

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
University of Algiers 02 Abou El Kacem Saadallah
Faculty of Foreign Languages
Department of English



**Dominating the Pleasure Principle to Protect the Self: A
Freudian Study of Ego Defense Mechanisms against Emotional
Distress as Reflected in David Almond's *Skellig* (1998)**

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of a Master of English Literature and Civilization

Submitted by:

Ms. Yasmine Lyna BENALI

Supervised by:

Ms. S. OUKAOUR SAHRAOUI

Academic Year: 2021/2022

BOARD OF EXAMINERS

Ms. L. Dahmane	Chairperson
Ms. S. Oukaour Sahraoui	Supervisor
Ms. A. Belazouz	Examiner

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the substance of this dissertation entitled “*Dominating the Pleasure Principle to Protect the Self: A Freudian Study of Ego Defense Mechanisms against Emotional Distress as Reflected in David Almond’s Skellig (1998)*” is the result of my investigation and that reference or acknowledgment is made, whenever necessary, to the work of other researchers. I am duly informed that any person practicing plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary sanctions issued by university authorities under the rules and regulations in force. I also declare that this Master’s dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other qualification.

Date: June 27th 2022

Signed: Miss Yasmine Lyna BENALI

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my wonderful supervisor Ms. S. Oukaour Sahraoui for her thorough supervision and support in the tumultuous journey of the research enterprise. In addition to the insightful feedback she has provided, I am grateful for the continuous appraisal she has conducted while ensuring that no single detail remained unrefined. I also truly appreciate the confidence she showed in my abilities.

A particular homage to the English department where I have had the pleasure to study the beauties of English literature and civilization. I am grateful for all the honorable lecturers who have partaken in the journey. A special mention to Ms. Zenadji who introduced me to the realm of literary and cultural criticism and provided me with the materials needed for my research.

I would also like to thank Ms. Bezzazi and Dr. Saoudi because their precious pieces of advice paved the way for my agility in the textual analyses I have penned throughout my university years. My deepest regards to Dr. Douifi and Mr. Rouabhia for their insightful introductory lectures on rhetoric along with the academic webinars that have consolidated my writing skills. All the lecturers provided me with a solid background that will serve me in the career that awaits me. Thus, I will make sure those precious times remain in my memory.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my lovely family, especially my grandparents. I owe you the outcome of the research because, for a considerable amount of time, its completion seemed inconceivable. Fortunately, you made its process far more enjoyable. The encouragement provided along the journey is the reason for much perseverance displayed in my research. There have been tough times in that academic journey but your push for tenacity was always resonating in my mind. I am very grateful for your support and sound reasoning. In fact, I have come to understand the necessity of hardships because my recollection of the challenging experience holds a value that I am glad to treasure today.

My deepest thanks to my parents and sister for being there for me throughout the entire Master's program. I also dedicate a special mention to my friends. I sincerely feel the urge to express my gratitude for your support, wise and comforting words to push harder.

Last but not least, I would like to sign off the dedication section with the warmest thanks to whoever reads my work. Thank you for raising significance in a work that mirrors my baby steps in the realm of research.

ABSTRACT

The research attempts to unveil the Ego's use of defense mechanisms to cure the internal distress experienced by *Skellig's* protagonist, Michael. Among the contentions expressed by the psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud, neurotic anxiety is triggered because of an unfulfilled impulse. In David Almond's novel, *Skellig*, Michael feels dethroned by his newborn sister. Her precarious condition shakes Michael's status and sense of peacefulness. The unwanted arrival and the intricacies ushered by the baby lead the protagonist to develop adverse urges for his sister. The Ego's defense mechanisms, namely Repression and Projection, interfere in the character's mind to silence his impulses. The mechanisms' censorship of Michael's pleasure principle paves the way for neurotic distress. Alerted by anxiety, the Ego decides to relegate the impulse to the dream area. Despite the dream's fulfillment of Michael's impulse, distress prompts the Ego to appoint other defense mechanisms with a lenient treatment of the wish, including Fantasy and Sublimation. The calculated approach uses imagination that proves socially adequate with reality because it displaces the protagonist's unexpressed feud with the baby by a conventional impulse. Likewise, Michael is able to indulge in his daydreams and a fair few fantastical trances. Therefore, relying on a psychoanalytic reading, the present dissertation analyses the fantasy work, *Skellig*, to highlight how Michael's Ego has come to select the fitting defense mechanism for his repressed pleasures in order to cure his emotional distress.

Key words: *Skellig*, Psychoanalytic reading, Emotional distress, Fantastical trances, Defense mechanisms.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Board of Examiners.....	i
Declaration.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Table of Contents	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: Ego’s First Attempts to Appease a Tormented Psyche: the Unexpressed Wish in Reality and Dreams.....	8
1. Neurotic Anxiety as a Mirror of a Repressed Rivalry.....	8
2. Dreams as an Illustration of Michael’s Wish Fulfillment.....	13
CHAPTER TWO: Towards a Balanced Psyche: Fantasy and Sublimation as Gratifying Defense Mechanisms against Distress.....	17
1. Confronting Reality through Fulfilling Daydreams.....	17
2. A Sublimated Discharge of Michael’s Impulses.....	22
CONCLUSION.....	26
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	28

INTRODUCTION

Fantasy literature, a popular genre among children and adults alike, has arguably been derided as fiction for mere entertainment. Along with the magical frame and the uncanny creatures, complex characters and themes are also recurrent in fantasy literature. The contention of the present dissertation is that David Almond's *Skellig* (1998), a novel that has been pigeonholed as a children's fantasy work, lends itself to a psychoanalytic reading. Indeed, the behaviour, actions and thoughts of Michael, the protagonist, are largely triggered by the forces of his psychic apparatus. Therefore, relying on Freudian Psychoanalysis, the present dissertation attempts to investigate the inner conflicts as well as the workings of the main character's mind.

David Almond's *Skellig* has received rave reviews that place it as a bestselling work. It also stands in the category of prizewinning novels, including the Carnegie Medal and the Whitbread Children's Book of the year. The story's manifest fame has also incited a cinematic adaptation and a play. However, the author's entry into bestselling records did not happen overnight; Almond was mostly writing short stories in adult fiction with a rejected novel. His first acclaimed children's novel, *Skellig*, discusses diverse deep themes including love, loss and friendship. In an interview conducted by Wordfactory.tv, Almond discusses his short stories and shows how they paved the way for his debut novel. Similar to *Skellig*, David Almond's short stories exhibit his interest in magical realism, "[they] were a mixture of things that had happened to me and my family, mixed in with imaginary things. The imaginary things gave a frame in which the real things could lie" (Kuenzler).

Skellig follows the journey of a ten-year-old child after his family's relocation to Falconer Road. The novel tells the story of the protagonist, Michael, who is in distress since the premature birth of his little sister. Being labelled 'the baby', the protagonist's sister suffers from a heart affliction that provokes panic in the household. As Michael's parents grow extremely preoccupied with the baby's precarious condition, the protagonist feels their indifference. Upon the family's arrival at the new house, Michael finds what he calls 'him' in the garage. The discovery introduces him to a hybrid

creature, part bird and part angel, Skellig. The latter is portrayed as old, infirm and paralyzed by arthritis. Michael pays daily visits to the creature and introduces him to his neighbour Mina. On their night visit, the children make the mysterious discovery of Skellig's wings; they join hands and the three of them move through the air. Before the baby's surgery, Michael's mother dreams of a peculiar entity entering the hospital room, but the children assume it is Skellig. The story ends with Michael and Mina wishing farewell to their friend.

Amid the scarce critical attention devoted to Almond's *Skellig* and to the best of our knowledge, only two studies discuss the psychological aspect of the novel. In her dissertation entitled, *Monstrous Losses and Broken Fairy Tales: Fantasy, Loss and Trauma in Young Adult Literature*, Elizabeth Dabrowski hints at the psychic relief provided through fantasy. She claims that the fantastical creature alleviates Michael's sense of precarious journey, helping him to "evolve and cope" (Dabrowski 39). Moreover, Bullen and Parsons' journal article, "Risk and Resilience, Knowledge and Imagination: The Enlightenment of David Almond's Skellig" implements a parallel perspective. However, their paper consolidates the fantastic with a psychological rationale. The article denotes mental illnesses and considers the fanciful appearance as "a manifestation of unconscious anxieties" (Bullen and Parsons 136). Despite the psychological attribute, the anxieties remained unexplored and the paper fails to ascribe a definite psychological concept for Michael's illusions, including Skellig who is viewed as "a symptom of psychological disturbance" (Bullen and Parsons 135).

The main purpose of this dissertation is to highlight how Michael unconsciously resorts to several defense mechanisms in order to curtail his emotional distress. The protagonist's unfulfilled impulses lead to anxiety. Hence, his Ego intends to satisfy Michael's urge using suitable defense mechanisms. In order to achieve this aim, the research relies upon Freud's fundamental theories of Neurotic Anxiety, Dreams and Defense Mechanisms. Anxiety disorders are commonly experienced by children and adolescents. Children are novices, compared to adults, in handling stressful situations. According to some psychoanalysts, including Freud, anxiety stems from the mind's internal part, the Unconscious. Freud maintains that anxiety is the result of repressed

urges and emotions (qtd. in Morris 192). In Almond's *Skellig*, the protagonist feels dethroned by his newborn sister and grows envious urges towards her. His psychic apparatus impedes his rivalry-based impulse from raising his attention through the Ego's mechanisms of Repression and Projection. Being prevented access to his internal pleasure, his dream area constitutes a ground for temporary fulfillment of his unexpressed wish and emotion. Despite the dreams' wish fulfillment, the Ego has recourse to secondary mental strategies, including Fantasy and Sublimation mechanisms to resist distress. In fact, the aforementioned mechanisms, hold, compared to Projection and Repression, an astute approach to discharge Michael's impulse through imagination. The selected mechanisms are viewed as gratifying because they resort to fantasy to satisfy the impulse. Whereas Bullen and Parsons' article purports that the fantastic escape is a psychological disorder, the present dissertation attempts to highlight the cautious wish-fulfillment pursued by the Ego's gratifying mechanisms in their reinforcement of the fanciful element.

In order to conduct a psychoanalytic reading of *Skellig*, some fundamental questions have been raised. The questions formulated by the research are as follows: Is sibling rivalry accountable for the emergence of Michael's unconventional wish? Is Michael's distress rooted in his repressed and projected wish? Do Michael's dreams mirror an unfulfilled impulse? Is *Skellig* a product of Michael's imagination? Are Michael's Fantasy and Sublimation mechanisms releasing the frustrated impulse into standardized behaviour? Do the defense mechanisms cure the protagonist of the anxiety disorder?

The Austrian neurologist, Sigmund Freud, propounded the term psychoanalysis in his conception of psychoanalytic theory. The formulation of the theory was conducted on various patients who revealed symptoms of psychological disorders. Bertha Pappenheim's hysteric syndrome inspired Freud's clinical treatment and debut in psychoanalysis. The patient was referred to as Anna O and the observation appeared in Freud and the Physician Joseph Breuer's collaborated book *Studies on Hysteria* (1895). Anna O suffered from severe symptoms of hysteria, including "Rigid paralyses of her arms and legs, paresis of the neck muscles, headaches, and somnambulism" (qtd. in Hunter 467). The treatment dispensed through hypnosis unfolded the woman's repressed

and unconscious thoughts to her attention. As a result, her condition improved as she confronted her unpleasant emotions. Through the clinical assessment of psychological disorders, Freud forged the personality theory, commonly called the model of the human mind and the Iceberg theory. The model is composed of two eminent components, the Conscious and the Unconscious.

The Unconscious mind is an emblematic part of the model. It houses two components, the Id and the Superego. The former, according to Freud, stands for the inborn primal instinct and emerges from birth seeking pleasure solely. The Id contains a variety of sexualized urges, unconventional impulses and wishes that chase immediate satisfaction. Their pursuit of pleasure does not leave room for any presence of logic. As highlighted by the father of psychoanalysis, the Id represents the bleak and unreachable side of one's personality (qtd. in Boag 2). On the other hand, the Superego sustains the Ego with ethical standards and mores. If the Ego disregards the Superego's moral compass, the mind is penalized with remorse and shame.

The conscious part of the mind houses the Ego. The latter stands for awareness and represents the reachable memories, feelings and thoughts. The Ego holds a principle based on reality and logic and is referred to as the Reality Principle. The Superego emerges in the mind as a delayed stage after the inborn Id, yet it is instantly hostile to the pleasure-oriented instinctual drive (Cherry). Growing tension between the forces of the Unconscious alerts the Ego's balance. The latter attempts to appease the extravagant Id, and in the interim, it is considerate of the Superego's morals. Thereby, Freud refers to the Ego's compromise as an attempt to reconcile the Id with reality (qtd. in Boag 2).

Anxiety represents one of Freud's acclaimed Psychoanalytic postulations. Also called distress and angst, anxiety has witnessed several revisions in Freud's psychoanalysis. Anxiety is discussed in his book, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926) and is also classified into two types, Neurotic and Objective. The former, which constitutes our research's interest, is a reaction to a repressed urge in the unconscious whereas the latter is a factual source of distress. Neurotic Anxiety represents most of Freud's psychoanalytical discussions because it is relevant to his theory of the

Unconscious wherein the Ego's hostile feelings toward the Id emit distress (qtd. in Hazard 237). Being prevented access to the conscious side, the wish turns into a frustrated excitation and provokes anxiety (qtd. in Ritter 49).

In one of his renowned works, Freud consolidates his theory of the mind with a set of mental strategies called defense mechanisms. The term reveals itself in Freud's essay, *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence* (1894) and is later expounded by his daughter Anna. The mental processes are unconsciously triggered by the Ego to ward off anxiety and unwanted feelings (Cherry). Repression represents a preeminent defense mechanism. Its role consists in pushing an unpleasant, unconventional event or information out of the individual's conscious perimeter (McLeod). Indeed, Freud views repression as keeping distance from the threatening unconscious urge (qtd. in Boag 74). In other words, the Ego's identification of the pleasure-oriented impulse as a menace to the psyche triggers repression as a means to counter the Id's unreason from reaching consciousness. Sigmund and Anna Freud's prevalent mechanism, Projection, places the unwanted feelings onto some external targets. Hence, the subject will attribute the undesired urges to other persons (McLeod).

The defense mechanisms of Fantasy and Sublimation do not engage in a hostile treatment of the instinct; they displace the wish into more socially authorized ways. In Freud's formulations of Sublimation, he describes it as a mature approach to handling the repressed urge. He claims that Sublimation removes the unconventional premise of the instinct through an artistic discharge, "The energy of the infantile wishful impulses is not cut off but remains ready for use—the unserviceable aim of the various impulses being replaced by one that is higher" (qtd. in Carlin and Capps 16). Sublimation resorts to artistic substitutions that enable the wish and impulse to be "harnessed and directed to more productive and felicitous ends" (Gemes 38). As regards fantasies, the American psychoanalyst George E. Vaillant classified fantasy as a defense mechanism. In his essay *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming* (1908), Freud was the first to praise fantasy in its release of the impulse through the writers' conversion of their imagination into reveries. He also praised the use of one's imagination to reform a defective reality and cope with

distress (qtd. in Jürgen and Rügen 163). Therefore, the imaginative activity serves as an instrument in the wish gratification as well as the amendment to reality (McKeon 146).

The psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams constitutes a ubiquitous influence in today's psychology. Psychoanalysis asserts that dreams are not mere coincidences but relate to the dreamer's experiences and unconscious impulses (Freud 4). The meaning of the dream is premised in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) wherein Freud suggests that a person's desires and wishes are both manifested and fulfilled through dreams and he wherefore declares, "The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind" (Freud 604). Based on the theory, there are two types of dreams, the latent and the manifest dream. The former represents the embedded psychological meaning whereas the second-mentioned is the version brought to the dreamer's attention and kept in memory. Both dreams belong to what the renowned psychoanalyst calls the dream-work, which is a form of censorship in which the unexpressed urges of the latent dream are distorted and further concealed in the manifest dream (Freud 168).

The psychoanalytic analysis of the early manifestation of the unconscious is mainly rooted in Freud's oedipal theory. The Oedipus Complex consists of a repressed Id whose instinctual urge targets the opposite-sex parental figure (qtd. in Shapiro 138). Although psychoanalysis is inclined towards the family structure, sibling relationship constitutes, to the best of my knowledge, a scarce argument among experts in psychoanalysis. The emerging hostility between siblings is perceived through the elder sibling's attitude after the birth of a second sibling. The behaviour is characterized by jealousy, envy and adverse feelings for the newborn sibling followed by marked enmity (qtd. in Carter 289). Few examinations of sibling jealousies are tackled in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) where Freud stipulates that the reasons for the sibling contention are "Rivalry for parental love, for common possessions, for living space" (qtd. in Neubauer 121). Therefore, the elder sibling abuses the younger whereas the second sibling, who is helplessly infuriated, apprehends the abuser (qtd. in Shapiro 141).

The significance of the present dissertation pertains to the anxious challenges endured by the protagonist as his Ego attempts to contain the impulses. In fact, Michael bespeaks the emotional distress encountered by many children who unconsciously repress their desires and longing in order to match reality. Through the psychoanalytic scrutiny of the protagonist's mind, the research highlights, that after that the Ego activated mechanisms producing distress, namely Projection and Repression, Michael's reality principle resorted to protective shields against anxiety through more fitting mechanisms. Therefore, it infers that the Ego's wise selection of defense mechanisms affects a child's demeanour and thoughts. My dissertation highlights how the Ego grants the wish a calculated entry into reality through dreams and daydreams and proves how most of the fantasy tradition entails a psychoanalytic reading that should be worthy of attention. Therefore, the research also proposes a method to establish a truthful diagnosis of distress through psychoanalytic literary analysis.

The dissertation includes two chapters. The first chapter constitutes the first part of the analysis. It displays Michael's unacceptable impulses by examining his neurotic symptoms through his utterances and conduct. It is divided into two sections; the first section deals with Michael's defense mechanisms of Projection and Repression and highlights how the aforementioned mechanisms stunted Michael's impulse, introducing a disorder known as neurotic distress. The second section relies on the Freudian dream interpretation to analyse Michael's unexpressed urge in his dream area. As a matter of fact, recurrent dreams with a similar visual motif affirm the presence of an unfulfilled wish. Although the Ego exercises censorship on Michael's repressed rivalry, dreams accord brief satisfaction to his impulses. The second chapter explores how the Ego selects protective shields against distress through the defense mechanisms of Fantasy and Sublimation. Based on Freud's theory of Daydreaming, imagination amends the impulse with standardized behaviours (qtd. in Ormrod 30). Therefore, the chapter examines how the Ego's concession to Michael's silenced impulse is an apt approach to curtail anxiety.

CHAPTER ONE:

**Ego's First Attempts to Appease a Tormented Psyche: the
Unexpressed Wish in Reality and Dreams.**

Relying on Freudian Psychoanalysis, this chapter attempts to uncover the unconscious wish of *Skellig*'s protagonist. The first section aims at exploring how Michael is subject to an internal anxiety-producing phenomenon. As a matter of fact, the unsettling feeling induced by the family's relocation to Falconer Road is amplified by the baby's sudden arrival and affliction. Thus, Michael feels dethroned which incites him to nurture evil wishes towards the baby. From a Freudian reading of the Unconscious, the Ego deploys defense mechanisms, namely Repression and Projection to impede the impulse from raising Michael's attention. Therefore, the protagonist's unexpressed wish leads to what Freud calls Neurotic Distress. The second section highlights the presence of the protagonist's unfulfilled wishes in his dream area using Freud's dream interpretation. It also explores how the dream grants a subtle expression and fulfillment to the protagonist's impulse.

1. Neurotic Anxiety as a Mirror of a Repressed Rivalry

In David Almond's *Skellig*, the ten-year-old Michael is confronted with the challenges of anxiety and sibling rivalry. According to Freud, anxiety is perceived through marked irritation, intrusive thoughts, and increased apprehension (qtd. in Morris 190). The protagonist's utterances and behaviour express his veiled bitterness and distress soon after his family welcomed a baby. It is the birth of his sister and the array of concerns surrounding her health condition that fill Michael with envy. Freud articulated the complex feelings that are catalysed when a new child arrives in the family. He also asserts that the youngest sibling dethrones the eldest one causing a stressful situation (qtd. in Volling 497). Extremely preoccupied, Michael's parents invest much less emotional effort in their son. Formerly the centrepiece of the family, Michael feels usurped and displaced by the baby. Hence, soon after realizing his loss of status as his parents' sole object of love and attention, Michael evades the places where the baby dwells. In fact, when the protagonist catches his parents' child-rearing habit with the baby, he opts for the repulsive garden, "I went back into the wilderness we called a garden and she went back to the flaming baby" (Almond 5). Moreover, Michael's parents do not seem to understand his unpronounced need for care and attention. When he first approaches the garage door, his mom turns quite aggressive and

angrily scolds him, “Do you not think we’ve got more to worry about than stupid you getting crushed in a stupid garage” (Almond 4). Hence, Michael consistently feels that he is just an inconvenience to his parents; even his inquiries are received with plain irritation, “It’s not important, son. Not Now” (Almond 12).

Sibling Rivalry has not received the same acclaim as many other psychoanalytic concepts. However, based on his personal experience, Freud showed interest in the complexity of sibling rivalries and explored the internal changes that jealousy induces, “I greeted my one-year younger brother (who died after a few months) with adverse wishes and genuine childhood jealousy; and that his death left the germ of (self-) reproaches in me” (qtd. in Ferguson 93). Obviously, Freud held unpropitious wishes towards his little brother; and that is insightful of how the young sibling pertains to the idea of a potential adversary. Consequently, the psychiatrist’s postulation significantly coincides with *Skellig*’s protagonist because the character has come to harbour resentment as a result of the turmoil the baby ushers into his life.

Michael grows indifferent to childhood’s sense of dynamism, aesthetics, and amusement. When the real estate agent Mr Stone notices the protagonist’s concern about the crumbling garage, he attempts to reassure him, “You have to see it with your mind’s eye. See it cleaned, with new doors and the roof repaired. See it as a wonderful two-car garage” (Almond 2). However, Michael who seems to find comfort in the gloomy details of the former owner’s death, digests Stone’s suggestion with acute irritability. Indeed, the boy confesses that the only thing he finds worthy of interest when Stone evokes the ‘mind’s eye’ is Mr Myers’s death circumstances, “I kept thinking of the old man, Ernie Myers. He’d been dead nearly a week before they found him under the table in the kitchen. That’s what I saw when Stone told us about seeing with the mind’s eye” (Almond 2). The fact that Michael mocks the fanciful alternative propounded by the estate agent while death animates his enthusiasm alludes to how the baby’s precarious health affects the protagonist’s sense of entertainment and views.

The unsettling reality fuels the protagonist’s distortion of his own journey. Upon their arrival at the new house, Michael describes the parent’s resolute decision to relocate to

Falconer Road, “They went on like it was a big adventure” (Almond 2). He, then, describes the grimy state of the garage as well as its profuse with unnecessary planks and insects” (Almond 3). The description the protagonist provides hints at a deadly view, “It was like the whole thing was sick of itself and would collapse in a heap and have to get bulldozed away” (Almond 4). The word choice Michael uses is relative to the baby’s sickness; it insinuates that the garage is influenced by the baby’s unwanted arrival. In fact, Michael correlates sickness with the garage as a representation of how the baby infests his journey with unsettled feelings. Therefore, the ominous image of death, illness, and decay has become the only frame worthy of Michael’s attention amid the unforeseen life-changing event.

Michael’s jealousy over his newborn sister receiving fair treatment makes him nurture adverse urges towards her. The conscious level of Michael’s mental apparatus, the Ego, fears the impulse and designates Repression and Projection to contain the urge. Freud’s renowned defense mechanism, Repression, transfers a person’s urge to the Unconscious (McLeod). Freud also contends that silencing the wish causes Neurotic Anxiety. Upon Michael’s late visit to the baby, he feels disoriented about the nature of his prayers, “I did not know what to pray” (Almond 11). He is torn in his prayer until he finally whispers, “Hurry up and get strong if you’re going to” (Almond 11). Even though Michael’s whim bears on the baby’s recovery, the way he articulates his prayer with urgency denotes the nature of his envy towards her. He grows concerned about her survival because his position as the unique child is shattered. Therefore, Michael reassures himself with her likely survival to re-establish the sense of safety carried in his former life. He, then, leaves the place in a hurry right after his mother hears him mumbling (Almond 11). The above quote is significant because it shows Michael being ashamed of the nature of his prayer and unable to comprehend why he just fled the place. Although his physical reaction implies his potential awareness of his immoral longing, his mind fails to understand the motive of the reaction because of Repression. In fact, the latter succeeds in keeping the envious urge that lurks in Michael’s prayer at distance from his conscious perimeter.

Concurrent with Repression, the Ego entails the performance of Projection. The latter confirms the existence of a person's hostile feelings as well as his unconscious ascription of the sentiment to another individual (Banks 403). As a matter of fact, Michael unconsciously projects his envious motives onto different individuals. When Doctor Dan pays a visit to the baby, the parents ask Michael to call the doctor by his name (Almond 7). However, Michael claims, "I did when I had to speak to him, but inside he was Doctor Death to me, and it fitted him much better" (Almond 7). The above quote divulges Michael's unexpressed wish because despising his sister leads him, at times, to consider her death. The ambivalent conduct of the protagonist, who first shows enthusiasm at My Myers' death circumstances, is now repelled by the deadly view characterized by Doctor Dan. Accordingly, his unwanted impulse is attributed to the doctor in order for his impulse to submit an indirect expression; likewise, it provides Michael with a fulfilled impulse since the protagonist gets to confront his pleasures. Furthermore, The death wish held by Michael is described by Freud as a concomitant pattern in sibling relationships, "Many people, therefore, who love their brothers and sisters, and would feel bereaved if they were to die, harbour evil wishes against them in their unconscious, dating from earlier times" (qtd. in Shapiro 154).

Michael's mechanism of Projection extends beyond doctor Dan since the Ego's mechanism discharges through external elements that prove pliable with the impulse. When the protagonist first enters the garage, he makes the discovery of what appears to be a man (Almond 8). Michael is terrified at the thought of the peculiar finding and hopes it was merely part of his dream (Almond 10). However, he finds again the man called Skellig and decides to pay him regular visits. Michael implores Skellig for help, "My baby sister's very ill. Is there anything you can do for her" (Almond 30). Skellig reacts to Michael's plea, "Babies: spittle, muck, spew and tears," to which Michael sighs and states, "It was hopeless" (Almond 30). Even though Michael holds resentful feelings toward the baby, he is disappointed in Skellig's unwillingness to help. In doing so, he ascribes his wish and repressed rivalry to Skellig. Moreover, when his father tells him that the baby is smiling at him (Almond 64) Michael deems what his father considers a smile, an expression of despise, "But it didn't seem like a smile to me" (Almond 64).

The fact that the protagonist assumes that an infant who is not yet able to express itself, harbours resentment, shows that Michael assigns his unacceptable impulse to the baby.

The psychiatrists Paul Stallard and Fergus Law devoted a special feature to children's anxiety. They theorize that several behavioural changes are bound to occur when children are exposed to delicate situations. They claim that a child's uncommon conduct should be taken as a signal of alert in order for the parents to take measures against distress. The latter is detected when children reveal difficulties to concentrate, sleep, and for the most part when they appear as the doctors claim, "Lethargic and uninterested in previously enjoyable activities" (Stallard and Law 91).

Michael seems to confirm most of the changing attitudes of children under distress. At first, Michael was decisive about the school he wanted to attend, "They asked me if I wanted to move school as well, but I didn't. I wanted to stay at Kenny Street High with Leakey and Coot. I didn't mind that I'd have to get the bus through town" (Almond 13). Over time, He confides to Mina about his reluctance to attend class (Almond 40). He also realizes that even his friends Leakey and Coot could not fill the uneasiness he experiences. When his friends converse, he expresses apathy for their conversation, "I couldn't be bothered with it all" (Almond 14). Michael, then, alienates himself to a fence where he gets to see the town where he lived (Almond 14). Second, a blatant lack of concentration is detected in Michael's attempt at his school's assignment, "I put the skeleton picture on the table and looked at it but couldn't concentrate on it" (Almond 38).

As remarked, the Ego's primary defense mechanisms of Repression and Projection concurrently direct the protagonist's behaviour while also engendering distress. Michael's unconscious use of the aforementioned mental strategies involves their presence in his reality. Another side of the mind, namely the dream area, proves the Ego's ability to carry on Michael's unawareness of his impulse. Dreams, despite the occupancy of censorship, enable the fulfillment of the protagonist's unconscious urge through Freud's concept of the dream-work. Therefore, another way to peek into Michael's unconscious is to analyse the hidden meaning of his dreams.

2. Dreams as an Illustration of Michael's Wish Fulfillment

Freud stipulated that dreams consist of the most truthful way to uncover the dreamer's genuine wishes and repressed emotions (Freud 604). The universal activity of dreaming is also praised for constituting the opposite of a person's culminating reality. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the father of psychoanalysis outlined how dreams assist reality, "[they] serve as a safety-valve for the over-burdened brain. Indeed, they possess the power to heal and relieve" (Freud 160). As they deal with reality, dreams display the realistic events experienced in the dreamer's waking state. Michael's day witnesses the presence of birds and the species eventually show up in his dreams. On their first intercourse, Michael and Mina converse in the garden. When Michael reaches the tree where Mina sits, she warns him about the blackbird. The latter appears agitated, squeaking in response to Michael's appearance. Therefore, Mina warns Michael, "That's its warning call. It's telling its family there's danger near. Danger. That's you" (Almond 25). Mina later informs the protagonist about the little birds in the nest as she emphasizes that the baby birds should not be disturbed by his presence (Almond 25).

After his interaction with Mina, Michael is no longer indifferent to the birds (Almond 26); indeed, when the night approaches, his dream selects his latest experience revealing his interest in the species:

I dreamed that the baby was in the blackbird's nest in Mina's garden. The blackbird fed her on flies and spiders and she got stronger and stronger until she flew out of the tree and over the rooftops and onto the garage roof. Mina sat on the back wall drawing her. When I went close, Mina whispered, "Stay away. You're danger!" (Almond 27)

Michael's dreams display two layers of content, the manifest and the latent dream. The former is the version kept in his memory whereas the latter contains his inadmissible wish. The process is commonly called the dream-work or dream censorship. Michael's manifest content is the perceptible visual in Michael's memory, but the real meaning behind his dream is the latent version unknown to him. Considering the fact that the baby is fed on insects as well as the birdlike appearance she develops, the dream alludes to its acquisition of Michael's residue of the day. As a matter of fact, earlier that day,

Michael was informed about how birds sustain protection in their nest. The baby birds are very frail but fortunately, their parents assist them until they become far more resilient. The boy is particularly engaged in the idea of a warm shelter wherein safety dwells. The hidden meaning of the protagonist's wish conveys that, similar to the birds' favourable development, the baby will thrive. Another significant element hints at the restrained latent dream, namely the depiction of a dangerous protagonist. Since the dream abides by the notion of censorship, the articulation of the unconscious urge is indistinct to Michael. As observed in his day's residues wherein Mina warns him of the birds' reservation about potential intruders, Michael's latent dream implies that he should not partake in the baby's pleasant home because he only considers his position as a unique child. Accordingly, he is portrayed as dangerous due to his unexpressed rivalry.

Michael does not acknowledge his wish and feelings. Nevertheless, their implicit expression through the dream-work evinces that they are being fulfilled. In other words, dreams emit the expression of the wish despite the boy's unrecognition of his impulse. Therefore, dreams represent a ground of implicit gratification as they are stimulated by the urgency of the wish (qtd. in Boag 4). In fact, before the child enters the garage where he encounters Skellig, he appears frightful and takes a deep breath, "I looked up at the blackbird on the garage roof and saw how it opened its yellow beak so wide as it sang. I saw the sheens of gold and blue where the early light shone on its black" (Almond 28). The significance of the passage highlights how Michael is attentive to the birds to which he formerly expressed an unsettled opinion. As remarked, he now stirs courage from them since his dream praises the species. Therefore, dreams prove effective in amending an unsettling reality because the protagonist, despite his defeatist and distorted perceptions, can now treasure the constituent of the trivial reality after its occurrence in the dream, "Truths and dreams are always getting muddled" (Almond 52).

Michael's series of dreams rely on the same motif, namely the protective nest. In one of his dreams, there is not a single presence of his sister, but Michael exclusively. The boy says, "When I slept, I dreamed that my bed was all twigs and leaves and feathers, just like a nest" (Almond 32). The researcher, Donna H. Kaiser, illustrates the idea of

children's affinity for birds. She suggests that the bird's nest, at an emotional level, forwards a sense of attachment, safety and protection (qtd. in Sheller 120). Michael seems gratified by his former dream of the delighted baby, but his envy is unconsciously amplified when he cannot benefit from the same affectionate surrounding as her. The passage marks a plain manifestation of Michael's unconscious impulse because few residues of the birds' plumage hint at the protagonist's impulse. Indeed, the plumage indicates that Michael is entitled to the protective home his sister has inhibited. Hence, the dream reconstitutes the peaceful life he experienced before he was dethroned by his sister as well as the loss of his cherished status as a unique child.

Mina's presence educates Michael in many disciplines. The pieces of information she shares about the birds contain solid arguments from her humble searches. The scientific evidence she provides during their conversation about the blackbird chicks surprises Michael. In fact, she enlightens him about the frail nature of the birds' bones (Almond 61). Michael touches the bone, feels the splinters inside, and learns that the light yet solid bone enables the chicks to fly (Almond 61). When the night falls, Michael comes across a fulfilling dream whose content pertains to the realistic day:

The baby squeaked and squealed in fright. She stood at the edge of the nest, flapping her wings, trying for the first time to fly. I saw the great bare patches on her skin: she didn't have enough feathers yet, her wings weren't strong enough yet. I tried to reach for her but my arms were hard and stiff as stone. "Go on!" the doctors yelled. They laughed. "Go on, baby! Fly!". Dr. MacNabola lifted a shining saw. She teetered on the brink. (Almond 83)

Michael's dream is definitely propounding anxious visuals. The dream substantially reveals the prominence of the day's residue because Mina's details about the delicate anatomy of the birds are mirrored in the depiction of the agitated baby. In fact, Mina's piece of information is pertinent to the dream because of the recent baby's hospitalization (Almond 63). As a result, the sister's affliction stirs the day's circumstance in Michael's night dream. The *Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Difference* features the relevance of the day's residues as an ongoing issue in the dreamer's actual life (Hau 1012). Likewise, in Michael's dream, the unrealistic wings'

flaw relates to the protagonist's reality because it hints at the baby's heart deficiency. Despite the stressful portrayal that his dream enfold, Michael is unconsciously reassured by her possible recovery. Similar to the baby chicks' feeble condition and gradual rise, his sister shall undergo the same process. Moreover, his "stiff as stone" arms symbolize his censored hatred. In fact, his inability to help the baby who is in danger pertains to his lack of empathy for her because the stone reflects Michael's uncaring attitude vis-à-vis his sister. Therefore, the wish undergoes temporary satisfaction through its implicit enunciation in Michael's dream.

To conclude this chapter, Michael's mind is tormented by emotional distress. The family's concern for the newborn sibling causes much angst in the boy's psyche. Michael has come to perceive his journey as a dramatic descent, at least through his lenses, into disregard. Since he has come to despise his sister, his Ego finds comfort through the mental processes of Repression and Projection. Despite the censorship exercised by Repression and Projection to curtail the expression of Michael's impulse, his dreams could guarantee the discharge of the urge through a faint representation of the impulse's unconventional premise. Dreams also prove more effective than Repression and Projection because they reach a middle ground between fulfilling Michael's feeling of rivalry and the Ego's hostility to the unacceptable envy. Given the ongoing deterioration of the baby's health, dreams cannot bring integral gratification to Michael's impulse unless the Ego supports them with less contentious mental strategies. Thus, in addition to the fulfilling dreams, other defense mechanisms partake in Michael's journey in order to dismiss his emotional distress.

CHAPTER TWO:

Towards a Balanced Psyche: Fantasy and Sublimation as Gratifying Defense Mechanisms against Distress

Michael's Ego resorting to protection against anxiety is the concern of this chapter. Determined to dismiss Michael's rivalry, the Ego activates new defense mechanisms, including Fantasy and Sublimation to submit socially approved versions of the protagonist's urge and jealousy. The substitution of the aforementioned mental strategies for the mechanisms of Projection and Repression insinuates that distress is still subsisting. The psychiatrist Anna Freud confirms that when the Ego is spurred by ineffective Repression, it develops apt mechanisms (Freud 48). Michael's magical trance and artistic escape reveal his unconscious recourse to Fantasy and Sublimation. Therefore, the section aims at examining how the Ego's latest defense mechanisms satisfy the protagonist's impulses within the boundaries of the Ego's reality principle. Hence, this chapter analyses Michael's behaviour according to the Freudian concepts of Fantasy and Sublimation as well as the mediator Ego in order to reveal Michael's adaptive measures to anxiety.

1. Confronting Reality through fulfilling Daydreams

Fantasy consists of a fanciful fabrication of the mind. In Psychoanalysis, fantasy is a mental strategy that aims at alleviating anxious situations (Grande). Owing to the psychic assistance fantasy displays, Freud regards this mechanism as a fanciful pleasure that relieves the tension caused by repressed needs (qtd. in Ormrod 30). In *Skellig*, as Michael's sister's health condition deteriorates, his parents grow more indifferent to his needs; thus, the protagonist attempts to regain their attention by providing voluntary service to help with the furniture arrangement (Almond 12). Michael awfully seeks diversion from his unpleasant life and by chance his need is gratified when he meets Skellig. The latter is a constituent of the garage's filthiness. At first sight, the creature is described as a grumpy old man looking infested with dead blue bottles (Almond 8). It is not long before Michael learns that Skellig is a grotesque entity. The protagonist sees him catching a spider and ingesting it (Almond 18) and is also appalled at the uncanny feeling of the creature's conduct and infirmity, "His face was pale as dry plaster. His black suit hung like a sack on his thin bones. My heart pounded. The dust was clogging my nostrils and throat. I chewed my lips and watched him" (Almond 19). Moreover,

Michael is repelled by Skellig's smell and believes that the unpleasant odour stems, "[from] the other dead things thing he ate: the bluebottles, the spiders" (Almond 31). However, Michael's curiosity overpowers his revulsion; hence, he grows attentive to Skellig and to whom he presents himself (Almond 20).

Michael's mystifying encounter suggests that Skellig is unrealistic. The latter is established through the protagonist's perception of a rough texture on the creature's back, "Like thin arms, folded up. Springy and flexible" (Almond 31). When Michael asks Skellig if anyone can see him, the creature tells him about his experience with Mr Myers, "[he] used to look at me, but look right through me like I wasn't there. Maybe thought I was a figment" (Almond 54). Even though the frail creature mocks the idea of being depicted as a figment, it has hitherto looked invisible. Michael represents, to Skellig's best knowledge, the first person to look at him and not right through him. Hence, the quote is insightful of Michael's imagination because the creature is manifestly a product of his mind's eye. Whereas Michael believes he makes a random mysterious discovery in the decrepit garage, a psychoanalytic reading propounds the eerie phenomenon as a result of the Fantasy defense mechanism.

Fantasy holds a significant role in the Unconscious. Freud draws parallels between wishes and fantasies and affirms that the former emanates from a negative satisfaction whereas the latter pertains to a positive reconstruction of pleasure (qtd. in Ormrod 30). The quote induces the role of daydreams in revising the unconscious impulse in order to secure a conventional expression of the wish. Similar to the psychiatrist's postulation, Michael unconsciously uses the fantastical Skellig in order to satisfy his wish. When Michael hears his mother's soothing sound while solacing the baby (Almond 27), he decides to visit Skellig. Michael notices the creature's frailty and takes an active role in nurturing him. He hands him aspirin and some refreshments (Almond 28) and even suggests a doctor for his arthritis (Almond 30). The protagonist is reluctant to help his parents with the baby and even flees the hospital's room whenever the adults discuss the baby's health status (Almond 65). As observed, the protagonist evades his sister, but voluntarily assists Skellig. It is, in fact, the mechanism that inserts the idea of illness in order for Michael to re-establish a positive impression of attending to his sister's

situation. Likewise, it is insightful of Michael's early steps in confronting sickness without any inducement of rivalries. Thus, the mind's product delivers an interesting approach to handling the unwanted journey experienced by Michael as well as the concomitant rivalry that results from the baby's condition.

The sudden appearance of the eerie creature coincides with the protagonist's emotional angst because the boy's unexpressed feud with the baby is channelled to a fanciful outlet. The conversion carried by the Fantasy mechanism is deemed suitable for Michael's realistic compass because the boy has come to foster a few concerns for the baby, "I wake up and think of you and there are other things I need to think about. The baby's ill and we hope she won't die but she might" (Almond 55).

Daydreams become part of Michael's journey because the Ego, being a mediator between the conflicting forces of the Id and Superego, consents to Michael's imaginative retreat. The Ego attempts to appease the demands of the inborn drive in a conventional way (qtd. in Prashant 376). Therefore, the Ego welcomes the reveries despite their unrealistic foundation because similar to dreams' censorship, the wishes are expressed cautiously. Commonly known as fantasy, Freud compares daydreams to dreams in their fulfillment of the wish:

The realm of imagination was seen to be a 'reservation' made during the painful transition from the pleasure principle to the reality principle to provide a substitute for instinctual satisfaction which had to be given up in real life. The imaginary satisfactions of unconscious wishes, just as dreams are; and like them they were in the nature of compromises. (Freud 64)

As remarked, daydreams resemble dreams. The content they advance consists of an inventive undertaking in which the balance of the Ego is reassured by the prudent discharge of the wish. The permission granted by the Ego stems from the fact that imagination enables the reality principle to venture into the pleasure-oriented area without triggering anxiety. In other words, reveries are consistent with dreams because the Ego corroborates their role in releasing the unconscious impulse.

The majority of the protagonist's conduct exhibits his mixed feelings about fantasy. When Michael inquires his mother about the origin of wings, she provides him with a story that purports the function of shoulder blades, "They say they're where your wings will grow again one day" (Almond 39). Michael finds the story implausible and claims it is a fairy story for children. Nevertheless, he suddenly rushes to his sister's blades, "I touched her skin and her tiny soft bones. I felt the place where her wings had been" (Almond 39). The passage is significant because it shows how Michael's Fantasy mechanism attempts to keep a regular involvement in his comportment. Similar to pigeonholing his mother's story as a story for a juvenile range, he mocks the concept of the mind's eye proposed by the estate manager (Almond 2). However, his scrutiny of the baby's blades proves how Michael is unconsciously driven by his mechanism to welcome the fantasies that connect him to his inner pleasure. Moreover, the passage discloses how fantasies reinforce the idea of the desired recovery in lieu of his malicious wish toward the baby. Thus, the fantasies' adjustment of impulses prevails over unacceptable desires.

Michael and Mina are subject to several reveries. By night, they leave their houses and sneak into the room where they put Skellig (Almond 118). Michael jubilates at the sensational experience, "I saw ghostly wings at Mina's back. I was lifted from the floor with Skellig and Mina. We turned circles through the empty air of that empty room" (Almond 120). On Michael's home return, he confesses to Mina that he does not know whether it was a dream or sleepwalking (Almond 121). The utopian hallucination turns apposite with Freud's wish gratification through dreams and daydreams. First, Michael's utterance consolidates the features of the fairy tale decor. Second, Michael is practically unable to categorize the intoxicating nature as a hallucination or a dream.

Michael and Mina notice the presence of wings on Skelligs' back. The children believe that the illusion resembles one of their dreams about Skellig's potential evolution into a bird:

He didn't move. She slid the sleeves down over his arms, took the jacket right off him. We saw what both of us had dreamed we might see. Beneath his jacket were wings that grew out through rips in his shirt. When they were released, the wings began to unfurl from his shoulder blades. (Almond 94)

Michael is mostly gratified because Skellig encompasses his former dreams about the companionable birds. Since Michael's dreams commonly portray a protective nest where caregiving is prominent for the frail baby chicks, his realization of the dreams' visuals within his imaginative escape unconsciously satisfies him. The wings infer the presence of an angel because the use of the mythical figure forwards a potential rescue desired by Michael. It is very common to ascribe birds' characteristics to creatures. The researcher, Valentina Concu, stated at a conference, "The depiction of fantastic creatures, like angels or winged horses, includes birds-like wings" (Concu 5). Manifestly, Michael's wish bears on the sibling's survival. The children's enthusiasm at Skellig's wings implies that they hope the winged creature accomplishes the baby's recovery. In fact, their daydreaming experience shows how the composed figment is relative to the soon-to-be baby's recovery. Likewise, it proves how the impulse is assimilated into reality because Michael's fixation with rivalry no longer manifests itself. Henceforth, the protagonist genuinely wishes for his sister's welfare.

Fantasies enable the Ego to approve of their wish dismissal into reality. They successfully provide a substitute for the wish and do not obstruct the measures fixed by the Ego. Through the exotic experience, Michael succeeds in satisfying his longing for the sister's rescue. Although the rescue is not realistically accomplished, Michael's implementation of the eerie figment lessens his distress due to a lack of hostility towards the unconscious urge.

The hallucinatory experience the children undergo shows that Mina, besides Michael, can see Skellig. Before introducing the creature to Mina, the fantastic facet of his new friend troubled him. In fact, due to the surrealist idea characterizing his ties with a non-existent figure, Michael does not confide to someone about his life's inclusion of eccentric phenomena because no one can conceive the plausibility of his story. When his father asks him about the uncommon behaviour he has lately displayed, Michael does not believe it is safe to confess, "For a moment I wanted to tell him everything: Skellig, the owls, what Mina and I got up to in the night. Then I knew how weird it would seem" (Almond 125).

On one occasion, the protagonist is filled with self-reproaches as he claims he mistakes his imagination for a realistic occurrence, “Maybe dreams and truth were just a useless muddle in my mind” (Almond 74). The passage is significant because it indicates that Michael believes his vision of the creature is deviant in a reasonable mind, to which Mina replies, “Sometimes we just have to accept there are things we can’t know. Why is your sister ill? Why did my father die? We have to allow ourselves to see what there is to see, and we have to imagine” (Almond 140). The passage unveils that Mina is adept at using her imagination. Similar to Michael’s anxieties, losing a parent prompts her to indulge in fantasy. Even though her journey contains a fair few intricacies, she is able to adjust them as she fabricates a gratifying atmosphere.

2. A Sublimated Discharge of Michael’s Impulses

Sublimation represents an interesting subject for writers. The author, Luke Phillips, examines the Freudian theory of Sublimation, “Repressing a drive causes it to bubble up in unexpected and unhealthy ways, and so it is to be avoided in favour of sublimation, which is a healthy and socially acceptable channeling of the drive” (qtd. in Phillips 353).

Imagination supplies Michael with a gratifying conception of his journey because the experienced reveries polish his mundane reality and condition the urge, “I tried to feel again the feathers and bones of wings on my shoulders. I opened my eyes, tried to recall the ghostly wings rising at Mina’s back” (Almond 121). Owing to the accomplished imagination, the mechanism of Sublimation aims at reinforcing it because it carries, similar to the Fantasy mechanism, a mature release of the unexpressed desires into valid activities. Freud’s essay *Creative Writing and Daydreaming* posits the idea of imagination through artistic creativity. Writing, like many other artistic creations, consists of a sublimated work in which imagination is performed in a realistic manner. Thus, it implies that the impulse is discharged without engendering distress.

The sublimated art is carried through Michael and Mina's clay activity. The collection of clay models owned by Mina is inspired by animal-like figures (Almond 71). Michael attempts to copy her while working with clay and inadvertently finds himself shaping a human head until he forms his sister’s head (Almond 72). Based on the identified wish,

the protagonist despises his sister for being the source of his ills. Through the craft, it is clear that his sister gains control over his thoughts, but it also infers that Michael creates a bond with the baby. The delicacy in forming his sister's shape shows that he exercises it with great fondness, "I started to shape her, her thin delicate form, her arms and legs" (Almond 72). He even describes the experience, "Like magic" (Almond 72). The aforementioned quotes are significant because Michael's emerging empathy for the baby triumphs over his grudge. Thus, the passages suggest that the sublimated art paves the way for Michael to behave himself since he can now cherish an acceptable urge, namely, that of the baby's survival. Thus, since Michael unconsciously utilizes Sublimation as a defense mechanism, he connects with the baby's survival in the most pleasant way. Moreover, magic generally alludes to unnatural settings, and hence attributing magic to the experience shows how the boy embraces the idea of fantasy. Unfortunately, the clay shrivels in his hand and he decides to leave (Almond 72). The quote reveals that Michael stopped at an early phase of Sublimation. Therefore, the clay model portraying the baby would have been pleasant if it were continued, but its sudden interruption infers that Sublimation was compelled to put an end to the process of purifying Michael's impulse.

The art-based activity that pleases Michael the most is drawing. Unlike clay, drawing elicits frenzy from Michael who describes it, "I felt like the more I drew, the more my hand and arm became free. I saw how what appeared on the page looked more and more like what I saw or what I thought of in my head" (Almond 135). As remarked, his body also reacts to distress. In fact, through fulfilling the wish, distress is being discharged from Michael's mind. Likewise, the protagonist's body illustrates how his external reaction reveals the presence of internal anxiety.

Michael's preliminary attempt at drawing depicts life occurrences. The vision that his drawing features consists of what Michael assumes the baby witnesses throughout her challenging journey:

I drew the baby time and again, sometimes focusing on her wide, bold eyes, sometimes on her tiny hands, sometimes on the way her whole body arched when she rested on your knee. I drew the world as the baby might see it: the long hospital ward filled with lumbering adults, the networks of wires and tubes and bleeping instruments filling the foreground, the faces of nurses smiling down. In the end, I drew Skellig at the door to the ward. I felt the burst of excitement she would feel to see this, the quickening of her heart, the flickering of her life. (Almond 136)

The passage represents the Ego defense mechanism's greatest performance. Michael is no longer absorbed in selfish motives and is extremely worried about his sister's exposure to a demanding situation at a tender age. He realizes that the baby has been through enough misfortune. Therefore, as a means to foreshadow her recovery, he inserts Skellig into the hospital framework. In fact, by combining art and fantasy, the protagonist unconsciously reassures his sister about her eventual rescue.

The dimension of fear portrayed in the baby's sickness is a reality that is not distorted by art. Hence, the fact that Michael's drawing maintains a realistic basis as it depicts a fantastic version of the baby's rescue shows the art as a sublimated performance of the protagonist's mechanism. Through analysing Freud's Sublimation mechanism, the researcher, Shane O'Brien, claims that it "serves the subject in offering an outlet in which neither reality nor pleasure is forsaken" (qtd. in O'Brien 7). Accordingly, both reality and the wish are being gratified through a balanced art-based discharge.

The surgery performed on the baby proves successful. Even though the procedure was stressful for the family, Michael remained optimistic (Almond 162). His confidence is arguably the outcome of the mediation of the Ego. Unlike his former inclination for bleak perceptions of his surrounding when he moved to Falconer Road, Michael exhibits empathy, inquiring, "Can love help a person to get better?" (Almond 161).

As observed, by the end of the novel, the Unconscious no longer fills Michael's psyche with distress. In fact, even if the surgery is in itself concerning, Michael's unconscious selection of mechanisms enables him to overcome anxiety and enjoy standardized pleasures. When Mina announces Skellig's departure, she reassures Michael claiming that "[he] will always be there, whenever we might need him" (Almond 163). The passage implies that now is the opportune time for the figment to

leave. The news does not seem to agitate the boy because Skellig unconsciously counseled and initiated Michael to adaptive measures for angst and silenced urges through the beauties of a parallel fantasy world. This is perceived in Michael's communion with the baby as he pricks a benevolent ear to her heartbeats, "Can you feel it? Her heart beating right in there beside my own?" (Almond 164). As remarked, Michael encourages Mina to feel the warmth of the felicitous experience, "Concentrate. It's like touching and listening and imagining all at the same time" (Almond 164). The quote marks a significant stage in Michael's journey because it proves how his mind implements imagination as a shield against imminent anxieties.

To conclude this chapter, since the Ego's initial use of Repression and Projection mechanisms was unsuccessful, Michael's Ego proved capable of deploying more mature ones, namely Fantasy and Sublimation, to manage his internal conflict. Whereas the story first portrays the protagonist's unsettled feelings and ambivalent urges, the denouement shows Michael nurturing sympathetic and decent sentiments. In other words, thanks to the efficient mental strategies of Fantasy and Sublimation, the reconciliation between the Reality Principle and Pleasure Principle eventually occurs, leading to the annihilation of anxiety.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation unravelled the protagonist's unconscious attempts to determine the appropriate defense mechanism to cope with distress. The research highlights Michael's inimical feelings for his newborn sister, revealing how his oblivion to his adverse urges induces anxiety. Freud theorized that distress stems from an actual impediment to the Id's impulse. The psychiatrist also contended the role of reveries in releasing a frustrated wish. Therefore, a Freudian reading was deemed convenient in the analysis of Michael's behaviour, dreams and fantastical trances.

The first chapter examined the involvement of the defense mechanisms of Repression and Projection in Michael's dreams and sense of reality. In the first section, Michael is shown harbouring ambivalent sentiments towards his newborn sibling. As a matter of fact, the 'usurper' dethrones him from his status of the unique child and deprives him of his parent's love and attention. Repressing and projecting his hostile feelings prove ineffective as Michael becomes prone to neurotic anxiety. In the second section, an examination of Michael's manifest and latent dreams has helped uncover their hidden meanings. In fact, Freud's dream work showed that Michael's dreams gratify the unconscious impulses through a censored expression. Therefore, the chapter has revealed how the silenced urges are partially released through a substitute reality.

The second chapter highlighted the persistence of Michael's impulses, propounding a formula to release them through the defense mechanisms of Fantasy and Sublimation. The contention of the research is that Michael's discovery of Skellig is a fabrication of his mind. The figment consists of a psychic help for Michael because, according to Freud's Daydream theory, the mechanism of Fantasy mends the immoral urge and secures its expression. Therefore, with a careful discharge of Michael's impulse, the Ego consents to the activity of imagination as a potential cure against neurotic symptoms. Eventually, Sublimation has provided an artistic discharge for Michael's frustrated urge.

Whereas a first reading of Almond's *Skellig* suggests a simple plot about friendship, a psychoanalytic study undeniably pushes the boundaries of meaning by highlighting a psychic battle against anxiety through the Ego's deployment of an array of defense mechanisms. The dissertation observed the various mechanisms carried by the protagonist's mind after a failed attempt with the primary defense mechanisms of Repression and Projection to manage the protagonist's immoral urge. Confronted with an enduring distress, Michael's Ego relegates the impulse to the dream area in order to grant a censored discharge. However, only the Ego's psychological strategies of Fantasy and Sublimation proved efficient in taming Michael's urge as well as alleviating his anxiety. Therefore, relying on Freud's psychoanalytic principles of Neurotic Anxiety, Dream Interpretation, Ego Defense Mechanisms, the Unconscious and Daydreams, the research has attempted to shed light on Michael's internal distress. The outcome of the present research may hopefully induce further studies on unexplored psychoanalytical aspects entailed in fantasy literature in general and in David Almond's *Skellig* in particular.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Source

Almond, David. *Skellig*. New Yearling Edition, 1999.

Secondary Sources

Books:

Agrawal, Prashant. *Review of Psychiatry*. BlueRose Publishers, 2021.

Ferguson, Harvie. *The Lure of Dreams: Sigmund Freud and the Construction of Modernity*. Routledge, 1996.

Freud, Anna. *The Ego and The Mechanisms Of Defense*. Karnac Books, 1993.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, edited by James Strachey. Translated by James Strachey. Basic Books, 1995.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol XX An Autobiographical Study Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety, edited by James Strachey. Translated by James Strachey, Anna Freud. Assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson. The Hogarth press Limited, 1959.

Michael Mckee, editor. *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*. The John Hopkins University Press, 2002.

Nathan, Carlin and Donald Capps. *The Gift of Sublimation: A Psychoanalytic Study of Multiple Masculinities*. Lutterworth Press, 2015.

Ormrod, James. *Fantasy and Social Movements*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Shapiro, Barbara. "Sibling Rivalry: A Phenomenon of Construction and Destruction." *Brothers and Sisters: Developmental, Dynamics, and Technical Aspects of the Sibling*

Relationship, edited by Salman Akhtar and Selma Kramer, Jason Aronson Inc, 1999, pp. 137-158.

Straub, Jürgen and Jörn Rüsen, editors. *Dark Traces of the Past: Psychoanalysis and Historical Thinking*. Berghahn Books, 2010.

Journal articles:

Banks, Robert. "Religion as Projection: A Re-Appraisal of Freud's Theory." *Religious Studies*, vol. 9, no. 4, 1973, pp. 401-426. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20005093.

Boag, Simon. "On Dreams and Motivation: Comparison of Freud's and Hobson's Views." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 7, 2017. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2016.02001.

Boag, Simon. "Freudian Repression, the Common View, and Pathological Science." *Review of General Psychology*, vol.10, issue 1, 2006. doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.10.1.74.

Boag, Simon. "Ego, drives, and the dynamics of internal objects." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 5, 2014. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00666.

Bullen, Elizabeth and Elizabeth Parsons. "Risk and Resilience, Knowledge and Imagination: The Enlightenment of David Almond's Skellig." *Children's Literature*, vol. 35, 2007, pp. 127-144. *Project Muse*, doi:10.1353/chl.2007.0007.

Carter, Alice and Fred Volkmar. "Sibling Rivalry." *Advances in Clinical Child Psychology*, vol. 14, pp. 289-295. *SpringerLink*, doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4613-9838-7_9

Gemes, Ken. "Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation." *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 38, 2009, pp. 38-59. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20717974.

Hazard, Paul Alfred. "Freud's Teaching On Shame." *Laval théologique et philosophique*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1969, pp. 234–267. *Érudit*, doi.org/10.7202/1020145ar.

Hunter, Dianne. "Hysteria, Psychoanalysis and Feminism: The Case of Anna O." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1983, pp. 464-488. *JSTOR*, doi.org/10.2307/3177609

Morris, Robert R. "Anxiety: Freud and Theology." *Journal of Religion and Health*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1973, pp. 189-201. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27505173

Neubauer, Peter B. "Rivalry, Envy, and Jealousy." *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, vol. 37, issue. 07, February 2017, pp.121-142. *Taylor & Francis Online*, doi.org/10.1080/007973

Phillips, Luke. "Sublimation and the Übermensch." *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2015, pp. 349-366. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/jnietstud.46.3.0349.

Ritter, Hal. "Anxiety." *Journal of Religion and Health*, vol. 29, no.1, 1990, pp. 49-53. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27506046>

Sheller, Sandy. "Understanding Insecure Attachment: A Study Using Children's Bird Nest Imagery." *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, vol. 24, 2007, pp. 119-127. *Semantic Scholar*, [doi:10.1080/07421656.2007.10129427](https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2007.10129427).

Stallard, Paul and Fergus Law. "The Psychological Effect of Traumas On Children." *Children and Society*, vol. 8, issue 2, 1994, pp. 89-97. *Wiley Online Library*, doi.org/10.1111/j.1099-0860.1994.tb00417.x

Volling, Brenda L. "Family Transitions Following the Birth of a Sibling: An Empirical Review of Changes in the Firstborn's Adjustment." *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 138, no. 3, 2012, pp. 497-528. *NCBI*, [doi: 10.1037/a0026921](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026921).08.1982.11823360.

Dissertations:

Dabrowski, Stephanie Elizabeth. *Monstrous Losses and Broken Fairy Tales: Fantasy, Loss and Trauma In Young Adult Literature*. Master's Thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2016. Accessed on 3 Apr 2022.

O'Brien, Shane. *A Psychodynamic Exploration of the Origins, Development and Completion of an Artwork*. Higher Diploma, Dublin Business School, 2018, esource.dbs.ie/handle/10788/3725

Conference Proceeding:

Concu, Valentina, editor. *The Speaking Birds: a Cognitive Approach to the Symbolic Representation of Animals in Literature*, 4 Mar. 2016, Indiana, Perdue University, 2016.

Websites:

Cherry, Kendra. "20 Common Defense Mechanisms Used for Anxiety." *Verywell Mind*, 29 Nov. 2021. www.verywellmind.com/defense-mechanisms-2795960. Accessed 9 May. 2022.

Grande, Dianne. "Defense Mechanisms: Definition, Types, & Examples." *Choosing Therapy*, 27 Oct. 2021. www.choosingtherapy.com/defense-mechanisms/. Accessed 5 May. 2022.

Kuenzler, Lou. "In Interview: David Almond." *Word Factory*, 29 Sep. 2008. thewordfactory.tv/in-interview-david-almond. Accessed 08 May. 2022.

McLeod, Saul. "10 Defense Mechanisms: What Are They and How They Help Us Cope." *Simply Psychology*, 10 Apr. 2019. www.simplypsychology.org/defense-mechanisms.html. Accessed 8 May. 2022.

Encyclopedia:

Hau, Stephan. "Day's Residues." *Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences*, 30 Sept. 2017, Springer, Cham. doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-28099-8. Accessed 29 May 2022.