



# Exploring the Defense Mechanisms of the Main Character in *The Accidental Tourist* After the Shooting Tragedy

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## Abstract

In the United States, numerous mass shootings have left victims and their families traumatized. Authors have been inspired to create literary works based on this phenomenon. One of these can be found in Anne Tyler's book *The Accidental Tourist*, first published in 1985. The novel narrates the tale of a father who must cope with anxiety following the death of his only child, caused by a school shooting tragedy. This study aims to find the types of defense mechanisms performed by the father as attempts to protect himself against the threat of experiencing anxious feelings from things that could trigger thoughts of his trauma. This study used Freud's theory of defense mechanisms, which includes denial, displacement, rationalization, and reaction formation. The primary data obtained from the novel in the form of dialogue will be compared to the data collected through several previous studies using a qualitative approach to be categorized according to Freud's theory of defense mechanisms. The study's findings indicate that the main character employs four defense mechanisms to maintain his image as a husband that aligns with social standards and expectations. The main character employs four defenses in five dialogues in the novel. The appearance of four defense mechanisms is also influenced by the main character's roles as a husband who struggles to meet social standards as a strong and more mature person compared to his wife. Men are expected to manage their stress on their own and avoid expressing their emotions according to the social standards surrounding masculinity. This leads men to use defense mechanisms.

**Keywords:** Denial, Displacement, Rationalization, Reaction Formation.

## Introduction

The United States continues to face an increasing shooting case. Data from Riedman shows that from 2020 to 2021, there was a very high increase in many

school shootings, 2020 with 116 school shooting cases and 2021 with 257 cases. In 2022, it kept increasing with 308 cases and remained higher in 2023, with 349 cases. In 2024, the number of cases declined, but it was still at a high level of 332 cases. In March 2025, there were 55 cases already (Riedman, 2025). One of the recent school shooting cases in 2024 happened when a 14-year-old student at Apalachee High School in Winder, Georgia, opened fire on other students on September 4, 2024.

This tragedy killed two teachers and two students (Carnes & DeLuca-Acconi, 2025). This tragedy left the victims' families and friends, as well as communities, traumatized by their terrible loss. Losing a child as a result of a shooting tragedy causes the family, in this case the parents, to experience a trauma that is different from other traumas caused by other things. Grieving over a violent death contrast with "normal" grief since it was caused by human intent or negligence (Turunen, 2014).

These events may pattern and form trauma that affects a person's life. Many people deal with loss or potentially traumatic incidents at some point in their lives. Trauma that is suppressed for too long can disrupt the daily life of the trauma sufferer and can even affect the people around them (Spytska, 2023). According to Freud, unprocessed traumatic experiences can become locked up in the unconscious mind (Toksoz, 2024). Victims of traumatic experiences may have mental and emotional symptoms over time.

Though common, these emotions might make it hard for some people to continue their lives. Psychologists can assist individuals in discovering healthy coping mechanisms for their feelings. Individuals may feel increased feelings of psychological discomfort as a result of potentially traumatic situations, or they may develop stronger defense mechanisms to avoid repeating a potentially traumatic situation (Gerber et al., 2018).

A defense mechanism is one of the most common forms of response to trauma. Defense mechanisms protect the subconscious against anxious feelings or thoughts (Di Giuseppe et al., 2024). Freud introduced this theory as a mental function, where one mental material is used to cover another mental material to avoid discomfort or pain triggered by internal or external factors (Cramer, 2015). It seeks to repress anxiety and emotional tensions and avoid confronting unpleasant truths. Defense mechanisms are unconscious mental processes that safeguard individuals from internal conflicts or undesirable events.

They are put in place when coping is exceeded and differ from one another in terms of the degree of adaptability and psychological function (Gori et al., 2020). Among the defense mechanisms proposed by Freud are denial, displacement, rationalization, and reaction formation. First is denial. In the stage of grief, denial is when a person refuses to recognize the truth of the situation during the grieving period (Moore et al., 2023). The second is displacement. Displacement is a protective strategy that allows someone to shift or direct emotions, impulses, or wants away from the original thing that may be causing anxiety or discomfort into

another object that is safer or more pleasant (Sihombing, 2024).

The next is Rationalization. This defense mechanism type refers to substitution formations as reasons to justify an action (Knoll et al., 2020). The last is reaction formation, which can occur when a person feels pushed to do or say something but ultimately does or says the opposite (Shelah & Marsih, 2022).

In society, discussions about trauma and the defense mechanisms used to prevent the repetition of trauma are difficult to convey directly in public. Trauma is commonly taboo to talk about directly. Trauma cannot be understood entirely or conveyed directly; as an option, it can be understood through storytelling (Farhan & Bhat, 2024). Storytelling offers therapeutic possibilities for interrupting traumatic reactions to unconscious detriment acquired from painful events (Dr. Imran Ali Khan et al., 2024).

Trauma survivors might externalize suffering and process complex emotions in symbolic or narrative form by reading or composing trauma literature (Procaccia & Castiglioni, 2022). Literary works can be an effective medium for depicting trauma. It is because the writer can express their thoughts, experiences, or the experiences of people around them by using characters in their narrative (Heidarizadeh, 2015). Anne Tyler's novel entitled *The Accidental Tourist* is one of the novels that conveys trauma.

This novel is classified as a trauma narrative because it has characteristics that correspond to a trauma narrative. The characteristics such as fragmentation and non-linearity, are the examples (Jaeger et al., 2014). These characteristics show that the story is delivered in disconnected parts. It contains flashbacks, repetition, and abrupt shifts. *The Accidental Tourist* offers a story about grief, trauma, and emotions from a masculine perspective. This is unique because grief and emotions are usually associated with feminine traits.

*The Accidental Tourist* by Anne Tyler tells the story of a travel guide writer named Macon. Macon lost his son as a result of a shooting tragedy at an event his son attended. A year after the shooting tragedy that made him lose his son, he separated from the wife he had been married to for more than twenty years. A few months later, Macon met Muriel, a dog trainer, and they became closer, but Macon avoided making a romantic relationship with Muriel. Several things that happened to Macon affected his perspective on relationships. It is caused by the same pattern of events in Macon's life, namely being left by his only child, who died suddenly due to a shooting tragedy.

As the main character, Macon portrays all the behaviours expected by society after the death of his child, such as being calm, tough, and not staying in grief. However, that calm behaviour hides the trauma that he continuously suppresses. It makes him unable to carry out his duties in his community fully. This case is worth visiting because men are perceived as individuals who are not as affected by tragic deaths as women. Traditional masculinity leads society to label that men must be strong, independent, and not show emotions.

The labels from society make him feel he must suppress his emotions, especially sadness and fear, because these are considered weaknesses (Genuchi et al., 2025). The primary incident that affected the main character in this story is the unexpected loss of his son as a result of a shooting incident at a restaurant where his son was attending a school activity. After his son became a victim of a shooting tragedy, Macon did not realize that he was going through many problems caused by his defense mechanism to deny that he was deeply grieving the death of his son.

What occurred to the character in this story also occurs in real life in America, where many parents lose their children unexpectedly as a result of mass shootings that occur frequently in America. This study wants to answer the types of defense mechanisms used by the main character in the novel *The Accidental Tourist* while recovering from the trauma of losing his only son as a result of a shooting, and the background of why he employed those. The primary objective of this study is to examine the character of Macon Leary in Anne Tyler's novel *The Accidental Tourist* through an understanding of Freudian defense mechanisms, thus contributing to the larger field of psychoanalytic novel analysis by providing a new perspective on the main character.

This investigation suggests that Macon Leary reveals Freudian defense mechanisms throughout the narrative. The researcher argues that the defense mechanism plays a significant role in Macon's response to trauma and shapes his relationships with other characters. Examining how these mechanisms impact his character development helps us better comprehend the evolution of his character.

## **Method**

The author wrote this paper using qualitative research. This method was chosen because it can represent the diversity of social phenomena involving human experiences (Lim, 2025). In qualitative research, providing the validity and reliability of the results is essential to building the study's credibility. To guarantee the reliability and trustworthiness of the results, the author employs thick description strategy. Thick description is a strategy includes providing complete and comprehensive explanation of the research context, subject, and finding (Creswell & Poth, 2013). This strategy helps the author to understand the nuances inherent in the research. It enables a more nuanced interpretation of the data by emphasizing the particular cultural, social, and environmental elements that influence subject's experiences.

The author utilized several material objects as data sources. The main material object was a novel by Anne Tyler titled *The Accidental Tourist* (Tyler, 1992) published by Vintage. This novel tells the story of a man who had just lost his only child when he became a victim of a shooting. After that incident, his life changed a lot, and many problems arose. To cover up the trauma and avoid things that trigger his trauma, he used several defense mechanisms. These defense mechanisms were what the researcher explored in this study. The secondary material object included several articles on Freud's defense mechanism theory. In this study, the researcher

collected data through dialogues in the main material object, namely the novel.

In collecting the necessary data, the researcher used the close reading technique. This technique allowed the researcher to find more in-depth information from the primary source, which was the novel. Close reading is a physical practice that involves optical or tactile actions and cognitive engagement in reading text attentively (Ohrvik, 2024). Using this technique, some things done to collect data were reading books repeatedly, highlighting the main character's dialogue, and annotating.

Annotating is a reading strategy that can help in understanding a complex text (Lloyd et al., 2022). Annotating involves conducting structured markings on the text, such as underlining and circling. In annotating, the author also adds notes, explanations, and comments on the main idea of the data in the novel. After the data had been collected, it was categorized according to the categories of defense mechanisms based on Freud's theory. Then, each category was examined to see how the main character applies the types of defense mechanisms in the novel.

By conducting this research method, it was possible to uncover the types of defense mechanisms used by the main character and the underlying reasons why the main character employs these types of defense mechanisms. The data collected was analyzed through Sigmund Freud's theory of defense mechanisms, which includes denial, displacement, rationalization, and reaction formation.

## **Results and Discussion**

This story in this novel takes place in Baltimore, a city in Maryland. The time setting in this story is estimated to be around the 1980s. In the novel, it is not explicitly stated that the story is set in the 1980s, but there are clues in the form of songs mentioned by the characters in the novel. The proofs are songs that were released in 1982 and 1983. They are "War is Hell" by T. G. Sheppard and "I Wonder if God Likes Country Music" by Bill Anderson and Roy Acuff.

In this novel, it is evident that Macon does not use just one defense mechanism but several types to protect himself from uncomfortable feelings. Some types of defense mechanisms appear in several different dialogues. However, several defense mechanisms appear simultaneously in one situation within the novel. The discussion on this type of defense mechanism will be explained in three subheadings. In the first and second subheadings, each will discuss one type of defense mechanism. However, the third subheading will include two types. It is because the main character uses two types of defense mechanisms simultaneously in the same situation.

### ***Denying Stage of Depression***

In this novel, there is evidence that Macon employs a defense mechanism in the form of denial in several events. It is a protective strategy used by individuals to overcome anxiety or psychological conflicts. Macon uses this denial to reject the

fact that he is struggling after the death of his child. He feels that his mourning period is over, and he can live his life again.

"You just go on your same old way like before. Your little routines and rituals, depressing habits, day after day. No comfort at all,"

"I've got a system, Sarah. You know I drive according to a system." (pp. 4)

In this part, Macon is on a trip back from vacation with his wife, Sarah. They are engaged in a debate about their conflicting behaviors following the death of their child. Sarah protests Macon's tendency to keep himself busy as if he were not grieving. "*Your little routine and ritual, depressing habit.*" This sentence illustrates Macon's actions after their child passed away: fixing and cleaning items in his house that do not require repair or cleaning. What Macon does here show symptoms similar to the denial referenced by Freud in his theory.

According to Freud's theory, denial is a protective strategy where a person refuses to accept reality. Denial, in the context of defense mechanisms, is an unconscious behavior that rejects facts that could disturb one's feelings. When someone is in denial, they struggle to accept overwhelming or stressful facts (Shelah & Marsih, 2022). During this stage, Macon distracts himself from his anxiety in this manner, but it does not resolve the issue. Sarah wants Macon to express his sadness as she feels it, so she can determine whether he is coping or grieving the death of their child.

Macon denies the truths presented by Sarah. He argues that his behavior, which Sarah has deemed strange, aligns with his principles and sees no issue. He believes that he always conducts his activities according to his system as a sign of being in good condition and not disturbed by the sadness of his child's death. In the novel, a similar thing happens in a different setting. A denial defense mechanism appears in a dialogue between Macon and his boss, Julian. The dialogue concerns a deadline for Macon's article. Macon works in a tour guidebook and is in the middle of a project for a guide for tourists who want to travel to England.

"Hey. Pal. Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Macon told him.

"I know you've been through a lot, pal----"

"I'm fine! Just fine! What could be wrong? All I need is time to get organized. I'll have the manuscript in by September fifteenth. Possibly earlier. Yes, very possibly earlier. Maybe the end of August. All right?"

Then he hangs up. (pp. 43-44)

This conversation takes place about a year after the death of her child and a few weeks after Sarah decides to separate from Macon. Macon works as a travel guidebook writer for several countries in Europe. In this dialogue, Macon's boss, Julian, requests that Macon's writing be sent to him immediately. He is kind enough

to understand Macon's situation, which is difficult following the shooting tragedy that took his child's life. However, despite experiencing discomfort that hinders his thoughts, Macon must continue writing and complete his tasks. Julian grants Macon leniency by extending the deadline for completing the writing.

Nonetheless, Macon insists that he is not in a bad condition. He feels he needs some time to organize his thoughts. He claims that he is fine and that nothing is wrong with him. Still, the tone of his voice suggests annoyance at Julian's statement, which unsettles him. His annoyance was shown in the dialogue by cutting Julian off. He did not want Julian to continue his words that touched on his current condition. The repetition of the phrase *"I'm fine! Just fine,"* in his dialogue also increasingly emphasizes that he is denying the fact that he is not in good condition.

He insists he is fine and will finish his writing as soon as possible, even before the deadline. After refuting Julian's comments, he abruptly hangs up the phone without waiting for a response. Macon got back to work earlier than Sarah after the shooting tragedy. Getting back to work earlier is a coping mechanism Macon uses as a father. This situation is typical because fathers were likelier than mothers to work at their jobs and on household projects to "keep busy," utilizing goal-oriented tasks as a coping method to manage loss (McNeil et al., 2021).

However, as a result of coping mechanisms, fathers were not performing effectively at work since they were still depressed. When a father comes back to work after his child dies, he will look like he was already dealing with the situation. However, the depression is still there and still bothering his focus. Fathers' anxiety levels appear to decrease over time after the child dies, but fathers' self-reported depression persists for 3 to 5 years after the child dies (McNeil et al., 2021). This situation happened to Macon, where he still cannot work productively, even though the tragedy occurred a year ago.

He still has trouble focusing, even though he returns to work faster to calm himself from the deep sorrow. In a different situation, Macon once again used the defense mechanism of denial to avoid discussing his condition. The situation is during dinner with Sarah at a restaurant where Macon and his family used to come whenever they had family dinners. Sarah asked Macon to have dinner with her because she wanted to talk about their divorce. On this occasion, they start arguing about why they should get a divorce.

"Sarah, I'm not muffled. I... endure. I'm trying to endure, I'm standing fast, I'm holding steady. "

"If you really think that," Sarah said, "then you're fooling yourself. You're not holding steady; you're ossified. You're encased. You're like something in a capsule. You're a dried-up kernel of a man that nothing really penetrates. Oh, Macon, it's not by chance you write those silly books telling people how to take trips without a jolt. That travelling armchair isn't just your logo; it's you."

"No, it's not," Macon said. "It's not!"

In this debate, Sarah said that all the things that Macon looked like he forced himself to be intact were not hurt by the death of their child. Sarah was fed up with Macon's self-defense, which seemed impenetrable. Sarah said that Macon was fooling himself by saying, *"Then you're fooling yourself"*. Sarah said that Macon cannot move on by saying, *"You're like something in a capsule"*. Something in a capsule means it does not want to move from its place. Sarah also mentioned that Macon was just like his book's logo, a travelling armchair, *"That travelling armchair isn't just your logo; it's you."*

Sarah wanted to say that Macon wanted to move on, but he was doing nothing to move. A travelling armchair was about someone who wants to travel somewhere but does not get out of their chair. The term 'armchair travelling' refers to the concept of experiencing and exploring distant locations without physically leaving the comfort of one's own home (Enninga, 2018). However, Macon denied everything Sarah said. He repeatedly said *"It's not"* twice. According to his thoughts, he does not close himself off. He argued that he was not defending himself but standing still as if nothing had happened. He denied that his behavior made others feel upset with him.

### ***Venting Anger on Another Target***

In this story, Macon never shows any emotions, whether sadness or anger. Even when he argued with his wife, he never showed any anger. However, the problems that kept piling up daily made him tired and reach his limit of patience. Unfortunately, he did not vent his anger on the right person, but rather on someone who had nothing to do with his problem. It shows that Macon is using the defense mechanism of displacement. This situation occurs when Macon gets angry at a clerk on the phone when he telephones The Market Basket, a small, expensive grocery store that offers delivery services.

"Not the dog biscuits, the dog food! It's food that goes to the coal chute, dammit."

"Now, look here," the clerk said. "There's no call to be rude."

"Well, I'm sorry," Macon told her, "but I just want the simplest thing, it seems to me: one puny box of Milkbone biscuits up beside my bed. If I gave Edward my buttered popcorn, it would upset his stomach. Otherwise, I wouldn't mind; it's not as if I'm hoarding it all for myself or something, but he has this sensitivity to fats, and I'm the only one in the house; it's me who has to clean up if he gets sick. I'm the only one to do it; I'm all alone; it's just me; it seems everybody's just ... fled from me, I don't know, I've lost them, I'm left standing here saying, 'Where'd they go? Where is everybody? Oh, God, what did I do that was so bad?'" (pp. 55)

In this phone conversation, the clerk asked where he should put Macon's order. Then Macon explained in great detail where the order should be placed. However, Macon's request was so complicated that it confused the clerk. Macon was angry with the clerk because he could not understand Macon's wishes. Macon said, *"I just want the simplest thing,"* when it was complicated for the clerk to put every order in different places. However, Macon's anger is not only about the worker who does not understand his wishes.

His anger was also about his current living situation at home, where he was alone. *"I'm all alone; it's just me,"*. Macon repeatedly mentioned that he was lonely. Also, he complained about why everybody left him when he needed support. *"it seems everybody's just ... fled from me, I don't know, I've lost them,"*. He kept asking where everyone had gone. *"I'm left standing here saying, 'Where'd they go? Where is everybody? Oh, God, what did I do that was so bad?'"*.

Macon vented his anger at the clerk, who was not the actual target. However, the clerk did not even know about his problem, and had no relation to his lonely feelings. This action is classified as a displacement defense mechanism. Displacement is a process of changing the target of an impulse (Baumeister et al., 1998). Displacement occurs when someone vents their emotions to someone unrelated to the problem because they cannot express them directly to the original target. Macon should have directed his anger towards those who made him feel alone.

Nevertheless, because Macon could not do that since he had been holding back his emotions all this time, his feelings were poured onto a delivery service officer who knew nothing about the problems Macon was experiencing. Macon cannot convey his emotions to the primary target, Sarah. He could never express his sadness and anger to Sarah because he always lost the argument with Sarah. He was also unable to talk to his wife about his inner struggle because he thought that doing so would only make things worse and possibly cause miscommunications and more stress in their marriage.

### ***Trying to Appear Wise and Think Rationally***

In a dialogue between Macon and Sarah, it is evident that Macon uses two types of defense mechanisms simultaneously to avoid uncomfortable feelings. Macon tries to behave wisely and think rationally to escape from the things that disturb him. Macon employed these two defense mechanisms in a dialogue with Sarah while talking on the telephone.

"I mean, if you let yourself get angry, you'll be... consumed. You'll burn up. It's not productive."

"Oh, productive! Well, goodness, no, let's not waste our time on anything unproductive."

Macon massaged his forehead. He said, "Sarah, I just feel we can't afford to have these thoughts."

"Easy for you to say."

"No, it is not easy for me to say, dammit---"

"Just shut the door, Macon. Just walk away. Just pretend it never happened. Go rearrange your tools, why don't you line up your wrenches from biggest to smallest instead of from smallest to biggest; that's always fun." (pp. 21-22)

This incident happened when Sarah called Macon to ask if she could take her blue rug from their house and move it to her new apartment. Their conversation continued until Sarah mentioned that she wanted to go to prison to meet the person who shot their child. Sarah wants to express her anger directly in front of the perpetrator. However, Macon immediately interrupted her story by saying that what Sarah was doing was in vain. In this dialogue, it can be understood that Macon is trying to calm Sarah's anger by saying that her current anger is unproductive and can harm her if she continues to be angry at the shooter of their child.

Trying to calm Sarah does not mean Macon is in a better state. In this dialogue, Macon expresses his frustration with emotional words like "*dammit*." That word shows the anxiety and frustration Macon feels when arguing with Sarah. With his patient and calm personality, Macon rarely uses harsh words, even during heated arguments with others throughout the novel. However, the use of the curse word "*dammit*." that appears in this dialogue serves to highlight the depth of his frustration, showing that even someone as calm as Macon can reach a breaking point when faced with overwhelming emotions or challenging circumstances.

This moment not only emphasizes his inner struggle but also reveals the intensity of his feelings, making it clear that his usual self-control is being tested in this situation. Reaction formation happens when someone is afraid of being criticized for something. One may act in a way that distances them from the perceived position of being criticized (Shelah & Marsih, 2022). This type of defense mechanism makes someone act contrary to what they feel is good in the eyes of others.

In other words, someone with feelings or desires that violate social or moral norms will communicate those feelings in a way that appears opposite or reversed, as if they are expressing something entirely different from what they truly feel. When Macon suppressed his anger and acted as the rational one, he behaved according to societal expectations. Nevertheless, he became more frustrated because he was unable to channel his anger easily like his wife. Macon certainly harbors anger towards the perpetrator.

Macon and Sarah's anger towards the perpetrator is very understandable because it caused their only child to die suddenly. However, when Sarah showed her anger towards the perpetrator to the point of wanting to meet him in prison, Macon became anxious because it did not align with his rational thinking. The act of calming Sarah, when Macon also harbored the same anger, made him feel that he

was wiser than Sarah because he was a husband. Calming Sarah also became an escape for Macon, who did not want to bring up the shooting tragedy that made him feel uncomfortable.

Macon tries to avoid conversations that make him feel anxious. Macon also employed the type of self-defense as a rationalization in this debate. With this, what the main character does for self-preservation appears rational, and the real motive will be locked in the subconscious. This defense mechanism arises to protect himself from uncomfortable feelings when Sarah vents her anger at their child's shooter. If Macon does not use this defense mechanism, he might get carried away and express his anger, worsening his frustration.

Rationalization happens where the ego replaces actual motives with hidden motives. This mechanism helps reduce anxiety caused by feelings or impulses that are unacceptable, both to the individual and to the surrounding society. It allows individuals to feel safe by hiding or covering up impulses that could cause shame, guilt, or tension. Macon tries to transform his feelings of anxiety and frustration into something more rational. He said that Sarah's anger was unproductive. It is done to avoid the feelings of frustration and anger that arise within her when someone brings up the shooting tragedy that took her child's life. Macon thinks Sarah's anger towards the shooter is irrational.

It would be more rational if Sarah redirected her anger to productive things. Macon's real motive is that he does not want to talk about things that make Macon re-imagine the death of his son. He avoids talking about the events that led to his son's death. From the dialogue, the way a mother and father deal with the reality of their child's death is very different. As a mother, Sarah is very expressive in showing sadness and anger. Sarah was repeatedly angry and wanted to shoot the shooter directly.

Meanwhile, Macon, as a father who lost his son, always tries to show the side of himself that thinks rationally, as if what happened to his son was supposed to be like that, and he could not do anything but accept it. Macon always hides his depression of losing his child by keeping himself busy and not wanting to talk about things related to his son's death.

## **Conclusion**

The limitation of this research was that it only explored the defense mechanisms used by the main character and the background of the emergence of these defense mechanisms, but did not explore the impact of the defense mechanisms employed by the main character. The results of this study showed that Macon, as the main character in this novel, used four types of defense mechanisms proposed by Freud. Macon used these four types because three factors were involved.

The concept of masculinity significantly influenced the factors related to the societal expectations embedded in men to a certain extent, such as disfavoring

grieving and sadness. The first factor was his background as a husband. His social role as husband made him believe that he had to be tough and not show his unstable feelings in front of the members of his community. Second, work demands required him, as the provider, to return to work quickly after grieving. Third was his relationship with his wife. Regarded as the more rational, he was expected to act amicably and patiently. His bad relationship with his wife and inability to express his anger to her made him unconsciously vent his anger on another. These factors led Macon to deny the fact that he is in a bad condition because of grief and to avoid things that make him uncomfortable.

Due to these factors, Macon developed four types of defense mechanisms. First was denial. Macon used this type in three situations. The first situation was when his wife said that he was behaving like a depressed person. Macon denied his wife's words, saying he was doing everything based on the system he usually followed. The second situation was when his boss asked him to finish the job as soon as possible, but Macon could not because of his bad condition. His boss gave him additional time to finish the job.

According to his boss, Macon's weakened condition was a result of the intense pain he was going through after losing his child not long ago. However, Macon denied his boss's presumption, claiming that his mental and physical tiredness was not the result of any personal sorrow but rather the endless demands and problems of his job. The last situation was when he was fighting with his wife. She revealed all his bad habits that arose after their child died. Macon denied what his wife stated and thought his actions were just right. Then the third was the situation where displacement was the second defense mechanism that emerged.

This type appeared when he was upset about all the bad things that had happened to him. However, he vented his anger at the grocery delivery clerk. He did so because he could not vent his anger on his real target, his wife. He was unable to talk to his wife about his inner struggle because he thought that doing so would only make things worse and possibly cause miscommunications and more stress in their marriage. The third and fourth types appeared simultaneously: rationalization and reaction formation. Both types came up when his wife brought up a topic about the shooter who killed their child.

When his wife brought up her grudge against the shooter and cursed the shooter, Macon tried to stop her. In fact, Macon also felt the same anger, but it made him feel uncomfortable. So, he felt he had to reason that cursing the perpetrator at this time was pointless. Although he also felt uncomfortable. With that, he seemed wise and could cover up his frustration. A novel with a masculine view of grief offers an intriguing subject for scholarly discussion.

This is because grief is often culturally associated with femininity. This novel theme is recommended to analyze since it still has many topics to discuss, grief from the masculine side. It is also suggested to analyze the same novel and discuss the effects of the defense mechanisms employed by Macon on his relationships with the people around him. This is because, in his journey of facing trauma, Macon

interacted a lot with the people around him, and many conflicts arose.

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