ultimate breakdown.

Punishment as a Psychological and Structural Mechanism

The island serves as a self-contained ethical domain that imposes inevitable punishment as it mirrors Freud's superego theory regarding justice (*Freud*56). The nursery rhyme functions as an unconscious mechanism that intensifies feelings of guilt while pushing individuals to situations of personal destruction (Christie 35).

Varied Responses to Guilt: A Psychological Spectrum

Each character in the story reflects a specific psychological reaction triggered by feelings of guilt. Vera and Armstrong face uncontrollable guilt along with complete mental breakdowns, while Brent and Wargrave demonstrate emotional detachment combined with a strict moral stance while Philip Lombard does not show any kind of regret or guilt. The variations in responses show how internal suppression together with moral principles and self-image perception determine the emotional effects of guilt.

Modern Psychology as a Complement to Freudian Analysis

The theory of cognitive dissonance explains how characters rationalize their actions

and resolve internal conflicts while neurocognitive research brings scientific underpinning to guilt. Vera and Macarthur demonstrate emotional distress and failed decision-making through the activation of anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) and prefrontal cortex (PFC) according to (Decety and Cowell 52). This perspective enriches Freudian interpretations by showing that psychological trauma has its origins in neurobiological functions.

General Conclusion

This thesis argued that *And Then There Were None* not only serves as a detective story but also it functions as an in-depth psychological examination of moral responsibility. The analysis demonstrates how guilt functions as a mental destabilizing factor through an integration of Freudian psychoanalysis with contemporary psychological theories that include cognitive dissonance, criminal psychology and neurocognitive research. The characters' internal struggles and their subsequent mental collapse can be explained through Freudian concepts about repression, the death drive and the superego. Modern psychological standpoints enhance the understanding of how people process guilt and moral shortcomings through their cognitive functions and emotional responses and neurological processes.

An interdisciplinary perspective reveals the following aspects:

1. Guilt acts as a powerful psychological mechanism, often hidden ultimately unavoidable .
2. The narrative uses punishment as more than a literary tool because it serves as a psychological process that connects with moral awareness.
3. The diverse reaction of the characters reflect the complexity of guilt across different mental frameworks .
4. Contemporary psychological research expands on Freudian theory through its examination of how emotional trauma connects to both cognitive and neurological operations.

Finally, this research establishes that Christie's novel *And Then There Were None* moves beyond its mystery genre to become a psychological work about guilt and justice-seeking unconscious motives. Classic psychoanalytic theory combines with modern psychology to provide an in-depth analysis of human behavior when individuals face moral tests.

Appendix A: “Ten Little Soldiers” Nursery Rhyme

Ten Little Soldiers

Ten little Soldier Boys went out to dine;
One choked his little self and then there were nine.

Nine little Soldier Boys sat up very late;
One overslept himself and then there were eight.

Eight little Soldier Boys traveling in Devon;
One said he'd stay there and then there were seven.

Seven little soldiers chopping up sticks
One chopped himself in halves and then there were six.

Seven little Soldier Boys playing with a hive;
A bumblebee stung one and there were five.

Five little Soldier Boys going in for law;
One got in Chancery and there were four.

Four little Soldier Boys going out to sea;
A red herring swallowed one and then there were three.

Three little Soldier boys walking in the Zoo;
A big bear hugged one and then there were two.

Two little Soldier boys sitting in the sun;
One got frizzled up and there was one.

One little Soldier Boy left all alone;
He went and hanged himself and then there were none.

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