

Defense Mechanism and Psychological Transition of Main Characters in Anthony Sutcliffe's Selected Short Films: A George E. Vaillant's Perspective

Farhana Alfia Zahro^{1*}, Putri Ayiendra Dinanti²

Sastra Inggris, Bisnis dan Ilmu Sosial, Universitas Dian Nusantara, Jakarta, Indonesia^{1,2}

*Email: 311211039@mahasiswa.undira.ac.id

Submitted: 08 27, 2026 | Received: 09 04, 2026 | Published: 09 06, 2026

ABSTRACT

Defense mechanisms are unconscious psychological strategies that individuals use to manage emotional conflict and psychological distress. This study aims to identify the types of defense mechanisms displayed by the main characters in Anthony Sutcliffe's selected short films based on George E. Vaillant's hierarchy of defense mechanisms and to analyze how these mechanisms reflect the characters' psychological transitions. This research employed a qualitative descriptive method. The data were collected from monologue, actions, and visual elements in five selected short films and analyzed using Vaillant's theory of pathological, immature, neurotic, and mature defense mechanisms. The findings reveal that the characters demonstrate defense mechanisms from all four levels of Vaillant's hierarchy. Furthermore, the characters experience psychological transitions through changes in their defense mechanisms, although the extent of these changes differs according to the conflicts they face. This study concludes that defense mechanisms serve as important indicators of the characters' psychological adaptation and emotional development, contributing to a deeper understanding of psychoanalytic criticism in literary and film studies.

Keywords: Defense Mechanism, psychological transition, psychoanalysis, George E. Vaillant.

How to Cite

Zahro, F. A., & Dinanti, P. A. . (2026). Defense Mechanism and Psychological Transition of Main Characters in Anthony Sutcliffe's Selected Short Films: A George E. Vaillant's Perspective. Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora, 2(3), 3767-3786. <https://doi.org/10.63822/k31fte94>

INTRODUCTION

Human life is inevitably accompanied by experiences that challenge emotional stability, ranging from loss, grief, and loneliness to trauma and uncertainty about the future. Among these, awareness of mortality remains one of the most persistent sources of psychological distress, giving rise to anxiety. According to Barlow (2004), anxiety is a future-oriented mood state associated with preparation for possible upcoming negative events, distinguishing it from fear, which functions as an alarm response to present or imminent danger. Gordillo et al. (2007) explain that reminders of one's own death, referred to as mortality salience, can influence human thoughts and behavior by triggering death-related anxiety. Even unconsciously, individuals tend to experience heightened fear and sadness when confronted with reminders of mortality, prompting behavioral responses aimed at self-protection and survival (Huang & Hu, 2023).

Faced with such existential distress, individuals develop various psychological strategies to manage overwhelming emotions and preserve psychological well-being. This need for adaptation underlies the concept of defense mechanisms, the unconscious protective strategies that help individuals manage emotional conflicts, reduce anxiety, and maintain psychological stability when confronted with threatening or painful experiences (Cramer, 2008, as cited in Kumari, 2024). This concept was first introduced by Sigmund Freud and later refined by George E. Vaillant through a hierarchical classification of defense mechanisms into four levels of maturity. For Vaillant, these mechanisms are not merely forms of escapism but adaptive tools that strongly influence an individual's psychological well-being (Premkalal et al., 2023). Therefore, examining defense mechanisms can provide insight not only into how individuals respond to distress but also into how their psychological responses may change when they confront difficult circumstances.

These psychological processes are frequently represented in literary and cinematic works, where characters are placed in situations involving fear, loss, trauma, loneliness, and mortality. According to Prasetyanto (2016), films are mostly used to imagine social life into some set story which the plot usually based on a story or event that already appears in daily life. Particularly within the short film format, the temporal constraints demand a concise narrative and the use of potent visual symbols to depict a character's mental state. Through this medium, the audience can observe how defense mechanisms operate in a tangible manner conveyed through actions, facial expressions, and internal monologues. Consequently, analyzing a film through a psychoanalytic lens allows for a more profound understanding of how humans adapt to existential pressure within a concentrated narrative space.

This study draws on the work of Anthony Sutcliffe, an independent filmmaker whose short films have screened at twenty-seven festivals and won six awards to date (Sutcliffe, n.d.). Prior to directing, Sutcliffe spent sixteen years working in the camera department as a focus puller on television dramas such as *Casualty: The First Noel* (2016), *Midsomer Murders* (2017), and *Agatha Raisin* (2018), as well as commercials and feature films (Sutcliffe, n.d.). His transition into directing has since included a directing role on the Sky One drama *Agatha Raisin* and the BBC's *Casualty* Christmas special (Sutcliffe, n.d.). This practical grounding is complemented by a BA (Hons) in Film Studies from the University of Kent, where his study of directors such as Eisenstein and Renoir shaped a theoretical foundation that continues to inform his approach (Sutcliffe, n.d.). This combination of technical background, academic training, and mentorship positions Sutcliffe as a filmmaker whose work offers a valuable case study for examining how directorial choices shape the psychological dimensions of on-screen storytelling.

This study focuses on five short films directed by Anthony Sutcliffe: *Cope* (2025), *The Present* (2014), *Traces* (2014), *Winchester* (2013), and *The Anniversary* (2012). The five films were selected purposely because they provide a consistent and relevant corpus for examining defense mechanisms and psychological transitions. All five films are directed by the same filmmaker, allowing the study to examine different psychological conflicts while maintaining consistency in directorial authorship. Each film presents a main character who experiences a significant emotional or existential conflict involving themes such as death, grief, anxiety, loneliness, trauma, or loss. The films also contain sufficient dialogue, monologue, narration, and observable character actions to provide textual and behavioral evidence for identifying defense mechanisms, and they have received recognition through film festivals, including Academy Award-qualifying festivals.

Each selected film presents a distinct psychological conflict. *Cope* (2025) follows Liam, a man who secretly decides to end his life within six weeks while maintaining the appearance of an ordinary life. *The Present* (2014) portrays a police officer who experiences an emotional burden while delivering tragic news to grieving families. *Traces* (2014) depicts a young woman experiencing persistent anxiety concerning personal safety and mortality. *Winchester* (2013) presents a lonely housewife who develops a strong emotional attachment to a neighboring child, reflecting her emotional isolation and unmet maternal longing. *The Anniversary* (2012) portrays a young woman confronting grief, guilt, and memories associated with a significant loss. Although the narratives differ, the five films share a broader concern with characters confronting psychologically challenging circumstances, making them appropriate objects for examining how defense mechanisms function as psychological responses to distress.

Previous studies have demonstrated the applicability of George E. Vaillant's Hierarchy of Adaptation in analyzing the psychological behavior of fictional characters. Altarika and Amalia (2025) analyzed Nancy Downs in *The Craft* (1996) and found that she predominantly employed immature defenses, particularly projection, fantasy, and acting out. Mandas and Mende (2026) examined Pat and Tiffany in *Silver Linings Playbook* (2012) and found a transformation from immature and maladaptive defenses toward more adaptive defenses such as sublimation. Gümüş and Yemez (2019) examined Celie in *The Color Purple* and identified a gradual shift from immature and neurotic defenses toward more mature defenses, whereas Giordano (2023) found that Victor Frankenstein predominantly relied on immature defenses. Similarly, Arifin (2023) examined Sara Crewe in *A Little Princess* and identified defenses across three levels of Vaillant's hierarchy.

Although these studies demonstrate that Vaillant's theory is useful for identifying defense mechanisms and examining psychological transformation, most of them focus on a single film or literary work and one or a small number of central characters. Therefore, previous studies have not specifically examined how Vaillant's hierarchy can be applied comparatively across multiple short films by the same director. To address this gap, the present study examines five short films directed by Anthony Sutcliffe, allowing the study to compare different protagonists while maintaining consistency in directorial authorship. Unlike previous studies that primarily examine defense mechanisms within a single narrative, this study compares the defensive responses of protagonists across five different short-film narratives and examines how these mechanisms reflect their psychological transitions.

In this study, psychological transition refers to a change in a character's psychological condition or psychological response from an initial state to a subsequent state as the character experiences conflict,

stress, or significant events. The transition is identified by comparing the character's psychological condition at different points in the narrative rather than by describing a single emotional state. It is understood as a process involving a recognizable change, such as a movement from suicidal determination to renewed hope, from emotional burden to professional resilience, or from uncertainty about the past to acceptance of reality. The transition does not necessarily mean that a character moves from a negative condition to a positive condition, because psychological change may also involve continued distress, increased anxiety, or the weakening of an existing coping strategy. Thus, the present study extends previous applications of Vaillant's theory by providing a comparative analysis of defense mechanisms across multiple short films by one director while considering their textual and visual manifestations in different psychological situations.

Based on the background described, the researcher formulates the research questions: what types of defense mechanisms are employed by the main characters in the selected five short films based on George E. Vaillant's theory, and how do these defense mechanisms reflect the characters' psychological transition? The scope of this research focuses on analyzing the defense mechanisms employed by the protagonists in the five selected short films, limited to Vaillant's Hierarchy of Adaptation, which consists of four levels: pathological, immature, neurotic, and mature defenses. The primary data are obtained from monologue, character behavior, actions, and relevant visual elements that provide evidence of defense mechanisms and psychological changes throughout the narratives.

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it contributes to the application of Vaillant's Hierarchy of Adaptation in film studies by applying the framework comparatively across five short films directed by the same filmmaker, extending the discussion beyond individual narratives to compare defensive responses of different protagonists. The study also contributes to literary psychology and film studies by examining how defense mechanisms are manifested through dialogue, monologue, narration, character behavior, and actions, as well as how these mechanisms relate to psychological transitions in different emotional and existential situations. Practically, this study is expected to provide readers with a deeper understanding of how fictional characters respond to anxiety, emotional conflict, grief, fear, loneliness, and other difficult experiences through different defense mechanisms. The comparison of the protagonists' defensive responses may help readers recognize that individuals can employ different psychological strategies when facing different forms of distress. This research may also serve as a reference for students and future researchers interested in applying psychoanalytic theories, particularly Vaillant's Hierarchy of Adaptation, to literary and film analysis.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methodology applied in conducting the research. It starts with an explanation of the research design and the psychoanalytic approach used to guide the study. Next, it presents the data sources, including the reasons for their selection and their significance in examining the protagonist's psychological condition. The chapter also describes the data collection methods, focusing on the systematic observation of the character's actions, expressions, and monologues. In addition, it outlines the techniques used in analyzing the data, particularly how George E. Vaillant's theory was employed to interpret the findings and produce reliable results. Overall, this chapter provides a clear explanation of the

procedures and considerations underlying the methodological decisions, ensuring transparency and supporting the foundation for the following analysis.

Research Design

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method to investigate the five selected short films, *Cope* (2025), *The Present* (2014), *Traces* (2014), *Winchester* (2013), and *The Anniversary* (2012). As a part of qualitative research, this method aims to describe psychological phenomena in a detailed and accurate way, focusing on the internal experiences of the character as observed through narrative elements. Philipsen and Vernooij-Dassen (2007) state that qualitative research is the study of the nature of phenomena, which includes their quality, different manifestations, the context in which they appear, or the perspectives from which they can be perceived, but excludes their range, frequency, and place in an objectively determined chain of cause and effect. It involves collecting data in naturalistic settings, performing inductive analysis from specific details to broader themes, and interpreting the meaning of the data. This allows the researcher to delve deeply into the intricacies of human mental states and interactions, providing a deeper understanding of how an individual manages existential crises and emotional transitions.

In analyzing the five selected films, the study employs a qualitative descriptive method to investigate how defense mechanisms are reflected through the protagonist's actions and inner monologues. This method allows the researcher to present a clear and detailed explanation of how these mechanisms are subtly portrayed in the films through speech, behavior, and decision-making. The analysis process began with collecting data from the films and organizing it into categories according to George E. Vaillant's hierarchy of defense mechanisms. Afterward, the categorized data were examined to identify patterns associated with the protagonist's progression from immature to mature psychological conditions. Finally, the findings were interpreted to explain how these psychological elements contribute to and strengthen the character's journey toward acceptance.

Source of Data

The data for this research were obtained from five short films directed by Anthony Sutcliffe: *The Anniversary* (2012), *Winchester* (2013), *The Present* (2014), *Traces* (2014), and *Cope* (2025). Anthony Sutcliffe was selected as the director because his short films consistently portray characters experiencing psychological tension, emotional conflict, fear, grief, loss, and other difficult situations that are relevant to the study of defense mechanisms. The five films were selected based on their relevance to the research focus, particularly their depiction of characters responding to anxiety through dialogue, visual representations, behavior, memories, and internal monologues. These elements provide observable textual and visual evidence for identifying and interpreting the characters' use of defense mechanisms based on George E. Vaillant's hierarchy. Therefore, the five films were selected because they provide varied representations of psychological responses to anxiety while maintaining a consistent directorial context, allowing the researcher to examine defense mechanisms across different narrative situations.



Figure 1. Poster of *Cope* (2025)
(Source: Anthony Sutcliffe, 2025)

Among the selected films, *Cope* (2025), with a duration of 6 minutes and 40 seconds, serves as the primary focus of the analysis because it provides the most extensive portrayal of a protagonist's psychological struggle. Written and directed by Anthony Sutcliffe, the film stars Joe Sowerbutts as Liam, whose performance provides substantial verbal and behavioral evidence for examining psychological defense mechanisms. The narrative follows Liam as he lives with a self-imposed deadline for death, creating continuous psychological tension and allowing the study to examine how he responds to anxiety and emotional conflict. The film was therefore selected as the central object because its narrative most directly corresponds to the research focus on defense mechanisms used in response to anxiety. The other four films function as supporting data by providing comparable representations of psychological responses in different emotional and situational contexts.



Figure 2. Poster of *The Present* (2014)
(Source: Anthony Sutcliffe, 2014)

The Present (2014), with a duration of 2 minutes and 44 seconds, is a short film written and directed by Anthony Sutcliffe and featuring Eiry Thomas. The film portrays a police officer who is required to deliver tragic news, creating a conflict between her professional responsibilities and the emotional burden of the situation. Her restrained behavior and emotional responses provide relevant textual and visual evidence for examining how anxiety and distress are managed within a professional context. The film was selected because it presents a different form of psychological tension, in which the protagonist must maintain composure while dealing with an emotionally difficult situation. Thus, *The Present* provides supporting evidence for examining defense mechanisms in response to emotional distress and complements the psychological conflicts portrayed in the other selected films.



Figure 3. Poster of *Traces* (2014)
(Source: Anthony Sutcliffe, 2014)

Traces (2014), with a duration of 4 minutes and 9 seconds, is a short film written and directed by Anthony Sutcliffe and featuring Heledd Gwynn. The film portrays a young woman who becomes increasingly concerned about the possibility of danger after being influenced by news and true-crime media. Her concern leads her to prepare for possible harm by recording her outfits and leaving traces of DNA that could help identify her if something happens to her. These behaviors are relevant to the research because they illustrate how anxiety about potential future danger can influence a character's thoughts and actions. Therefore, *Traces* was selected because it provides behavioral and visual evidence for examining psychological responses to anticipated threats and complements the analysis of anxiety-related defenses in the other films.



Figure 4. Poster of *Winchester* (2013)
(Source: Anthony Sutcliffe, 2013)

Winchester (2013), with a duration of 3 minutes and 31 seconds, is a short film written by Barton Young and directed by Anthony Sutcliffe, starring Eiry Thomas as Liz. The film portrays Liz, a lonely housewife who reflects on her emotional attachment to her neighbor's six-year-old daughter, Amy, allowing the narrative to explore motherhood, affection, loneliness, and emotional attachment. These psychological and emotional conflicts are relevant to the present study because they provide a context in which the protagonist's thoughts and behaviors can be examined as responses to internal emotional tension. The film was selected because its reflective narrative and characterization provide textual and visual evidence for identifying defense mechanisms within a different type of emotional conflict. Thus, *Winchester* broadens the research data by presenting psychological responses that differ from the anxiety surrounding death and loss depicted in the other films.



Figure 5. Poster of *The Anniversary* (2012)

(Source: Anthony Sutcliffe, 2012)

The Anniversary (2012), with a duration of 3 minutes and 7 seconds, is a short film directed by Anthony Sutcliffe and written by Paul Kiff. The film follows a woman who reflects on her companion's death and revisits the events surrounding the tragedy, experiencing sadness, guilt, regret, and uncertainty. Her memories and reflections provide relevant textual and visual material for examining how a character processes emotionally distressing experiences and responds to anxiety associated with loss. The film was selected because its focus on grief, guilt, and the reinterpretation of a traumatic event provides a distinct psychological context for identifying defense mechanisms. Consequently, *The Anniversary* complements the other selected films by contributing evidence of defensive responses to bereavement and unresolved emotional conflict.

Data

The data in this research consist of selected scenes and dialogues from five short films, namely *Cope* (2025), *The Present* (2014), *Traces* (2014), *Winchester* (2013), and *The Anniversary* (2012). The data include verbal elements, such as character dialogues and internal expressions, as well as non-verbal elements, including actions, facial expressions, and interactions between characters. These elements are analyzed to identify the presence of psychological defense mechanisms as reflected in the characters' behaviors and narrative development. The analysis is conducted using George E. Vaillant's hierarchy of defense mechanisms to examine how different levels of defenses are represented and how they contribute to the characters' psychological responses to stress and conflict. The secondary data consist of supporting sources that strengthen the analysis and provide the theoretical foundation for this research, including books, journal articles, theses, dissertations, and other credible academic publications discussing psychoanalysis, Vaillant's hierarchy, psychological transition, film studies, and previous related research.

Technique for Collecting Data

The process of collecting qualitative data involves gathering and organizing information that enables researchers to understand a phenomenon in depth within its natural context. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative studies rely on non-numerical data, such as written texts, spoken language, documents, and audiovisual materials, to explore meanings and human experiences. The selection of data sources depends on the objectives and characteristics of the study. In this research, the primary data were obtained from audiovisual materials, specifically five short films directed by Anthony Sutcliffe. Such data provide detailed verbal and visual evidence that supports a comprehensive interpretation of the protagonists'

psychological defense mechanisms (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data for this research were collected through the following procedures: viewing the selected films repeatedly to gain a thorough understanding of the narratives, character development, and psychological situations experienced by the protagonists; selecting relevant evidence by carefully identifying and recording scenes, dialogues, internal monologues, facial expressions, and character behaviors that reflected psychological conflicts and defense mechanisms; documenting the data by capturing screenshots and transcribing important dialogues and monologues to preserve both visual and textual evidence for subsequent analysis; organizing the collected data by grouping them according to Vaillant's hierarchy of defense mechanisms; and preparing the data for analysis by systematically arranging and interpreting the collected evidence to examine how the protagonists employ defense mechanisms in response to anxiety and psychological conflict throughout the selected films.

Technique of Analyzing Data

Data analysis in qualitative research refers to the process of organizing, examining, and interpreting collected data to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives of the study. Rather than focusing on numerical measurement, qualitative data analysis emphasizes identifying patterns, constructing meanings, and explaining the relationships found within the data. This process allows researchers to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being investigated by interpreting both verbal and visual evidence in its context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, the analysis was guided by George E. Vaillant's hierarchy of defense mechanisms. The following procedures were employed to analyze the data: selecting relevant data by reviewing the collected dialogues, internal monologues, character behaviors, facial expressions, and visual representations to identify scenes that reflected psychological defense mechanisms; classifying the data according to Vaillant's hierarchy consisting of pathological, immature, neurotic, and mature defenses; interpreting the defense mechanisms by analyzing each selected scene and dialogue to determine how the identified defense mechanisms functioned in response to the protagonists' anxiety, emotional conflicts, and stressful situations; examining psychological transitions by comparing the characters' psychological conditions at different stages of each narrative, identifying the initial and subsequent psychological conditions and examining the events and defensive responses associated with the change; and interpreting the direction of transition by examining whether the character showed greater emotional adjustment, continued difficulty, increased anxiety, acceptance of reality, or another identifiable psychological condition. Through these analytical procedures, the researcher was able to examine the manifestation of defense mechanisms systematically while providing a comprehensive interpretation of the protagonists' psychological responses across Anthony Sutcliffe's selected short films. The use of Vaillant's hierarchy also enabled the findings to be organized according to different levels of defensive functioning, thereby addressing the research objectives in a structured and theoretically grounded manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings of the study and analyzes the defense mechanisms and psychological transition of the main characters in Anthony Sutcliffe's selected short films based on George E. Vaillant's hierarchy of defense mechanisms. The analysis focuses on identifying the types of defense mechanisms displayed by the characters and examining how these mechanisms reflect their responses to

psychological conflict and emotional distress. By analyzing selected scenes, dialogues, and visual elements, this chapter explores the four levels of defense mechanisms proposed by Vaillant: pathological, immature, neurotic, and mature defenses. The discussion also examines the main characters' psychological transition as reflected in the progression of their defense mechanisms throughout the narratives. Through this analysis, the study provides a deeper understanding of how the films portray psychological adaptation and coping processes in response to life's challenges.

Findings

Defense Mechanisms in Five Selected Short Films by Anthony Sutcliffe

Based on the observation and data analysis, the researcher identified various defense mechanisms displayed by the main characters in Anthony Sutcliffe's selected short films. These defense mechanisms were classified according to George E. Vaillant's hierarchy of defense mechanisms, which consists of pathological, immature, neurotic, and mature defenses. The analysis was conducted by examining the characters' dialogues, behaviors, facial expressions, and responses to psychological conflicts presented throughout the films. Each identified defense mechanism reflects the characters' unconscious attempts to cope with emotional distress and internal conflict. The overall findings of the identified defense mechanisms are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Findings of Defense Mechanisms in Selected Short Films by Anthony Sutcliffe

No	Title of Film	Character	Level of Defense Mechanism	Type of Defense Mechanism	Evidence
1	Cope (2025)	Liam	Level III (Neurotic)	Intellectualization	Monologue (01:04), (03:22), (03:37)
			Level IV (Mature)	Anticipation	Monologue (00:16), (00:43), (02:51), (04:21); Figure 4.1
			Level IV (Mature)	Suppression	Monologue (00:24), (02:02), (02:06), (02:25)
			Level IV (Mature)	Humor	Monologue (01:31), (01:14); Figures 4.2, 4.3
2	The Present (2014)	Police Officer	Level III (Neurotic)	Intellectualization	Monologue (00:45), (00:57)
			Level IV (Mature)	Suppression	Monologue (00:19)
3	Traces (2014)	Unnamed Female Protagonist	Level IV (Mature)	Anticipation	Monologue (00:31), (01:36)
			Level III (Neurotic)	Intellectualization	Monologue (01:42)
			Level IV (Mature)	Anticipation	Monologue (00:40), (02:01), (03:09), (03:35)
4	Winchester (2013)	Liz	Level IV (Mature)	Humor	Monologue (02:20), (03:09)
			Level II (Immature)	Fantasy	Monologue (01:36), (02:04)
5	The Anniversary (2012)	Sam's Girlfriend	Level III (Neurotic)	Displacement	Monologue (02:14), (02:36)
			Level I (Pathological)	Denial	Monologue (00:33), (00:52), (01:55)
			Level III (Neurotic)	Intellectualization	Monologue (01:31), (02:18)
			Total		37

(Source: Data Analysis, 2026)

As shown in Table 1, the selected short films present a variety of defense mechanisms across the four levels proposed by Vaillant. Neurotic and mature defenses appear more frequently than pathological defenses, indicating that most characters attempt to manage psychological conflict through relatively adaptive coping strategies despite experiencing emotional difficulties. However, several characters also display immature defenses in situations involving fear, guilt, or unresolved trauma. The differences in the use of defense mechanisms demonstrate that each character responds to psychological challenges in unique ways depending on the context of the conflict. These findings provide the basis for a more detailed discussion of the characters' defense mechanisms in the following section.

Psychological Transitions in Five Selected Short Films by Anthony Sutcliffe

In response to the second research question, the data analysis shows that the characters experience psychological transitions through the development of their defense mechanisms. These transitions are reflected in the ways the characters respond to emotional conflicts, traumatic experiences, and interpersonal challenges throughout the selected short films. By examining the progression of each character's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, the researcher identified changes in the level of defense mechanisms they employed over time. Some characters remained dependent on less adaptive defenses, while others gradually demonstrated more mature ways of coping with psychological distress. The overall findings regarding the characters' psychological transitions are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Findings of Psychological Transition in Selected Short Films by Anthony Sutcliffe

No	Title of Film	Character	Initial Psychological Condition	Psychological Transition	Subsequent Psychological Condition
1	Cope (2025)	Liam	Suicidal determination and certainty about ending his life	Meaningful experiences cause Liam to repeatedly reconsider and postpone his planned death, making him increasingly open to continuing his life	Renewed hope and openness to continuing life
2	The Present (2014)	Female Police Officer	Emotional burden caused by repeatedly delivering tragic news to grieving families	Through anticipation, suppression, and intellectualization, she gradually develops greater emotional control while continuing to perform her professional responsibilities	Professional resilience and greater emotional regulation
3	Traces (2014)	Unnamed Female Protagonist	Cautious awareness of possible danger	Repeated preparation for hypothetical threats and continued focus on crime, surveillance, and victimization gradually intensify her preoccupation with danger	Persistent anxiety and expectation of becoming a victim
4	Winchester (2013)	Liz	Idealized attachment to Amy as a substitute for the motherhood she desires	The imagined maternal relationship becomes unsustainable when Liz confronts the reality of Amy's family leaving and the circumstances preventing her	Greater awareness of her loneliness and the reality of her circumstances

5	The Anniversary (2012)	Sam's Girlfriend	Uncertainty and difficulty accepting the reality of Sam's death	from having a child The protagonist gradually shifts from denying or questioning the emotional implications of the loss toward examining the event through logical reflection and factual understanding	Greater acceptance of the reality of Sam's death while continuing to experience grief
---	------------------------	------------------	---	--	---

(Source: Data Analysis, 2026)

Table 2 demonstrates that the psychological transitions represented in the five selected short films involve identifiable changes between initial and subsequent psychological conditions. The transitions do not follow a single direction or always represent movement from a negative condition to a positive one. In *Cope*, Liam moves from suicidal determination toward renewed hope, while the protagonist of *The Present* develops from emotional burden toward greater professional resilience. In contrast, *Traces* presents a movement from cautious awareness toward persistent anxiety, while *Winchester* shows the weakening of an imagined maternal reality as Liz becomes more aware of her actual circumstances. Finally, *The Anniversary* portrays a movement from uncertainty surrounding Sam's death toward greater acceptance of reality. These findings indicate that psychological transition can involve improvement, increased psychological difficulty, or a change in the character's way of understanding and responding to a conflict.

Discussion

Defense Mechanisms in *Cope* (2025), *The Present* (2014), *Traces* (2014), *Winchester* (2013), and *The Anniversary* (2012)

This section discusses the defense mechanisms portrayed by the protagonists in Anthony Sutcliffe's selected short films. The analysis applies George E. Vaillant's Hierarchy of Defense Mechanisms to identify the types of defense mechanisms employed by the protagonists in response to various psychological conflicts and emotionally challenging situations. The findings reveal that the protagonists utilize defense mechanisms from four hierarchical levels, including pathological, immature, neurotic, and mature defenses, depending on the nature of the conflicts they experience.

Defense Mechanisms in *Cope* (2025)

The analysis of *Cope* (2025) reveals that the protagonist, Liam, employs several defense mechanisms to cope with the emotional burden of his decision to end his life. Based on George E. Vaillant's hierarchy of defense mechanisms, the defenses identified in the film include anticipation, suppression, intellectualization, and humor. These mechanisms help Liam manage the anxiety, fear, and uncertainty associated with his approaching death while maintaining his daily routines and social relationships. Rather than avoiding reality, Liam consciously prepares himself for the consequences of his decision and attempts to preserve emotional stability throughout the remaining weeks of his life. The predominance of mature and neurotic defense mechanisms suggests that Liam responds to psychological distress through relatively constructive forms of adaptation rather than impulsive or reality-distorting behaviors. According to Vaillant's theory, mature defenses enable individuals to regulate emotional conflict while maintaining an accurate perception of reality and effective interpersonal functioning.

Anticipation is the most dominant defense mechanism employed by Liam throughout the film.

According to Di Giuseppe and Perry (2021), anticipation involves preparing for future emotional distress by considering realistic outcomes and mentally rehearsing responses to future difficulties. Liam demonstrates this defense through his careful planning of the remaining six weeks of his life. He establishes a specific date for his death and organizes his activities around the limited time he believes he has left. Rather than avoiding thoughts about his future, Liam repeatedly confronts them and attempts to prepare himself emotionally for the consequences of his decision. Through this preparation, anticipation allows him to gain a sense of control over an uncertain and frightening future. His repeated use of anticipation reveals that his decision to end his life is not an impulsive reaction but a carefully considered process. However, when the deadline arrives, he chooses to postpone his decision and establishes another six-week countdown instead. This recurring cycle suggests that anticipation serves as a mature defense mechanism that helps him cope with ongoing psychological distress.

Suppression is another defense mechanism identified in the film. Di Giuseppe and Perry (2021) explain that suppression involves consciously postponing attention to distressing thoughts or emotions until a more appropriate time. Despite being fully aware of his intention to end his life, Liam continues to carry out his daily responsibilities and interact with those around him as though nothing has changed. He chooses not to reveal his emotional struggles to his wife or the people around him, allowing him to maintain a sense of normality. By temporarily setting aside his distress, Liam is able to function in his everyday life while privately dealing with his internal conflict. His use of suppression demonstrates his determination to prevent his emotional struggles from disrupting the lives of those around him, although it also reflects his tendency to cope with emotional pain in isolation.

Liam also demonstrates intellectualization as a way of coping with his emotional distress. According to Di Giuseppe and Perry (2021), intellectualization involves relying on abstract thinking or logical reasoning to avoid disturbing emotions. Throughout the film, Liam often reflects on life, death, and his personal experiences in a detached and analytical manner. Instead of openly expressing fear, sadness, or despair, he evaluates his circumstances through observation and reflection. This allows him to create emotional distance from the painful reality of his situation and reduces the intensity of the feelings associated with his planned death. His reflections emphasize explanation instead of emotional expression, allowing him to discuss death as though it were a problem to be analyzed rather than a deeply personal experience.

The final defense mechanism identified in *Cope* (2025) is humor. Humor is considered one of the most adaptive defense mechanisms because it allows individuals to acknowledge difficult realities while reducing emotional tension (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021). Liam occasionally responds to his circumstances with ironic or light-hearted remarks regarding his impending death. Rather than completely avoiding the subject, he uses humor to make his situation feel less overwhelming. Through humor, Liam is able to confront his fears while maintaining a degree of psychological stability.

Defense Mechanisms in *The Present* (2014)

The analysis of *The Present* (2014) reveals that the protagonist employs several defense mechanisms while carrying out the emotionally demanding task of delivering tragic news to families. Based on George E. Vaillant's hierarchy of defense mechanisms, the defense mechanisms identified in the film are suppression, anticipation, and intellectualization. These mechanisms enable the protagonist to perform

her professional responsibilities while managing the emotional strain associated with her work. The predominance of mature defenses suggests that the protagonist is generally able to cope with the emotional demands of her profession in an adaptive manner.

Suppression is one of the most prominent defense mechanisms displayed in the film. According to Di Giuseppe and Perry (2021), suppression involves consciously postponing attention to disturbing thoughts, feelings, or experiences in order to focus on more immediate responsibilities. Throughout the film, the protagonist demonstrates an awareness of the pain and grief experienced by the families she visits. However, she deliberately sets aside her own emotional reactions in order to fulfill her duty. Rather than becoming overwhelmed by the sorrow surrounding her, she maintains her composure and continues carrying out her responsibilities. This defense allows her to function effectively despite repeatedly confronting emotionally distressing situations.

The protagonist also demonstrates anticipation. Di Giuseppe and Perry (2021) describe anticipation as preparing for future emotional distress by considering possible outcomes and mentally rehearsing responses to them. Before delivering the devastating news, the officer appears mentally prepared for the reactions she may encounter from family members. She understands that her arrival will permanently alter the lives of those receiving the information and anticipates the emotional consequences that will follow. By preparing herself for these difficult encounters, she is able to approach the situation with greater emotional control and professionalism.

Another defense mechanism identified in the film is intellectualization. According to Di Giuseppe and Perry (2021), intellectualization involves relying on abstract thinking or logical reasoning to avoid disturbing emotions. Rather than responding emotionally to stressful experiences, the protagonist focuses on facts, procedures, or rational explanations to reduce psychological discomfort. Through this cognitive distancing, she is able to remain emotionally composed while continuing her duty.

Defense Mechanisms in *Traces* (2014)

The analysis of *Traces* (2014) reveals that the protagonist employs several defense mechanisms in response to her persistent fear of crime, personal harm, and mortality. Based on George E. Vaillant's hierarchy of defense mechanisms, the defense mechanisms identified in the film are anticipation, intellectualization, and humor. These defenses allow her to manage anxiety by transforming uncertain fears into situations that appear more predictable and controllable.

Anticipation is the most dominant defense mechanism employed by the protagonist throughout the film. According to Di Giuseppe and Perry (2021), anticipation involves preparing for future emotional distress by considering realistic possibilities and mentally rehearsing responses to potential difficulties. The protagonist constantly imagines situations in which she may become a victim of crime or disappear unexpectedly. She worries about how authorities would identify her if she went missing and intentionally leaves a freshly used razor in her bathroom to provide fresh DNA for identification. She also pays close attention to CCTV cameras and deliberately positions herself so they can record her appearance. Through these actions, she attempts to prepare for possible future tragedies and reduce the uncertainty associated with them.

The film also demonstrates intellectualization as one of the protagonist's primary coping strategies. Di Giuseppe and Perry (2021) explain that intellectualization involves relying on logical reasoning and

abstract thinking to avoid disturbing emotions. Instead of directly expressing fear or anxiety, the protagonist discusses issues such as missing-person reports, forensic identification, DNA evidence, and surveillance footage. She repeatedly describes her behavior as being "realistic" rather than irrational or obsessive. By focusing on practical and procedural details, she distances herself from the emotional impact of her fears and views them through a more analytical perspective.

Another defense mechanism identified in the film is humor. Humor allows individuals to acknowledge stressful realities while reducing emotional tension through amusement or irony. Throughout her narration, the protagonist occasionally makes light-hearted comments about her unusual behavior. These moments of humor help reduce the emotional intensity of her anxiety and make her fears more manageable, demonstrating humor as a mature defense mechanism because the protagonist remains aware of the reality of her fears while using wit to regulate emotional discomfort (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021).

Defense Mechanisms in Winchester (2013)

The analysis of *Winchester* (2013) reveals that the protagonist, Liz, employs defense mechanisms to cope with her loneliness, emotional dependence, and unfulfilled desire for motherhood. Based on George E. Vaillant's hierarchy of defense mechanisms, the defense mechanisms identified in the film are fantasy and displacement. These defenses allow Liz to temporarily manage her emotional distress while avoiding direct confrontation with the realities of her situation.

Fantasy is the most dominant defense mechanism identified in the film. According to Di Giuseppe and Perry (2021), fantasy involves dealing with emotional conflicts or stressors through excessive daydreaming or imagination rather than through direct action or real-life problem solving. Throughout the film, Liz constructs an idealized image of motherhood and her relationship with Amy. She recalls feelings associated with pregnancy, maternal love, and caring for a child, speaking about Amy in a deeply personal and emotional manner. Her descriptions suggest that she has created an imagined emotional reality that fulfills her desire to experience motherhood. By focusing on this idealized vision, Liz is able to temporarily escape the loneliness and disappointment she experiences in her actual life. However, this defense does not address the underlying source of her distress and instead provides only temporary emotional comfort.

The second defense mechanism identified in the film is displacement. According to Di Giuseppe and Perry (2021), displacement involves redirecting emotions from their original source toward a less threatening object or person. In the film, Liz directs her emotional needs and maternal affection toward Amy rather than confronting the deeper feelings of loneliness and dissatisfaction within her own life. By transferring these feelings onto Amy, Liz is able to experience a sense of emotional fulfillment, even though the underlying issues remain unresolved.

Defense Mechanisms in The Anniversary (2012)

The analysis of *The Anniversary* (2012) reveals that the protagonist employs defense mechanisms to cope with the grief and emotional distress caused by the death of her companion, Sam. Based on George E. Vaillant's hierarchy of defense mechanisms, the defense mechanisms identified in the film are denial and intellectualization. These defenses help the protagonist manage the painful emotions associated with loss while attempting to make sense of the traumatic experience.

Denial is one of the defense mechanisms displayed by the protagonist throughout the film.

According to Di Giuseppe and Perry (2021), denial involves refusing to fully acknowledge aspects of external reality or personal experience that may be distressing or difficult to accept. Although the police officially classified Sam's death as an accident, the protagonist struggles to accept this explanation. Her continued questioning of the event suggests difficulty in fully accepting the reality of what happened. In addition, she recalls believing that Sam might still be alive immediately after the fall, despite the severity of the situation. These responses indicate her attempt to protect herself from the overwhelming emotional impact of the loss.

The protagonist also demonstrates intellectualization as a way of coping with grief. According to Di Giuseppe and Perry (2021), intellectualization involves relying on logical reasoning or analytical thinking to avoid disturbing emotions. Rather than focusing solely on her sadness, she repeatedly examines the details surrounding Sam's death. She questions why he remained silent as he fell and considers whether the incident could truly have been accidental. She also reflects on the criticism she received from others regarding not keeping him on a lead. By concentrating on explanations and factual details, she creates a degree of emotional distance from the painful feelings associated with the loss, allowing her to process the event through reasoning rather than becoming completely overwhelmed by grief.

Psychological Transition Reflected by Defense Mechanism in the Five Selected Short Films

This section discusses how the defense mechanisms identified in the five selected short films reflect the psychological condition and level of adaptation of the main characters. According to Vaillant's hierarchy, defense mechanisms can be classified into four levels: pathological, immature, neurotic, and mature defenses. The progression from lower-level defenses to higher-level defenses generally reflects a greater capacity to cope with emotional conflicts and stressful situations in an adaptive manner. Therefore, the psychological transition of each character can be examined through the dominant defense mechanisms they employ and whether their coping strategies demonstrate movement toward more adaptive levels of functioning.

From Suicidal Determination to Renewed Hope in *Cope* (2025)

At the beginning of *Cope* (2025), Liam demonstrates a strong determination to end his life. He sets a deadline six weeks in advance and organizes his daily activities around the date he has chosen. Rather than treating the decision as a passing thought, he carefully plans for it and mentally prepares himself for what he believes will be the end of his life. This behavior reflects his belief that suicide is the only solution to the emotional struggles he is experiencing. Although Liam continues to fulfill his responsibilities as a husband, father, and friend, his actions show that he is firmly committed to carrying out his plan.

Toward the end of the film, Liam reaches the day he has planned for his suicide but ultimately decides not to carry it out. He explains that whenever something wondrous, beautiful, or silly happens, it makes him realize that he does not want to die, and he marks another six-week deadline on his calendar. This moment marks a psychological transition from suicidal determination to renewed hope, as he chooses to give himself more time instead of acting on his original plan. The transition is reflected not in a shift between different levels of defense mechanisms but in the continued use of mature defenses that enables Liam to move from certainty about death toward openness to continuing life, illustrating the adaptive function of mature defenses in promoting psychological adjustment under emotional distress (Di Giuseppe

& Perry, 2021).

From Emotional Burden to Professional Resilience in *The Present* (2014)

At the beginning of *The Present* (2014), the protagonist experiences a significant emotional burden as part of her profession as a police officer. She understands that every visit she makes will permanently change the lives of the families receiving the news of a loved one's death. This responsibility creates psychological pressure because she must repeatedly witness intense grief and emotional suffering. At this stage, the protagonist is primarily characterized by the emotional burden associated with her professional duty.

As the narrative progresses, the protagonist gradually develops greater emotional control through the defense mechanisms identified in the previous section. Anticipation enables her to mentally prepare for the reactions she expects from the families, while suppression allows her to set aside her own emotions in order to complete her responsibilities. Intellectualization further supports this process by encouraging her to focus on the procedural aspects of her work rather than becoming emotionally overwhelmed. Together, these defense mechanisms help her cope with the psychological demands of repeatedly delivering tragic news. As a result, she becomes increasingly capable of balancing empathy with professional responsibility.

By the end of the film, the protagonist demonstrates professional resilience despite continuing to face emotionally challenging situations. Although her defense mechanisms remain predominantly within the mature level of Vaillant's hierarchy throughout the narrative, their continued use facilitates her psychological transition from emotional burden to professional resilience, reflecting the adaptive function of mature defenses in promoting effective emotional regulation under stressful circumstances (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021).

From Being Cautious to Living in Anxiety in *Traces* (2014)

At the beginning of *Traces* (2014), the protagonist demonstrates an awareness of the potential dangers that may occur in everyday life. Rather than ignoring reports of crime and missing-person cases, she pays close attention to them and believes that being prepared is a realistic response to the uncertainty of the world around her. This awareness initially appears to reflect a reasonable concern for personal safety rather than excessive fear.

The protagonist's psychological transition is reflected through the defense mechanisms identified, particularly anticipation, intellectualization, and humor. Anticipation is evident in her repeated preparations for situations in which she imagines herself becoming a victim of crime, such as ensuring that investigators would be able to identify her if she disappeared. At the same time, intellectualization enables her to justify these behaviors by focusing on logical explanations, forensic procedures, and surveillance systems rather than directly acknowledging her fear. Although she occasionally uses humor by making ironic comments about her unusual habits, these moments only provide temporary emotional relief.

By the end of the film, the protagonist's awareness of potential danger has developed into persistent anxiety as her narration increasingly focuses on hypothetical situations involving disappearance, victimization, and death. Unlike the opening scene, where she merely introduces her cautious personality, this moment demonstrates that her awareness has evolved into a habitual expectation that she could become a victim at any time, causing ordinary activities to be shaped by persistent fear. *Traces* portrays a

psychological transition from cautious awareness to persistent anxiety, demonstrating that the continued use of defensive strategies does not always result in improved psychological adjustment and may, under certain circumstances, reinforce the distress they are intended to manage.

From Dreaming of Motherhood to Facing Reality in Winchester (2013)

At the beginning of *Winchester* (2013), Liz creates an idealized emotional world in which Amy, her neighbor's daughter, fulfills the role of the child she has always wanted. Although Amy is not her own daughter, Liz gradually develops a deep emotional attachment that allows her to imagine the experience of motherhood. Through her narration, Liz presents ordinary moments as emotionally meaningful, suggesting that Amy has become the emotional center of the family she wishes she had. Rather than confronting the loneliness and disappointment in her own life, Liz becomes increasingly invested in this imagined reality.

Liz's psychological transition is reflected through the defense mechanisms of fantasy and displacement. Fantasy enables her to construct an imagined reality in which she experiences the emotional satisfaction of being a mother without confronting the circumstances that prevent her from achieving it. At the same time, displacement allows her to redirect her feelings of longing and disappointment toward Amy instead of addressing the true source of her emotional distress. Together, these defense mechanisms provide temporary comfort by allowing Liz to avoid the painful reality of her loneliness.

By the end of the film, Liz is forced to confront the reality that the relationship she has relied upon cannot fulfill her desire for motherhood permanently. She learns that Amy's family is moving to Winchester and reveals that her husband believes they are too old to have a child of their own, exposing the deeper source of her emotional suffering. These realizations cause the imagined maternal role she has created to collapse, leaving her unable to maintain the emotional world that had previously comforted her. *Winchester* portrays a psychological transition from an idealized experience of motherhood toward a greater awareness of reality and loneliness.

From Uncertainty About the Past to Acceptance of Reality in The Anniversary (2012)

At the beginning of *The Anniversary* (2012), the protagonist experiences a psychological state characterized by uncertainty following the death of her companion, Sam. Rather than distancing herself from the painful memory, she revisits the location where the accident occurred and mentally reconstructs the events of that day, suggesting that she remains emotionally attached to the loss. Her reflections reveal that she continues searching for meaning in the tragedy instead of fully accepting it. At this stage, her psychological condition is dominated by uncertainty and an inability to accept reality completely.

The protagonist's psychological transition is reflected through the defense mechanisms of denial and intellectualization. Initially, denial allows her to resist the emotional implications of Sam's death because accepting them would intensify the pain caused by her loss. As the narrative progresses, however, she increasingly relies on intellectualization by examining the incident through logical reasoning and careful reflection rather than emotional reactions. Instead of rejecting reality entirely, she begins to analyze Sam's behavior before the accident, the circumstances surrounding his death, and the events that followed. This gradual shift from denial to intellectualization demonstrates movement toward a more adaptive way of coping.

By the end of the film, the protagonist begins to accept the reality of Sam's death, although the grief

remains. She acknowledges that the hope she once held onto immediately after the accident can no longer alter what has happened. Rather than questioning whether Sam might have survived, she openly recognizes the finality of his death. Her focus has shifted from searching for alternative explanations to understanding Sam's emotional struggles with compassion and acceptance. *The Anniversary* portrays a psychological transition from uncertainty about the past toward greater acceptance of the reality of Sam's death, demonstrating a change from resisting the implications of the loss toward acknowledging and processing its reality.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the defense mechanisms employed by the protagonists in five selected short films by Anthony Sutcliffe, namely *Cope* (2025), *The Present* (2014), *Traces* (2014), *Winchester* (2013), and *The Anniversary* (2012), using George E. Vaillant's hierarchy of defense mechanisms. The findings show that the protagonists employ defense mechanisms from all four levels of Vaillant's hierarchy: pathological, immature, neurotic, and mature defenses. Mature defenses, particularly anticipation, suppression, and humor, are prominent in *Cope* (2025), *The Present* (2014), and *Traces* (2014), while neurotic defenses such as intellectualization and displacement also appear in several narratives. Immature defenses, particularly fantasy and displacement, are prominent in *Winchester* (2013), while denial, classified as a pathological defense, is identified in *The Anniversary* (2012). These findings demonstrate that the protagonists employ different defense mechanisms according to the psychological conflicts and difficult circumstances they experience.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the defense mechanisms reflect psychological transitions by accompanying identifiable changes from one psychological condition to another. In *Cope* (2025), Liam moves from suicidal determination toward renewed hope and greater openness to continuing his life. In *The Present* (2014), the protagonist moves from emotional burden toward professional resilience as she becomes more capable of regulating her emotions while fulfilling her professional responsibilities. In *Traces* (2014), cautious awareness of danger develops into persistent anxiety, while in *Winchester* (2013), Liz moves from an idealized experience of motherhood through Amy toward greater awareness of her loneliness and reality. In *The Anniversary* (2012), the protagonist moves from uncertainty surrounding Sam's death toward greater acceptance of its reality. These findings demonstrate that psychological transition does not necessarily mean movement from a negative condition to a positive one or movement from a lower to a higher level of defense; rather, it refers to an identifiable change in psychological condition or response that may involve adjustment, continued distress, increased anxiety, or greater acceptance of reality.

REFERENCES

- Altarika, N., & Amalia, S. D. (2025). Defense mechanism in *The Craft* (1996) movie: A psychoanalytic approach [Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta].
- Arifin, R. P. (2023). Sara's defense mechanisms in *A Little Princess* by Frances Hodgson Burnett [Undergraduate thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang]. UIN

- Library. <http://etheses.uin-malang.ac.id/id/eprint/5273>
- Barlow, D. H. (2004). *Anxiety and its disorders: The nature and treatment of anxiety and panic* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Cramer, P. (2000). Defense mechanisms in psychology today: Further processes for adaptation. *American Psychologist*, 55(6), 637–646. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.6.637>
- Cramer, P. (2015). Understanding defense mechanisms. *Psychodynamic Psychiatry*, 43(4), 523–552. <https://doi.org/10.1521/pdps.2015.43.4.523>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Di Giuseppe, M., & Perry, J. C. (2021). The hierarchy of defense mechanisms: Assessing defensive functioning with the Defense Mechanisms Rating Scales Q-sort. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, Article 718440. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.718440>
- Drapeau, M., Thompson, K., Petraglia, J., Thygesen, K., & Lecours, S. (2011). Defense mechanisms and gender: An examination of two models of defensive functioning derived from the Defense Style Questionnaire. *International Journal of Psychology and Psychological Therapy*, 11(2), 149–155.
- Giordano, G. (2023). Defense mechanisms in Victor Frankenstein's personality: An investigation of pathological narcissism. *Journal for Research Scholars and Professionals of English Language Teaching*, 7(35). <https://doi.org/10.54850/jrspelt.7.35.007>
- Gordillo, F., Mestas, L., Arana, J. M., Pérez, M. Á., & Escotto, E. A. (2017). The effect of mortality salience and type of life on personality evaluation. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 13(2), 286–299. <https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v13i2.1149>
- Gümüş, F., & Yemez, Ö. (2019). Defense mechanisms in *The Color Purple*. In *Book of abstracts & proceedings: 8th International Conference on Narrative and Language Studies* (p. 106). Karadeniz Technical University. <http://conference.nalans.org>
- Huang, C., & Hu, C. (2023). The terror management and sorrow management of death consciousness. *Acta Psychologica Sinica*, 55(2), 318–335. <https://doi.org/10.3724/SP.J.1041.2023.00318>
- Mandas, A. L., & Mende, D. K. N. (2026). Trauma dan transformasi mekanisme pertahanan ego: Analisis psikoanalitik tokoh Pat dan Tiffany dalam film *Silver Linings Playbook*. *Indonesian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 7(1), 109–122. <https://doi.org/10.33367/ijhass.v7i1.7936>
- McLeod, S. (2025). Sigmund Freud's theories. *Simply Psychology*. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/sigmund-freud.html>
- Nichols, B. (2017). *Engaging cinema: An introduction to film studies*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Perry, J. C., & Bond, M. (2017). Addressing defenses in psychotherapy to improve adaptation. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 37(3), 153–166. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07351690.2017.1285182>
- Philipsen, H., & Vernooij-Dassen, M. (2007). Qualitative research: Useful, indispensable and challenging. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 65(3), 417–419. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pec.2006.08.001>
- Prasetyanto, A. (2016). *An analysis of main character defense mechanism in Steven Spielberg's Catch Me If You Can* [Undergraduate thesis, Universitas Brawijaya]. Universitas Brawijaya Repository. <https://repository.ub.ac.id/102549/>
- Vaillant, G. E. (2000). Adaptive mental mechanisms: Their role in a positive psychology. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 89–98. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.89>