

# An Analysis of Eugene O’Neil’s Play “Long Day’s Journey into Night” with Reference to Sigmund Freud’s Theory of Defense Mechanism

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## Abstract

This study is about the functioning and impact of defense mechanisms reflected in Eugene O’Neill’s play “Long Day’s Journey into Night”. The purpose of the study is to analyze this structural element of the play named defense mechanisms that are used by all characters in the play from the perspective of psychoanalysis. This study is a descriptive qualitative study. The object of the study is the above-mentioned play by Eugene O’Neill. The researcher has used two kinds of data sources named primary sources that is the play and secondary sources including books, journals, and articles related to the study. The technique of data collection is using library research and note-taking method. Data is analyzed using the descriptive qualitative method. The result of the research shows that there is a clear correlation between literature and psychology. All the characters in this play use various defense mechanisms to defend themselves from anxiety. Based on the analysis, all the characters are prideful and they do not want to appear guilty. Thus, their use of defense mechanisms often emerges every time they feel uneasy. It not only takes them out of anxiety but also puts an impact on their behaviors.

**Keywords:** Psychoanalytic study, Defense Mechanism, Reaction Formation, Projection, Displacement, Undoing, Isolation, Sublimation, Denial.

## 1. Introduction

Human behaviors have always been the core of all the literature of the world as literature is the reflection of society. The connection between human mental status and behaviors is a comparatively neglected field of study that has to be taken into account. Serious consideration of human behaviors in this rapidly growing Techno-savvy global village, where people have to be closely connected, communicating and understanding each other, is crucial. It has a close connection with the overall development of human society, including scientific, financial, and moral developments.

Literature has always been admired as a crystal clear reflection of human behavior, being a reflection of society. So, literature has been helping researchers in exploring and understanding human behavior and the human psyche. Psychoanalysis is the branch of study that has taken an interest in literature from its beginning. It has considered literature a field to study and seek inspiration from.

Eugene O’Neil, a revolutionary American modern playwright, is the only American Nobel Prize winner for literature and four times winner of the prestigious Pulitzer Prize. He has used old plots of Greek legend tragedies for writing a modern psychological drama. O’Neill’s core interest was

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to unfold the multiple and complex layers of the human conscious and unconscious mind, along with its strong connection with human behavior. He used to see life as an ironic tragedy that is doomed to failure and this realization has a strong connection with the lost personalities as well as the disconnected and illogical behaviors of his characters (Landerová, 2012). The emotional state of his characters was the representation of their feelings. The attitudes and dialogues of those characters were depictions of their psyche. Maley (2014) argues that "... the Tyrones locate their ideals in the past and experience them as forever beyond their reach" (109).

“Long Day’s Journey into the Night” is Eugene O’Neill’s autobiographic drama, that was published posthumously and won different awards. This play has presented the inner working of the human mind and its connection with human behaviors and dialogues. This drama, along with many other aspects of human attitude, highlights how people react to unacceptable actions. Bennett argues that one of the unique features of the play as a whole is that almost every possible type of defense, in addition to those already mentioned, appears at least once. Almost every page of this drama presents a different example of humans’ defensive attitude. Shortly, this drama showcased intense psychological action to a great magnitude.

Analyzing psychological plays may lead to a better domain of behavioral and emotional situations. This better understanding of emotional and behavioral displays may enhance our relationships in our social and professional relationships. Due to the highly complex and intertwined themes highlighted in the play “Long Day’s Journey into Night”, researchers have analyzed it through many different perspectives like its feminist stance, Marxist approach, and modernist conception. The literature review shows that none of the scholars studied all the self-defense mechanisms in the play. Those studies present other aspects of the drama, including the differences in the family and the autobiographical elements of the author’s life.

The context for self-control and positive response during anxiety or unacceptable condition is usually the processing of an emotionally challenging situation. When a person faces an unexpected situation, defensive mode gets activated in that person. This defensive condition functions as a motive to reconcile the unexpected situation and the existing mindset. This reconciliation, in the form of a defense mechanism, helps the person reduce emotional anxiety and shifts his attention to another topic. Consequently, it impacts that person’s behavioral pattern and helps him/her in maintaining the ego pattern.

Taking into account the plot of the play, it is a quite true and natural depiction of its characters’ never-ending anxiety and mental discontentment. As a result, all the characters are displaying different forms of defense mechanisms at one or the other time. The researchers have applied Sigmund Freud’s theory of defense mechanisms which he proposed in his paper “The Neuro-Psychoses of Defense” in 1894.

The researcher’s objectives for this research include:

- Indicate the implementation of defense mechanisms by all four characters of the play “Long Day’s Journey into Night”.
- Investigate the impact of using defense mechanisms on the behavior of all four characters of the play.

The following are the questions the researcher studied:

- What defense mechanisms are implemented by all four characters of the play “Long Day’s Journey into Night”?
- How does using defense mechanisms impact the behavior of all four characters of the play?

## 2. Literature Review

People’s feelings and behaviors are not only the results of their personal experiences but of the experiences of the generations. Real-life experiences show that these emotions guide far better than time-consuming deep thoughts because these emotions are natural and spontaneous. These emotions lead human beings towards specific reactions or defensive behavior when they are in a state of anxiety or are not ready to accept the realities of life. Psychological defenses are intrinsic aspects of all ongoing interpersonal interactions (Gray, 2017). Defensive behavioral experiences result in these reactions. These emotional reactions or responses are deeply rooted, while our thoughts are commonly our surface reactions. Thus looking into these emotional reactions, which usually represent themselves as a defense mechanism, goes very deep and is crucial to understanding human behavior.

The most crucial thing to keep in mind is that fundamental questions define who we are. They don't include transient negative emotions like fleeting feelings of insecurity or low self-esteem. For example, having an occasional "bad air day" does not necessarily mean that there is a fundamental problem. Instead, persistent core issues influence our behavior in negative ways that we are typically unaware of unless they are effectively resolved. In other words, because we experience anxiety in situations where our fundamental issues are at stake, anxiety can reveal a lot about who we are.

Under normal circumstances, however, our defenses prevent us from being aware of our unconscious experience, and even slightly prolonged or recurrent anxiety doesn't manage to overcome our repression. So how can we understand how our unconscious works without the help of psychotherapy? As I mentioned earlier, if we can spot patterns in our behavior, they can give us hints, particularly in the area of interpersonal relationships and, within that domain, particularly in our romantic or sexual relationships, as this is where our earliest, unresolved family conflicts are reenacted. In addition, if we know how to use it, we have access to our unconscious. Through our dreams and any creative endeavors, we partake in; both are directly inspired by the unconscious, independent of our conscious will or desire.

The researcher has analyzed Eugene O’Neill’s marvelous artifact "Long Day's Journey into Night" which is an autobiographic family play (Câmpean, 2022), considered his masterwork, to look into the variation of human effort for defending their ego. This play has depicted deep psychological actions in their full strength (Fathima, 2013). The drama is focused on a maladaptive family surviving with critical behavioral problems, which include fear, guilt, drug addiction, moral abjection, and the desires of their past.

The whole family is depicted as if everyone is a victim besides being an assaulter. Mouelhi (2014) argues that all four members of the Tyrone family engage to varying degrees in creating an atmosphere thick with accusations, defenses, and pleadings. Overall, the play is an expression of losing one's true self and going through the feeling of anxiety and mental stress. While facing unacceptable or unexpected situations, where the person starts losing the balance of id, ego, and superego, s/he has to adopt any defense mechanisms (Gonzalez, 2018). The representation of this imbalance and its consequences can be seen on every page of this play (Babae, 2011).

The psychological depiction of all the characters appealed to the researcher to study this play in its orientation with the defense mechanism theory presented by Sigmund Freud. This play presents a lot of incidents where characters show their defensive behavior as Landarová (2012) indicates "As the Tyrons’ widespread sense of loss enforces each of the four family members to search for reasons of their behaviors and they turn on one another in cycles of blame, denial, self-accusation, and counter-attack..."The researcher attempted to analyze this kind of behavior depicted by all the characters in this play. The researcher used the concept of self-defense mechanisms, a part of



Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory. This research also explained different types of this mechanism in the drama and describe their application, adopted by characters, in solving their conflicts.

Psychoanalysis is an in-depth exploration of the unconscious human mind that has significance for the re-normalization of a person's life. The unconscious and thought processes are given a lot of weight in this. It says that for a healthy mind, awareness of this is essential. Psychoanalysis placed a strong emphasis on motives, concentrating on subliminal or veiled motivations that aid in the clarification of literature on two levels: the level of the writing itself and the level of character action in the text. Psychoanalysis places emphasis on the issue and seeks to explain to the psychic and cultural forces how meaning and identity are related. In today's understanding of reading, meaning, and the relationship between literature and culture, psychoanalysis is crucial.

Although some psychoanalytic readings of literature may fall short of being comprehensive and tend to be reductive, psychoanalysis is still very important on the level of theory. There are two recognized interpretations of the contemporary theory used in literature. First of all, it refers to a method of treating patients with mental disorders. Second, it also includes theories about the complexity of the human mind.

Sigmund Freud was the one who first advanced psychoanalytic theory. Initially trained as a doctor, Freud worked in a clinic where he treated and studied patients. He becomes aware that he saw his patients' mental illness as a result of his long-standing dedication to this field. His interest in psychology research particularly that of the unconscious mind, grew over time. According to Freud, our mind is divided into three sections.

Understanding psychoanalysis aids comprehension of philosophy, culture, religion, and, above all, literature. Sigmund Freud frequently made connections between psychoanalysis and literature and art in general when he was developing his theory of psychoanalysis. Freud examined the Oedipal elements in Sophocles' Oedipus Rex and Shakespeare's Hamlet as well as the plays' effects on their audiences in "The Interpretation of Dreams."

Freud further elaborated on the relationship between literature and psychoanalysis in his essay "Creative Writers and Day-dreaming." To understand creativity, he compared to play, dreams, fantasies, and artistic creations. In this work, Freud first discussed his theory of the literary work's structure and conducted a psychoanalytic investigation into the essence of literature. A literary work is comparable to a daydream, according to Freud. The literary work, like a daydream, contains in its fantasy the accomplishment of an unfulfilled wish and thus enhances an unsatisfactory reality.

### 3. Methodology

To conduct this research, the researcher will work in a qualitative paradigm as Marshall & Rossman (2014) say, "Qualitative methodologies have described three major purposes for research: to explore, explain or describe the phenomena of interest (p.33)". It will help researcher's detailed exploration of the selected text to see in-depth how defense mechanism is used and has impacted the behaviors of characters. Qualitative research is like a collaged, close-knit set of practices to offer solutions to a problem in an actual situation that is like a construction through progressive steps.

The researcher will use the tools of her methodological trade according to the requirement of the problem, organizing whatever approaches, techniques, or empirical material are at hand and if new tools or strategies have to be invented or pieced together, the researcher will do this (Denzin & Lincoln. 2011). It is an interdisciplinary field that crosscuts the humanities and the social and physical sciences thus it supports the naturalistic study. Interpretivism is the methodological

approach that is selected for this study because this study focused on how human beings make sense of their life experiences and the world around them.

The research employed a descriptive qualitative method with a psychoanalysis approach to Sigmund Freud's theory of self-defense mechanisms. Data sources were secondary data, first-string of which was collected from the play and other relevant data from other resources like books, journals, articles, and some internet sources. The researcher used the following methods to analyze the drama to find answers to the set questions.

Textual analysis is a method used in exploratory studies in social sciences. It works in different aspects like quality, originality, production, inspiration, background, and cultural considerations of the studied context. This methodology focuses on basic ideological and cultural assumptions about text with the help of interpretive approaches. The researcher has selected this method because it involves understanding language, symbols, and/or pictures present in texts to gain information and make sense of the communication and experiences mentioned in the play. Written messages and spoken dialogues have provided cues to ways through which the dialogues are interpreted. The researcher has also attempted to take into account the broader social structures that influence the dialogues present in the play under investigation.

Close reading deeply analyzes how literary texts work. It is a reading process besides being a refined form of literary analysis. In literary works, different components, such as subject, structure, and specific vocabulary are considered. This methodology examines these components and allows researchers to find clues to understand the text in depth by putting its small parts under a microscope. Snow and O'Connor (2016) caution against reliance on close reading as a teaching strategy but suggest that it should be “embedded within the larger motivational context of deep comprehension of complex and engaging topics” (p. 6). The researcher has chosen this strategy because, being based on a thorough look into the literary work, it has helped the researcher to discover refinement and details of dialogues that seem minor but offer a significant contribution to the meaning-making process. This analysis has offered the researcher a deeper insight into the author's selection of vocabulary and certain elements of specific scenes. Moreover, it has helped the reader in making the connection of other details that may get overlooked in a superficial reading.

Data collection for qualitative research requires a keen consideration of the limitations and advantages of the strategies used for this purpose. I kept two things in mind for the selection of strategies. First is the relationship of the research question with the strategy for data collection as Maxwell (2012) says, "your methods are the means to answering your research question (p.74)". The second is triangulation or the multi-method approach according to Maxwell (2012) triangulation of these strategies can provide more complete and accurate than either could alone. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2017) advocate triangulation by saying, “the more the methods contrast with each other, the greater the researcher’s confidence (p.234)”.

For the literary textual analysis, the researcher has broken the text’s structure and content into smaller parts to seek in-depth understanding. In the analysis of this play, the researcher has attempted to find out the relationship between the dialogues of all four characters and their social and psychological performances. It includes their actions and behaviors in past and their connection with their actions and behaviors in the day captured in the play.

By using a close reading strategy, the researcher could pay attention to language as a meaning-making resource by doing multiple readings of the text. During reading, the researcher integrated writing as a means of extending understanding and expanding repertoires. It supported the reader to find text-based evidence to respond text dependent questions. Moreover, the researcher outlined the content of the text using headings or subheadings to identify the gist of the text. It helped the researcher to summarize the key ideas.

## 4. Analysis

There is a misapprehension that psychological defenses are only present in emotionally sick people. It is not considered something natural that takes place unconsciously. It has provoked the researcher to study the four characters in the play as though they were real people. The researcher found it appropriate to discuss those characters as it helped her and was very useful in making and rejecting several assertions.

### 4.1 Evidence of Defense Mechanism in the Play

Through this study, the researcher has analyzed if the defense mechanisms are a natural and normal phenomenon, and if it is so, what are the different types of these mechanisms characters of this play have used to maintain their ego. In **challenging** or unacceptable situations, characters have behaved differently, and at times, they don't accept the real cause or issue of the unacceptable condition. O'Neill's presentations of such situations are not only true reflections of real life but also have the capacity for multiple interpretations (Barnes et al, 2019). The responses by different characters in such conditions invited the researcher to examine and explore the causes of such behaviors to respond in such conditions.

#### 4.1.1 Reaction Formation

One of the stranger defense mechanisms is reaction formation, which involves acting in a way that is completely at odds with how one is feeling. It is described as acting in a way that is completely at odds with one's true emotions. This is a defensive strategy that serves as a hindrance for the time being. Mary responded that she is not upset about Edmund's condition when Tyrone told her not to be. She makes a statement that is completely at odds with how she feels.

Tyrone: But you mustn't let it upset you, Mary. Remember, you've got to take care of yourself, too.

Mary: I'm not upset. There's nothing to be upset about. What makes you think I'm upset? (O'Neill, 1956: 16)

The whole story of Edmund's birth and his mother's sensitivity about his health makes it quite obvious that she is very much worried about her son but in this dialogue, she has formed an opposite reaction to overcome her anxiety about the issue.

Another example of reaction formation can be seen when James is playing solitaire against himself at midnight with a half-empty bottle of whiskey and lights turned off to save money. The following dialogue presents the conflict between father and son:

James Tyrone: I told you to turn out that light! We're not giving a ball.

There's no reason to have the house ablaze with electricity at this time of night, burning up money!

Edmund Tyrone: Ablaze with electricity! One bulb! Hell, everyone keeps a light on in the front hall until they go to bed. (O'Neill, 1956: 16)

James' instant reaction after this argument between the two men, is he suddenly thinks of his son's frailty and instantly feels sorrowful. To overcome this anxiety, he gets up and turns all the lights on saying:

James: To hell with them! The poorhouse is the end of the road, and it might as well be sooner than later!

Edmund: You're a wonder, Papa. (O'Neill, 1956: 16)



This is reaction formation where James has said and done against his nature just to overcome the anxiety caused by his previous action. Another example that the researcher found is Mary's expression of respect and care for James. She tells Jamie about the struggles James has made to make him realize that he should respect his father, while in reality she lacks love and cares for James.

Another example of reaction formation is seen in the character of James Tyrone, Mary's husband. James is a successful actor, but he is haunted by the fear that he has wasted his talent and sold out for financial gain. He presents himself as a shrewd businessman and provider for his family, but he is deeply ashamed of the compromises he has made in his career. He also harbors resentment toward his family, who he believes have taken advantage of him and his success.

#### 4.1.2 Projection

By representing these internal psychic products as coming from somewhere other than the self, projection is a defense mechanism against preconscious or unconscious drives, fantasies, or conflicts. By directing their emotions or flaws toward those around them, people who engage in projection find relaxation. The play's four main characters, Edmund, the youngest, the author, and the other three, directly allot themselves to the author, Eugene O'Neill, and his own family. The discovery that young Edmund has tuberculosis and the mother's relapse into her morphine addiction are the two main plot points of the play.

Mary complains about others' behavior toward her and says, "It makes it so much harder, living in this atmosphere of constant suspicion, knowing everyone is spying on me, and none of you believe in me or trust me" (O'Neill, 1956: 16). Mary does not trust herself and feels guilty about beginning to take morphine again. This painful feeling about herself is intolerable for her so she defends herself by blaming those around her. Moreover, she is not at all careful about herself and projects this trait of herself toward Edmund in the following dialogue:

Of course, there's nothing that takes away your appetite like a bad summer cold.

I know he'll be all right in a few days if he takes care of himself. . . . I'm not upset. There's nothing to be upset about. (O'Neill, 1956: 16)

Mary herself is jealous of her mother because of her Electra complex. She hates her mother and has a special attachment to her father. This hate is an intolerable feeling and it is making her uneasy. To overcome her anxiety, she projects her jealousy to be found in her mother and calls her "jealous".

Mary always idealizes her father. Mary's father is mentioned by Tyrone, but he doesn't think he's a perfect man. Though not as noble as Mary thinks, he was a friend to him. He speaks with Edmund about his father-in-law, "As I've told you before, you must take her memories with a grain of salt. Her wonderful home was ordinary enough. Her father wasn't the great, generous, noble Irish gentleman she makes out" (O'Neill, 1956: 16).

The wedding dress that she received from her father at her wedding is something that is frequently remembered and longs for in the later scenes of the play. Her desire for her father is very strong. It is how she says it:

That wedding gown was nearly the death of me and the dressmaker, too . . . My father even let me have duchesses lace on my white satin slippers and lace with the orange blossoms in my veil. Oh, how I loved that gown . . . I used to take it out from time to time when I was lonely but it always made me cry... (O'Neill, 1956: 117)

Her deep love for her gown is the projection of her desire for togetherness with her father. The defense mechanism of projection, in which individual projects their own thoughts, feelings, and desires onto another person, can be seen throughout the play "Long Day's Journey into Night" by

Eugene O'Neill. For example, the character of James Tyrone often accuses his wife Mary of being selfish and uncaring. In reality, it is James who is focused on his own needs and desires, such as his fear of losing his wealth and status as an actor. By projecting his own flaws onto Mary, he avoids confronting his own faults and shortcomings.

#### 4.1.3 Displacement

Moving emotional states away from their source and toward a different target is known as displacement. When the Tyrone family members experience anxiety, rage, or loneliness, they will turn to whiskey, whores, and for Mary, morphine as a diversion or solution.

Edmund: Papa! [Changing the subject.] Are we going to have this drink, or aren't we?

Tyrone: You're right. I'm a fool to take notice. [He picks up his glass listlessly] Drink hearty, lad. (O'Neill, 1956: 117)

Edmund's love for alcohol is also evidence of his displacement of anxiety caused by the missing love, care, and relationship from his mother especially and from other family members generally. He is aware that alcohol is harmful to someone who suffers from consumption. But he consumes a lot of alcohol. His love for alcohol "displaces" the love he receives from his family. Additionally, he expects his mother to give him a lot of love and attention. She pays him more attention whenever his health deteriorates. That is yet another approach to draw her close. So he keeps drinking more alcohol.

Jamie, ten years older than Edmund, has been dealing with stress and intolerable anxiety because of their family relationship and negative behaviors toward each other. Jamie tells this to Edmund when he says, "You never knew what was wrong until you were in prep school. Papa and I kept it from you. But I was wise ten years or more before we had to tell you" (O'Neill, 1956:55).

It is crystal clear that Jamie and Edmund play very different roles within the family. Jamie was expected to treat Edmund like a child while he was growing into an adult from the start. To deal with this depression he used to keep too much drinking and to satisfy his need for love and care, he used to visit whores. Following is another situation where Mary is making Jamie realize the missing love and care that is there for Edmund but not for Jamie, while both are her sons. She puts her arm around Edmund and says, "You mustn't cough like that. It's bad for your throat. You don't want to get a sore throat on top of your cold" (O'Neill, 1956:59).

Because Jamie is envious of the love Mary shows to his younger brother, Jamie puts on a face of embittered, defensive cynicism. Throughout the play, none of Jamie's parents show him any real, sincere affection. In second act, when mother shows special affection toward Edmund, Eugene describes Jamie's reaction, "On the other hand, Jamie knows after one probing look at her that his suspicions are justified. His eyes fall to stare at the floor; his face sets in an expression of embittered, defensive cynicism" (2.1.59). This particular scene suggests that he despises the fact that he has no family to lean on. Jamie satisfies this lack by displacing his attention towards whiskey and whores.

Mary is not satisfied with her husband's contribution to the family and is very much stressed and depressed because of his mechanical role. She does not find herself convenient releasing her anger on him so she displaces her anxiety on Jamie by scolding him to look at his behavior. She says:

It's you who should have more respect! Stop sneering at your father! I won't have it! You ought to be proud you're his son! He may have his faults. Who hasn't? But he's worked hard all his life. He made his way up from ignorance and poverty to the top of his profession! Everyone else admires him and you should be the last one to sneer.

(O'Neill, 1956:59)



#### 4.1.4 Undoing

This mechanism explains the practices of a person who tries to cancel or remove the threatening or guilt-provoking actions or thoughts or who tries to change the past. All of the characters in *Long Day’s Journey into Night* are very anxious about the "Good Old Days" that are gone and the past mistakes that still have scars on them. The past has evolved in this play from being a terrible and fatal burden to a haven. The main characters are preoccupied with reflecting on the past and either feeling bad about what they have done or blaming someone else for all of their problems.

Regarding their decisions from their youth, both parents express deep regret. James, who has put in a lot of work, would like to be known for more types of roles and to be a more popular actor. Mary uses an idealized recreation of her childhood as an escape from her unhappy marriage to James, as she seems to wish she had never married him. She takes morphine to make herself feel like a child again, attending the Catholic girls' school. A way out of dealing with the present is to dwell on the past. Both brothers are similarly affected.

When Jamie thinks and acts, then rejects those thoughts and actions, he also uses the defense of undoing. The older brother consistently rejects his feelings of hatred and love as well as his perceptions of himself and his family. The other family members' common defenses conflict with this distinctive use of defensive undoing. The order in which the play's manifestations of Jamie's defensive failure occur also suggests the significance of Jamie as a tragic hero. While communicating with his father, he says:

Jamie: What's all the fuss about? Let's forget it.

Tyrone: Yes, forget! Forget everything and face nothing! It's a convenient Philosophy if you've no ambition in life except to – (O'Neill, 1956: 21)

He appears in most of the scenes the entire time, but only in the first and last acts does he cause undoing. The play's beginning and conclusion are connected structurally by his defensive theme. One example is the character of James Tyrone, who frequently tries to undo his past mistakes and regrets by engaging in positive behaviors such as spending time with his family and trying to be a supportive father. He also tries to make amends for his past actions by being generous with his money and resources. By engaging in these positive behaviors, James attempts to counteract his negative feelings of guilt and shame.

Another example of undoing is seen in the character of Mary Tyrone, who tries to undo her addiction to morphine by engaging in positive behaviors such as attending church and trying to be a good mother and wife. She also tries to create a sense of order and control in her life by obsessively rearranging and cleaning the furniture in her home. By engaging in these positive behaviors, Mary attempts to counteract her negative feelings of shame and self-disgust.

#### 4.1.5 Isolation

The defense mechanism of isolation, in which an individual separates their thoughts, feelings, and memories from the rest of their consciousness, can be seen throughout the play "*Long Day’s Journey into Night*" by Eugene O’Neill. Even though the four Thrones are sharing a house this summer, a strong sense of isolation pervades. The play does not include family meals, which are a key component of family ties. Between acts, there is time for lunch, and dinner is a disaster because everyone leaves the table to go his own way. Mary's loneliness is particularly severe. As the only female in the family, she is marginalized by her gender as well as by her morphine addiction, which causes her to become increasingly detached from reality.

The entire book *Long Day’s Journey into Night* exudes a sense of isolation. The Tyrone family is on their own when it comes to managing their emotions, despite living together and being

constantly surrounded by servants. Even though her husband and sons adore her and work hard to make her happy, Mary in particular struggles with a sense of loneliness that makes her feel alone. She argues that this is because she has never truly had a "home." Instead, she has traveled and stayed in inexpensive hotels with James for her entire adult life, a lifestyle that has prevented her from developing deep connections with people outside of her family.

O'Neill makes it clear in the opening act that Mary has idealized the concept of living a fulfilling social life. She thinks that having a place to call home and friends would help to lessen the loneliness she otherwise seems unable to escape. She says to Edmund in their discussion of their neighbors, "In a real home one is never lonely." Given that Mary speaks enviously about her neighbors' "presentable homes" at the beginning of this passage, it appears that her image is her top priority. She does, however, note that these friends aren't "cut off from everyone" in the end. In light of this, she makes a hint that she does feel "cut off" from the outside world. She ignores the fact that she is currently residing in a home, which is what she has always desired, which is of course something she should be aware of. This fact, however, does not alleviate her loneliness; this is proof that unimportant factors, such as home ownership, have no impact on a person's sense of isolation.

Mary talks about wanting to settle down in a real home for a long time throughout the play. She also regrets that she has never stayed in one place long enough to make friends. She says, "If there was only some [...] woman friend I could talk to—not about anything serious, simply laugh and gossip and forget for a while—someone besides the servants" (O'Neill, 1956: 21).

O'Neill, however, implies that Mary is not interested in these things. Mary has romanticized the idea of being at home. Her discussion of their neighbors with Edmund makes this clear. She adds, "People like them stand for something. I mean they have decent, presentable homes they don't have to be ashamed of. They have friends who entertain them and whom they entertain. They're not cut off from everyone" (O'Neill, 1956: 21).

As a result, it becomes apparent that she isn't interested in leading a wealthy suburban woman's lifestyle; rather, she has simply decided that this way of life may help her end her current loneliness. After they discuss the neighbors, she freely acknowledges this to Edmund, saying, "Not that I want anything to do with them," after belittling the fact that these people aren't "cut off from everyone." This town and everyone in it has always infuriated me" (O'Neill, 1956: 21). Finding a solution to end her feeling of isolation seems to be her main concern.

Edmund experiences loneliness and isolation, just like his mom. She may think he could ever get rid of this feeling, but he doesn't think he could. In the play's concluding act, he reveals this to his father during a drunken conversation when he discusses his time as a sailor. He talks about lying on the bowsprit one night and gazing up at the starry sky as waves pounded beneath him. He adoringly describes the freedom he felt in this moment, in which he was completely alone yet felt connected to the world. He says:

I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm of it, and for a moment I lost myself—lost my life. I was set free! I dissolved in the sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight and the ship and the high dim-starred night! I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life, or the life of Man, or Life itself! (O'Neill, 1956: 21)

Edmund sees the world in a depressing light because of his loneliness, but it is this very perspective that allows him to experience fleeting moments of joy and transcendence. Edmund embraces his feeling of isolation and can turn it into something positive while Mary spends her time daydreaming about how to feel a sense of belonging. O'Neill contends that this is the only way to deal with loneliness, which is a trait of humanity that cannot be avoided.

One example is the character of Mary Tyrone, who isolates herself from her family as she struggles with her addiction to morphine. She withdraws into her own thoughts and memories, escaping from the present moment and the challenges of her daily life. By isolating herself, Mary avoids confronting the reality of her addiction and its impact on her relationships with her husband and sons.

Another example of isolation is seen in the character of James Tyrone, who isolates himself from his family as he struggles with his own sense of regret and disappointment. He distances himself emotionally from his wife and sons, choosing instead to focus on his career and his own needs. By isolating himself, James avoids confronting his feelings of guilt and shame over the compromises he has made in his career.

#### 4.1.6 Sublimation

Since it makes sense for someone Edmund's age to be active, his id is. Additionally, he published poetry in Lit Magazine while still a college student. He is very interested in literature because it allows him to "sublimate his repressed desires." He tries to transform his immoral desires into things that are acceptable in society.

Edmund fits this description and is weak and pitiful not because of his youth but rather because of his role in the play. He has a drinking problem. He has a meager amount of optimism for life. His mother adores him even though his father chastises him for being "morbid." She may have a stronger love for him than for the others because he is Eugene's alternate. He also has disagreements with his brother and father. Mary and Jamie think that he is the victim of his father's stinginess. Jamie also suffers from jealousy of his brother. Edmund is provoked by Jamie to rebel against his father. But unless his brother, Jamie, persuade him otherwise, he doesn't seem to have accepted this. He is the beloved child of his parents, as evidenced by the fight he had with his brother. But when he drinks, he is unable to act normally.

He drinks a lot and enjoys finishing himself even though he is aware that his illness requires him to avoid alcohol. He desires to be enveloped in a thick fog, and this passage of dialogue reveals how he has sublimated this desire into literature:

...when I was swimming far out [...] I have had the same experience. [...] Like the veil of things as they seem drawn back by an unseen hand. For a second you see – and seeing the secret, are the secret. For a second there is meaning! (O'Neill, 1956:148)

Tyrone rejects Edmund's obsession with passing away saying, "yes, there is the making of a poet in you all right. But that's morbid craziness not being wanted and loving death" (O'Neill, 1956:157). Edmund knows he has a disease even though he drinks. He has a stronger natural death tendency than the tendency to live. In biological terms, the loss of equilibrium that ends life and causes it to return to its inorganic beginnings is caused by the failure of the life instinct to restrain the tendency to death, which becomes stronger than the instinct to live.

He has the discernment to focus his libidinal fervor on more socially acceptable pursuits. His love of writing, which Freud defined as the "sublimation" of impermissible instinctual desires, manifests itself in his love of poetry and journalism. Furthermore, he enjoys taking long voyages. He loves being a sailor which suits his sublimation. According to Jamie, this is what happens: Jamie: he's always come home broke finally, hasn't he? And what did his going away get him? Look at him now! Christ! That's a lousy thing to say. I don't mean that.

Tyrone: He has been doing well on the paper. I was hoping he'd found the work he wants to do at last.

Jamie: . . . No that's not true! They are glad to have him, but it's the special stuff that gets him by. Some of the poems and parodies he's written are damned good. (O'Neill 36)



Jamie claims that Edmund's months-long outside sailing trips are useless. His condition is deteriorating. He still enjoys taking these trips to the sea, though. He also produces beautiful poems and articles that express his libido. Psychoanalysts view all forms of artistic expression, including writing, painting, and literature, as the transformation of primal drives into socially acceptable shapes. Additionally, Edmund tries to get away from his father's oppressive presence in the household. He travels to the sea as a result of this. He is in a situation similar to that of Oedipus. Oedipus flees after realizing that he would murder his father.

In a similar vein, Edmund leaves his house to avoid his controlling presence. The next sign that his unconscious mind is interfering with his conscious self is that he stammers when he speaks. Psychoanalysts believe that without our knowledge, our unconscious interferes with our routine behaviors. We can release internal tension by using tongue slips, crude jokes, stammering, and dreams.

#### **4.1.7 Denial**

Denial is arguably the simplest method of self-defense. It is declining to accept that something has occurred. It is the inability to accept the outside world because it is too dangerous. In her conversation with Jamie, Mary makes an effort to deceive herself by telling her that Edmund only has the cold caused due to summer:

Jamie: It's not just a cold he's got. The kid is damned sick.

Mary: Why do you say that? It is just a cold! Anyone can tell that! You always imagine things. (O'Neill, 1956: 26)

O'Neill shows how difficult it was for people to face their guilt in this play. Mary attempts to divert the attention of her family away from her addiction which is the most glaring example of this dynamic at work. By vehemently disputing the notion that she is about to experience yet another relapse, she first and foremost diverted attention from her morphine addiction. Her rebuttal, however, is insufficient to assuage her worried relatives, so she accuses them of mistrusting her. Whenever she is highly intoxicated, she keeps blaming others for her mistakes and finds it simpler than taking accountability for her deeds. After taking morphine, she intensifies her guilt-tripping and blames Jamie for the death of her second son, and James indirectly of pushing her into addiction.

In the starting of play, Mary's family pays close attention to her because she has relapsed so frequently. Edmund worries that she is going back to her old ways when he sees her wandering around the house at night. He remembers how she keeps injecting morphine and when she is asked about it, she makes him feel bad for doubting her. She responds, "For heaven's sake, haven't I frequently used the spare room as my bedroom? But I can see what you were thinking. When was that? Edmund interjects, "I didn't think anything," (O'Neill, 1956: 26) feeling guilty.

Mary, however, accuses Edmund of having misplaced trust in her and vehemently adds that it would "serve [him] right if it was true" that she was resuming drug use. "Mama! Avoid saying that! You speak in that manner when" Edmund starts. Mary interrupts him and scolds him "Stop suspecting me! Please, my love! I'm hurt by you. Although Mary has not yet started using morphine, her anxious behavior is a definite sign that she is on the verge of another relapse. She has not cried, though, so perhaps she is trying to convince herself that everything is still fine by giving Edmund such a strong reaction. As if she is not already on the verge of giving in to her craving, she wants to dismiss the idea of a relapse.

Edmund tries to convince his mother to promise that if he is given a serious diagnosis, she won't use drugs as a coping mechanism because he is aware that his mother is concerned about his health. "Sure, I'll make that promise. I entrust you with my trustworthy word" says Mary. She continues,

"But I suppose you're remembering I've promised before on my word of honor," adding with what O'Neill describes as a "sad bitterness."

When Mary finally succumbs to her addiction, she starts to blame her loved ones openly for her problems. She accuses her husband James Tyrone of making their oldest child Jamie an alcoholic during one of their arguments. "You raised him to be drunk. She says, oblivious to the fact that Jamie has observed her substance abuse as well. "He's seen you drinking since he first opened his eyes," she claims. "When the poison is inside of you, you want to point the finger at everyone but yourself!" James answers. This is quite true, as is demonstrated by what Mary says when speaking about the passing of her second child, Eugene, who passed away when he was a baby.

## **4.2 Impact of Defense Mechanism on Characters' Behaviors**

The impact of these defense mechanisms is often negative, as they prevent the characters from confronting their problems and finding meaningful solutions. For example, Mary's denial of her addiction to morphine prevents her from seeking help, while James's projection of his own guilt onto his family causes him to blame others for his own mistakes. These defense mechanisms also exacerbate the problems within the family and lead to a breakdown in communication and understanding between the characters.

### **4.2.1 James Tyrone**

James Tyrone, the main character in Eugene O'Neill's play "Long Day's Journey into Night," employs several defense mechanisms to cope with his emotional pain and guilt. James Tyrone's use of defense mechanisms is a major theme that affects his behavior throughout the play. These defense mechanisms have a significant impact on his behavior in the form of making him an irresponsible, and stubborn character.

Overall, James' use of defense mechanisms has a significant impact on his behavior in "Long Day's Journey into Night". It creates a cycle of denial and rationalization that prevents him from confronting the underlying issues in his relationships and taking responsibility for his actions. These defense mechanisms serve to protect James Tyrone from confronting his pain and guilt, but they also prevent him from facing the truth and finding a way to heal. Ultimately, James Tyrone's behavior is defined by his struggle to cope with his past and his present reality, and his defense mechanisms play a significant role in this struggle.

### **4.2.2 Mary Tyrone**

In the play "Long Day's Journey into Night," the character of Mary Tyrone, the wife of James Tyrone, exhibits several defense mechanisms, such as denial, repression, and avoidance. She employs several defense mechanisms to cope with her emotional pain and guilt of her lost motherhood (Karim, & Butt, 2011). These defense mechanisms have a significant impact on her behavior throughout the play. Mary denies her addiction to morphine and hides her drug use from her family. She represses painful memories of her past and avoids confronting her present problems.

These defense mechanisms serve to protect Mary Tyrone from confronting her pain and guilt, but they also prevent her from facing the truth and finding a way to heal. Ultimately, Mary Tyrone's behavior is defined by her struggle to cope with her past and her present reality, and her defense mechanisms play a significant role in this struggle. These defense mechanisms affect Mary's behavior by making her distant, detached, and unable to communicate her feelings. She withdraws

from her family and isolates herself in her drug-induced world, creating a barrier between her and her loved ones.

#### **4.2.3 Jamie Tyrone**

Jamie Tyrone, the older son of James and Mary Tyrone in Eugene O’Neill’s play “Long Day’s Journey into Night,” also employs several defense mechanisms to cope with his emotional pain and guilt. These defense mechanisms have a significant impact on his behavior throughout the play.

Jamie Tyrone uses defense mechanisms such as denial, repression, and avoidance to cope with his emotional pain and guilt. His defense mechanisms contribute to his alcoholism, which is a way of numbing himself to his feelings and memories of his past. These defense mechanisms serve to protect Jamie from confronting his pain and guilt, but they also prevent him from facing the truth and finding a way to heal. Ultimately, Jamie’s behavior is defined by his struggle to cope with his past and his present reality, and his defense mechanisms play a significant role in this struggle.

#### **4.2.4 Edmund Tyrone**

Edmund Tyrone is the younger son of James and Mary Tyrone in Eugene O’Neill’s play “Long Day’s Journey into Night.” He is portrayed as a young man struggling with addiction and the weight of his family’s history. Edmund uses several defense mechanisms throughout the play to cope with his internal conflicts, emotional pain, and guilt. These defense mechanisms have a significant impact on his behavior throughout the play.

Edmund distanced himself from unpleasant situations, people, or thoughts by using defense mechanisms. These psychological techniques aided him in separating himself from dangers or undesirable emotions, such as guilt or shame. Nothing ever got resolved in this play, so he kept arguing about the same conflict. He quarreled but frequently kept his deepest emotions hidden. He could settle disputes amicably, but he opted to resolve those conflicts through means of self-defense. These defense mechanisms serve to protect Edmund from confronting his pain and guilt, but they also prevent him from facing the truth and finding a way to heal. Ultimately, Edmund’s behavior is defined by his struggle to cope with his past and his present reality, and his defense mechanisms play a significant role in this struggle.

### **5. Conclusion**

This study is conducted to analyze the self-defense mechanisms used by the characters in the play “Long Day’s Journey into Night”. The theory of psychoanalysis, proposed by Sigmund Freud is applied to the play. After reading the play, the researcher finds that the characters have used all seven types of defense mechanisms which include reaction formation, projection, undoing, denial, isolation, displacement, and sublimation. The utilization of these mechanisms has impacted their behaviors as well as their relationships.

Throughout the play, O’Neill uses various psychological techniques to explore the characters’ inner thoughts and emotions. The dialogue is often introspective and revelatory, as each character reflects on their experiences and motivations. He depicts the use of various defense mechanisms by the characters to cope with their emotional pain and past traumas. Defense mechanisms are psychological strategies that individuals use unconsciously to protect themselves from unpleasant emotions or thoughts.



Overall, the use of defense mechanisms in "Long Day's Journey into Night" highlights the complex and destructive nature of human coping mechanisms. The characters' inability to confront their emotions and conflicts head-on leads to further psychological distress and contributes to their downfall. The play suggests that the only way to overcome these defense mechanisms is through self-awareness, honesty, and genuine communication. This play serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of emotional healing, effective communication, and healthy boundaries in interpersonal relationships, and the destructive consequences that can result when these elements are absent.

## **5.1 Major Findings**

In "Long Day's Journey into Night," the characters often use defense mechanisms as a way of coping with the difficulties in their lives. Defense mechanisms are unconscious psychological strategies that help individuals manage their emotions and stress. In the play, the characters use various defense mechanisms to avoid facing their pain and trauma.

### ***5.1.1 Impairment of relationships***

Defense mechanisms are psychological strategies that we unconsciously use to protect ourselves from difficult or unpleasant emotions, thoughts, or situations. While these mechanisms can help us cope with stress and anxiety in the short term, they can also cause significant harm to our relationships over time. This play explores the relationships within a dysfunctional family. The play highlights how defense mechanisms, used by each family member, contribute to the impairment of their relationships.

In summary, defense mechanisms can impair relationships by preventing honest communication, creating misunderstandings and mistrust, and hindering problem-solving and accountability. The defense mechanisms used by each family member in "Long Day's Journey into Night" contribute to the impairment of their relationships. These mechanisms create emotional distance and prevent them from communicating openly and honestly with each other. To maintain healthy relationships, it's important to recognize and work through our defense mechanisms with the help of a therapist or trusted friend.

### ***5.1.2 Hindrance of personal growth***

Defense mechanisms are psychological strategies that we unconsciously use to protect ourselves from difficult or unpleasant emotions, thoughts, or situations. While these mechanisms can help us cope with stress and anxiety in the short term, they can hinder our personal growth in the long run (Belounis, 2022). In "Long Day's Journey into Night," the characters' use of defense mechanisms hinders their personal growth in several ways. The play portrays a dysfunctional family struggling with addiction, illness, and various emotional problems, and each character uses different defense mechanisms to cope with their problems. Here are some ways defense mechanisms can impede personal growth.

In conclusion, the usage of defense mechanisms in "Long Day's Journey into Night" not only hinders the characters' personal growth but also increases their psychological distress, leading to a cycle of negative emotions and behaviors that perpetuates their dysfunction.

### ***5.1.3 Interference with reality***

These mechanisms can interfere with reality because they distort our perceptions of ourselves, others, and the world around us. Here are some ways defense mechanisms can interfere with reality. Mechanisms such as denial and projection can distort an individual's perception of reality, leading to difficulties in problem-solving and decision-making. In "Long Day's Journey into Night," the characters' use of defense mechanisms interfered with their ability to perceive and engage with reality. The play portrays a family struggling with addiction, illness, and various emotional problems, and each character uses different defense mechanisms to cope with their problems.

In conclusion, the usage of defense mechanisms in "Long Day's Journey into Night" interferes with the characters' ability to perceive and engage with reality, leading to a disconnection from the present moment and perpetuation of their dysfunction. These defense mechanisms can interfere with reality by distorting our thinking, preventing us from seeing things as they are, interfering with our relationships, hindering our ability to deal with problems, and creating a cycle of negative emotions and behaviors. Recognizing and working through our defense mechanisms can help us see reality more clearly and lead to a more fulfilling and rewarding life.

### ***5.1.4 Limitation of coping skills***

Defense mechanisms prevent us from developing healthy coping mechanisms. They are often quick fixes for dealing with unpleasant emotions or situations. By relying on these mechanisms, we do not develop healthy coping mechanisms, which can help us deal with future challenges constructively and healthily. The usage of defense mechanisms in "Long Day's Journey into Night" limits the coping skills of the characters and prevents them from developing more effective strategies for dealing with their problems. The play portrays a family struggling with addiction, illness, and various emotional problems, and each character uses different defense mechanisms to cope with their problems. Relying on defense mechanisms can limit an individual's ability to develop healthy coping skills and strategies for dealing with stress and difficult emotions.

In conclusion, the usage of defense mechanisms in "Long Day's Journey into Night" limits the characters' coping skills and prevents them from developing more effective strategies for dealing with their problems, leading to a cycle of negative emotions and behaviors that perpetuates their dysfunction. It is important to note that defense mechanisms are a normal part of human psychological functioning and can be helpful in small doses. However, it is important to be mindful of how and when they are used and to seek professional help if they are interfering with one's ability to function and enjoy life.

## **5.2 Lessons Learnt**

Based on the analysis of "Long Day's Journey into Night," there might be some suggestions for the appropriate use of defense mechanisms. To avoid the negative impacts of defense mechanisms, the characters could use them more consciously and healthily. They could develop some awareness about these mechanisms, self-reflection, and acceptance of one's feelings and emotions can turn those mechanisms into healthier strategies.

### **5.2.1 Awareness**

The first step to use defense mechanisms effectively is to be aware of them. Understanding the various defense mechanisms and recognizing when they are being used can help individuals better understand their emotions and behaviors. Healthily using defense mechanisms can help individuals become more self-aware, allowing them to better understand their emotions and behaviors. Effective use of defense mechanisms can help individuals regulate their emotions, allowing them to remain calm and composed in challenging situations. Defense mechanisms can help individuals manage stress and anxiety by providing a way to cope with difficult emotions and situations.

### **5.2.2 Healthy coping mechanisms**

The characters could develop healthier coping mechanisms, such as seeking support from others, engaging in relaxation activities, and practicing self-care. Instead of relying solely on defense mechanisms, individuals should develop healthy coping mechanisms. This may include seeking support from others, engaging in activities that promote relaxation and well-being, and seeking professional help if necessary. This can help reduce the reliance on defense mechanisms and promote better mental health. When used effectively, defense mechanisms can help individuals overcome obstacles and develop healthier coping mechanisms, leading to personal growth and development.

### **5.2.3 Self-reflection**

Individuals should take the time to reflect on their emotions and behaviors and to identify any patterns that may be causing distress. This may involve keeping a journal or seeking therapy to gain greater insight into one's thoughts and feelings. Based on such exercises one can use defense mechanisms effectively. Effective use of defense mechanisms can increase an individual's resilience, helping them better navigate difficult situations and bounce back from setbacks.

### **5.2.4 Communication**

The characters could communicate openly and honestly with each other, expressing their emotions and need clearly and respectfully. This can help avoid misunderstandings that can lead to conflict and increase understanding between them. Open and honest communication can help individuals better understand each other and avoid misunderstandings that can lead to conflict. This involves listening actively and expressing oneself clearly and respectfully. Defense mechanisms can help individuals maintain healthy relationships by avoiding conflicts and misunderstandings.

### **5.2.5 Acceptance**

Accepting one's emotions and behaviors without judgment can help reduce feelings of shame or guilt that may lead to the use of defense mechanisms. This can be challenging, but accepting oneself as imperfect and human is an important step in developing healthier coping mechanisms. The characters could practice self-acceptance and self-compassion, acknowledging their imperfections and accepting themselves as they are. This can help reduce feelings of shame or guilt that may lead to the use of defense mechanisms.

In conclusion, the appropriate use of defense mechanisms involves awareness, healthy coping mechanisms, self-reflection, communication, and acceptance. By using defense mechanisms



consciously and healthily, individuals can better manage stress and emotional pain, and improve their relationships with others. The effective use of defense mechanisms can have significant benefits for individuals, allowing them to manage stress, regulate their emotions, maintain healthy relationships, increase self-awareness, promote personal growth, and build resilience. By using defense mechanisms more consciously and healthily, the characters of "Long Day's Journey into Night" could avoid the negative impacts that they experienced in the play. They could manage their stress and emotional pain more effectively, maintain healthier relationships, promote personal growth and development, and increase resilience in the face of challenges.

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