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Self-Defense Mechanisms in John Green's

The Fault in Our Stars

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DEDICATION

***In the name of ALLAH, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, All the praise is due to
ALLAH alone***

*I would like to dedicate this modest work first to the man that has raised me and always
believed in me...*

TO MY GRANDFATHER MAADAOU MILOUD;

*the one that had been waiting impatiently for this moment
unfortunately, his beloved soul has left us at the last step before reaching my goal
may Allah make his abode in his spacious gardens.*

TO MY MOTHER;

*the fighter that had brought me to this world and made me who I am
thank you for being both parents and for all your sacrifices
I shall never be able to repay you for the things you did to me.*

TO MY AUNT;

my second mother, my friend and my supporter ever since I was a child.

To my family and my friends

To all the ones whose lives affected mine and added to the richness of my being;

*I am endlessly grateful,
without you, I would not have become the woman I am today.*

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for blessing me with strength, knowledge and patience to accomplish this modest work.*

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levels of education.*

ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims at exploring the self-defense mechanisms that the main character Hazel Grace Lancaster has in John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* through the use of the psychoanalytical theory. Since our physiological state has a significant effect on our psychology, this research endeavors to explore the essence of Hazel's psychological issues through investigating the relationship between her physiological dimension and her psychological dimension according to Egri Lajos' *Three Dimensions of Human Character*. In addition to Abraham Maslow's theory of *Human Motivation* which shall further be used to demonstrate how this character's inability to maintain a better health condition has diminished her need for social interactions. Moreover, Hazel's fears and insecurities shall be detected and analyzed to highlight their effects on her behaviors and her way of thinking within the novel. After a thorough analysis of her core issues, the various defense mechanisms that Hazel has been unconsciously employing were deduced as well as the reasons behind their manifestation according to her behaviors and thoughts within the story.

Key terms: Defense mechanisms, Physiological Dimension, Psychological Dimension, Human Motivation, Fear, psychoanalysis.

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Background of the Study

Postmodernism is said to be both a response to a contemporary state of existence and a textual aesthetic practice. It began to be recognized as a response to Enlightenment beliefs and values which were indirectly represented in Modernist literature in the aftermath of the Second World War. Postmodern literature, analogous to postmodernism, is both difficult to be given a fixed definition and to establish its exact features, scope, and meaning. Although in a disorderly world modernist literature is striving for significance, yet postmodern authors generally neglect the need for meaning. They use metafiction and pastiche to undermine the existence of a single narrative force in a given literary work. In comparison, postmodern writers use a variety of cultural elements, of which certain themes and genres were previously considered inappropriate for literature such as discrimination and heterosexuality.

The *New York Times* considers John Green as bestselling and an award-winning author. This was also for winning several trophies including the Edgar Award, Printz Honor, and the Printz Medal. Moreover, Green was among the finalists for the LA Times Book Prize twice. Among his most famous writings: *Looking for Alaska* (2005), *An Abundance of Katherines* (2006), *A cheerastic Christmas Miracle* (2008) which was a part of the *Let It Snow* collaboration with Maureen Johnson and Lauren Myracle, *Paper Towns* (2008), *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* (2010) with David Levithan, *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012). In addition to a set of short stories like: *The Approximate Cost of Loving Caroline* which was a part of *Twice Told* (2006), *The Great American Morp* that is a part of the *21 Proms anthology* (2007), *Freak the Geek* that is a part of *Geektastic: Stories from the Nerd Herd* (2009) and *Reasons* that is a part of *What You Wish For* (2011).

After finishing his studies at Keynon College, Green worked as a chaplain at a hospital in Columbus, Ohio. He was planning to become a priest in the Episcopal religion. Nevertheless, after working in a hospital with ill children, he was inspired to write. This experience later inspired him to write *The Fault in Our Stars* as well. John Green spent almost ten years writing this book. However, one day he met a girl named Esther Earl who was one of

his fans. Only then he finally found a source of inspiration to invent the character Hazel. Esther was suffering from an incurable lung cancer just like the protagonist of his book. When meeting her, his relation with the story has changed completely and gave him a vivid illustration of dying while being young.

The reason behind the vast popularity of this book is the fact that it deals with a realistic story of a seventeen years old girl named Hazel Grace Lancaster that has been diagnosed with an incurable illness which is stage IV thyroid cancer since she was thirteen years old. In this story, however, it is not only one protagonist that is fighting against cancer; there is also the male protagonist Augustus and his friend Isaac. This story is an illustration of cancer patients' struggle in coping with their deteriorating health conditions and escaping their unfortunate lives. Hazel namely has been seeking any sorts of consolation for herself in order to numb her agony and find an alternation to the grim reality that she was living.

Unlike the elderly, most teenagers usually have healthy bodies which enable them to enjoy their youth. Therefore, when Hazel was unable to breathe properly or indulge at any activity that requires too much energy she started to feel as an inferior. Consequently, as a way to feel more ease and neglect the things that make her uncomfortable, her unconscious starts to employ a set of defense mechanisms in order to facilitate overcoming the hardships that she faces in her life.

Research Problem

Psychoanalysis offers an insight into the characters' psyche in a given literary work through which we can find interpretations of their behavioural attitudes that are usually the result of some other hidden factors. In *The Fault in Our Stars*, the main character Hazel has a set of self-defense mechanisms that are shown through her behaviours in the story. This research attempts to shed light on the reasons that make Hazel's unconscious employ these defense mechanisms.

Research Hypothesis

In *The Fault in Our Stars*, the main character Hazel suffers from an incurable lung cancer since the age of thirteen. Her inability to regain her normal healthy life back is a challenging and harsh reality for her to accept. In the novel, this character isolates herself from everyone and spends all of her days at home reading books. Her behavioural attitudes reveal a manifestation of a variety of self-defense mechanisms. Therefore, it is hypothesized that her unconscious is employing these mechanisms as a consequence of her fears or anxieties.

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between Hazel's unsatisfied needs and her lack of motivation for social interactions?
- How is Hazel's physiological dimension affecting her psychological dimension?
- What are the types of defense mechanisms that Hazel has been unconsciously employing in order to overcome her fears or anxieties?

Research Objectives

This study sets five main aims which are:

- Analyzing the relationship between the main character's physiological needs and her lack of motivation for social interactions.
- Investigating the effects of Hazel's physiological dimension on her psychological dimension.
- Finding the types of defenses that Hazel has as a way to overcome her fears or anxieties.

Methodology

This study is conducted according to the psychoanalytical theory. The main character's psychological state is analyzed according to some basic Freudian concepts such as defense mechanisms, the unconscious and the core issues. In addition to two theories that will explain further the essence of her main psychological issues and their relation with her health condition. The first is Maslow's theory of *Human Motivation* which entails that there is a hierarchy for human needs and that an individual is unable to fulfill certain needs unless the needs of the level beneath it are satisfied. In this sense, we can investigate the unsatisfied needs that are hindering Hazel from seeking social and emotional relationships. The second is Egri Lajos' theory of *The Three dimensions of Human Character* that clarifies the impact of the physiological, psychological and social dimensions on one another. Through this theory, we can deduce the relationship between Hazel's physiological dimension which includes her

health condition and her psychological dimension which involves the defense mechanisms that she has; in addition to the revealing effect of these two dimensions on each other.

This research belongs to the qualitative method with two types of data sources, namely primary and secondary data source. Since the study is corpus-based, the primary data source is John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars*; meanwhile, the secondary data are other materials related to the study that were collected mainly from the library, books, articles, journals and the internet.

Structure of the Dissertation

The present study is divided into three main chapters: one that is theoretical and two practical chapters. The first one will provide the necessary theoretical background for this research including all the main psychoanalytical theories and concepts for the upcoming analysis. The second chapter will discuss the essence of Hazel's core psychological issues and the effect of her physiological state on her psychological one according to the story. In the third chapter, all the defense mechanisms will be analyzed with given illustrations from the novel in order to reveal the manifestation of these defenses through Hazel's behaviors, speech, and acts.

**Chapter One:
The Theoretical Background**

Chapter One: The Theoretical Background

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the modernist era literature had undergone a noticeable emergence of psychoanalysis as a prevailing theory offering new compelling interpretations of human activities and their internal conflicts. Therefore, this chapter offers an exploration of the theoretical framework on which the analysis of the main character in *The Fault in Our Stars* shall be conducted. Moreover, it provides explanations of the basic psychological concepts which are related to this study. In addition to introducing the main theories that will take a part in the upcoming psychoanalytical study such as the notion of defense mechanisms, Maslow's hierarchy of *Human Motivation*, Egri Lajos' *Three dimensional of Human Character*, as well as a detailed background concerning the core psychological issues which are common for most of the human beings.

1.2 The Unconscious

Freud denied the importance of studying the conscience alone in psychology, but he claimed to what he called "sub-consciousness", or rather "unconsciousness".

The unconscious is the larger circle which includes within itself the smaller circle of the conscious; everything conscious has its preliminary step in the unconscious, whereas the unconscious may stop with this step and still claim full value as a psychic activity. Properly speaking, the unconscious is the real psychic; its inner nature is just as unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is just as imperfectly reported to us through the data of consciousness as is the external world through the indications of our sensory organs (Freud).

While investigating the conscious mind, Freud found that it consists of everything that we are aware of and all the experiences which can be directly recalled such as our sad and joyful moments and recollections. However, Freud believes that certain events or feelings are too painful and frightening to the point where all the information related to them is locked away or "repressed" in the unconscious mind (Smart 60).

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud defined the term unconscious as being without awareness but psychologically it means that human beings are obsessed with their desires, conflicts, memories, and fears of which they are not aware. Thus, the unconscious is the storehouse of everything which makes us afraid.

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According to Smart, the role of the unconscious is mainly to function as the repository for thoughts, feelings and experiences which are unacceptable and end up being repressed by the conscious mind. Therefore, it exemplifies a means by which the rational human agency is “de-centered” and is no longer the driving force of human actions. This idea has been highly influential in human geography as when Freud compared the psyche with an iceberg which hides deep down more than what is on the surface. The observed small floating part of that iceberg is the “consciousness” of the human being while the greatest non-floating part is the “sub-consciousness” where all the suppressed feelings, fears and desires are found deep down in the hidden part. Consequently, Freud says that we cannot understand human behaviors unless we understand these unconscious motives.

To conclude, the unconscious is a chief element in investigating the motives which form each character’s feelings and way of thinking in a given literary work. When trying to face, evade problems, or gain pleasure, conflicts are set as obstacles in the face of one’s pleasure or happiness, this encourages the unconscious to set its defenses, the so-called “defense mechanisms”.

1.3 Core Issues

In psychoanalysis, anxiety is among the main concepts that when making a close examination to it, we will come to the clearest view on the core issues of any individual. Fortunately, the moment when we see dreams while sleeping or when we feel exhausted before going to bed we encounter a deep feeling of sadness; our defense mechanisms collapse temporarily and as that occurs we would sense our anxiety and raise it from being locked in the unconscious level to the conscious one (Tyson 5).

Studying core issues comes before studying self-defense mechanisms because they are more profoundly ingrained in one's personal life experiences. There is a number of specialists in the field of psychoanalysis who assert that the core issues of any individual are determined in their childhood before reaching the age of twelve. Therefore, core issues are the true color of any individual's personality. Regardless of the decisions that people might take when growing older, or the changes that they try to make to their personalities; one’s core issues will always be highly influential of their personalities.

According to Tyson, anxiety is the psychoanalytic terminology of several disorders which trigger a feeling of uneasiness, fear and stress. Usually, anxiety manifests

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itself to our consciousness the moment when our defenses collapse, even if just temporarily. Consequently, it is anxiety that will reveal the core issues of every individual. Core issues, on the other hand, are very significant when looking for the sources which influence people's personalities. These issues are inescapable; they will accompany people from their childhood till their adulthood and for the rest of their lives (Kathy 177).

All in all, Sigmund Freud states that there are five main core issues. The first is *fear of intimacy* which is the constant and unbearable sense of threat when having any sort of emotional attachment or intimacy with other individuals which makes the person believe that he/she would get hurt by making themselves vulnerable when being in love with anyone. Thus, they would prefer to emotionally distance themselves from people in order to remain safe. The second is *fear of abandonment* which is the ongoing conviction that our family members, friends, or partners will abandon us one day either physically or emotionally by losing interest towards us. The third is *fear of betrayal* which makes us doubt the loyalty of each person that we know. People who have such an issue would face difficulty in trusting others; they might think that their partners are cheating on them or their friends are mocking them behind their backs and even their parents lying to them. The fourth is *low self-esteem*. It is the feeling of unworthiness and the deterioration of one's self-image which leads people to believe that they are less worthy of receiving appreciation, affection, love and care from others. The fifth and final core issue is the *insecure/unstable sense of self*; in this case, one would feel lost and unaware of his/her identity since he/she is unable to maintain a stable definition of this latter.

1.4 The Notion of Self-Defense Mechanisms

The Encyclopedia of Psychology defines defense mechanisms as coping strategies that work against negative or unwanted feelings like stress, frustration or anxiety. On the other hand, Sigmund Freud defines these defenses as the ego's defensive tools which force all the unwanted feelings and thoughts to remain in the unconscious.

Additionally, another definition was given by The American Psychiatric Association: "Defense mechanisms are patterns of feelings, thoughts, or behaviors that are relatively involuntary. They arise in response to perceptions of psychic danger or conflict, to an unexpected change in the internal/external environment, or in response to cognitive dissonance".

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Today, the thought of uttering certain words and performing certain acts without understanding the purpose behind those behaviors is no longer a difficult matter to comprehend. Although there is a claim that these actions compensate for a variety of unconscious psychological operations has been less warranted for several years. However, until now academic psychologists have developed a great interest in the matter that eventually contributed to the validation of unconscious mental processes (Crammer 1).

Among the unconscious psychological operations, a set of mental activities is known as defense mechanisms. These defenses are different in terms of the particular ways in which they operate; however, all of them fulfill one main function which is preventing the individual from going through extreme anxiety. Such processes exist on unconscious basis, apart from various conscious coping strategies. Therefore, individuals have these ongoing processes without being aware of their operations (Crammer 1).

Ernest R Hilgard mentions that defense mechanisms are the immediate reactions to frustrations. They are employed to solve problems, help in protecting the individual's self-esteem and defending them against anxiety when facing continuing frustrations.

Nipa Nitayayon, on the other hand, sees that defense mechanisms are ways which help people release tensions by avoiding their problems and mainly the ones which are hard to solve which cause unpleasant feelings. Additionally, individuals find it easier to live at peace among other individuals in their societies due to the help of defense mechanisms and their role in the reduction of conflicts, stress, anxiety and, several other disturbing emotions.

After the previous definitions, we conclude that defense mechanisms are psychological devices employed at the level of unconsciousness for people to adapt to dissatisfactions, tensions, and stress through securing one's ego (self-esteem) and helping them have an extended period of time in order to work on their issues.

1.4.1 Contributions of Defense Mechanisms to Self-Adjustments

Defense mechanisms are considered as being the main element which contributes to one's ability to have emotional homeostasis. Due to having these defenses, there will be a protection of the conscious mind from being directly exposed to negative emotional input like that associated with anxiety and depression. Psychological defense mechanisms operate via the mitigation of harmful feelings, in order to maintain or regain a better state of mind.

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Therefore, they operate similarly to the way in which the immune system does, which means that they operate without any conscious decision from the human being (Bowins 1-2).

Ernest R. Hilgard's argues that the lack of problem-solving may arise when people attempt to solve problems directly. When the difficulties are too challenging to overcome, the person may use defense mechanisms in dealing with them. Thus, defense mechanisms enable us to adapt easily in different ways. Firstly, defense mechanisms offer people a bigger room for overcoming the problems that are too difficult to be solved immediately. This period of time will aid them in finding the ultimate solution. Also, an individual would experience more peace during his/her healing period as a consequence of the temporary relaxation in that extended period of time. Secondly, these mechanisms enable us to have different life experiments with different roles and learn new adaptation strategies. Same as when a person can learn from judgments to fix his/her misbehaviors. The same goes with the self-deception which may provide ways to distorting the self. Thirdly, the indicative acts of these defenses could be socially beneficial since they move people to challenging areas so as to offer a motivating boost that contributes to positive better changes.

To conclude, people often tend to believe that defense mechanisms are only used by psychiatric patients, particularly psychotics. However, a deep understanding of how defense mechanisms function leads to realize that defense mechanisms also function in the daily life of common and sane people as well.

1.4.2 Types of Defense Mechanisms

1.4.2.1 Selective Perception

Among the variety of defense mechanisms, there is what we call selective perception which is a personal filtering of hearing and seeing things according to one's needs only. It usually occurs when the individual is facing too many difficulties to handle (Berger 55-56).

1.4.2.2 Denial

Denial is the inability to accept an unpleasant reality which usually leads individuals to denial in order not to deal with situations or facts which are unsatisfying. Thus, denial is a way to escaping reality and assuming that the unwanted truth or event had never occurred (Berger 56).

1.4.2.3 Avoidance

Avoidance usually happens when people try to avoid things or people that can cause him/her anxiety through provoking certain feelings or past experiences which he/she has been avoiding (Berger 56).

1.4.2.4 Displacement

In comparison to avoidance where people tend to avoid everything that might cause them anxiety, displacement is a bit more complicated. Due to this latter, people seek to find a less threatening thing or person than their primary source of anger, pain, or fear in order to resort to (Berger 56).

1.4.2.5 Fixation

Fixation occurs when a person develops an obsessive attachment to something because he/she feels unsafe when doing something new; thus, they rather choose their old habitual activities or a harmless choice from their comfort zones. This mechanism can be triggered by an intense sense of confusion or vulnerability (Berger 56).

1.4.2.6 Identification

Identification refers to the adoption of the characteristics of another person's way of thinking, values or attitudes in order to display them later. An individual often uses someone else's qualities and shares his/her accomplishments to feel more self-worth and significance especially when having a monotonous life with few or no achievements (Berger 66).

1.4.2.7 Rationalization

Rationalization is a defense mechanism which includes defending an unreasonable behavior, feeling or belief in a rational way. Berger proposed that rationalization happens when someone rationalizes actions produced by unconscious and unreasonable indicators so that the implicit motivations or intentions shall not be unexposed (Berger 66).

1.5 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Maslow asserts that: "An individual has a hierarchy of motivational needs". In this hierarchy, physiological needs are the most essential for maintaining life, such as sleeping, eating, breathing, and drinking. Abraham Maslow's article *A Theory of Human Motivation* appeared in *Psychological Review* in 1943. This was later the reason behind the development of his book: *Toward a Psychology of Being*. Through this paper, Abraham Maslow sought to

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establish a theory of human motivation focused on their needs, by mainly focusing on his clinical experiences with people, unlike the previous psychological theories like the ones which were established by Freud and BF Skinner who were mostly abstract or animal-based.

This theory establishes that when certain fundamental requirements are not fulfilled, then one must be motivated to fulfill them. Unless the individual meets these fundamental necessities of life, higher needs such as social needs and esteem needs are not yet acknowledged. When people fulfill their physiological needs, their focus will automatically shift to safety needs in order to be released from the risk of physical and emotional damage. These needs may be satisfied by inhabiting a secure place, having medical care and finding a stable career. According to Maslow's model, if an individual feels endangered, there will be no interest given to fulfilling the higher needs in the pyramid until this concern is fulfilled. Once the physiological and safety needs of the lower level are satisfied, other higher-level needs are awakened.

The first level of these higher needs is social needs, such as community participation, friendship, as well as love-giving and receiving. Only when an individual has a sense of "belonging" to others in his/her society, the feeling of importance emerges. Another level of this hierarchy is called esteem needs that has both external and internal needs. The intrinsic requirements of esteem needs include aspects related to self-esteem such as self-respect and the sense of accomplishment. On the other hand, external needs are things like those of social position and recognition within the community or society. Some examples of esteem needs may include: self-respect, accomplishment, popularity, appreciation and social standing.

Eventually, at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there is the ultimate level which is self-actualization. This latter is in the summit of the pyramid; it is the search to achieve one's maximum power as an individual. Unlike the needs which are beneath this level, this need is seldom entirely satisfied. During the ongoing psychological evolution, there will always be new chances for further self-developments. These self-actualized individuals enquire some certain needs like: justice, truth, and wisdom. Self-actualized individuals have recurrent manifestations of high experiences, which are stimulated times of intense joy and peace. However, Maslow asserts that a minority of all the individuals are able to exceed this high degree of self-actualization.

In short, Maslow's theory is focused around the idea that human beings are driven by unsatisfied desires so that all the lower desires must be fulfilled before higher needs can be

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achieved. According to Abraham Maslow's tenets, there are general needs (physiological, safety, love, and esteem) that have to be met before a person can act selfishly. Such requirements have been called "deficiency needs". When an individual is motivated to satisfy these basic needs, they are also progressing towards development and subsequently reaching self-actualization.

1.6 The Three Dimensions of Human Character

When observing several well-constructed characters in literature as in *Othello*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, one can find that all of them are tridimensional characters. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, for example, we are familiar with the way Hamlet looks, his social status, his age and his health condition which makes his attributive peculiarities clearer to the readers. In addition to the entire contextual background of the events, his previous life, the current atmosphere within his family, his experiences and the way that they made him the man he is today. We are further aware of his psychological status and his personal motives for taking certain actions (Egri Lajos 35).

According to Egri Lajos, the three dimensions of any character are its basic foundation. These three dimensions are: physiology, sociology, and psychology. They are the components that constitute the characterization of a literary character and are related to one another. Various combinations of such elements can contribute to various human characteristics (107).

Furthermore, a character is a combination of physiological, psychological, and sociological aspects that reinforce the actions of any person. It contains some characteristics like habits and attitudes (regardless of their origins) under which a person behaves differently from another one. It is the arrangement of someone's actions, as it evolves in interaction with other individuals. The physiological dimension is usually presented by describing a character's physical features, for example, the external looks and wellbeing. External looks may influence the feelings of characters concerning their environment, or the feeling of being safe or insecure.

A character's physiological features are identified by sex, age, or physical appearance, such as their body forms, whether being attractive or not and the hair or skin color. Then, the sociological dimension concerns the characterization of the social environment of the individual. This dimension could be explored successfully by the character's social life,

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education, dwelling, employment and social standing. Lastly, there is the psychological dimension which discusses the behavioral attributes like: attitudes, habits, feelings, and the way of thinking (Roucek and Warren 23).

Eventually, when comprehending that these three dimensions will validate any step of human behavior, it would be more convenient to write for every character and to follow his/her motives until reaching their origins.

1.7 CONCLUSION

Since all human beings are vulnerable, harsh realities and traumatic life experiences can turn into obstacles that might seem impossible to exceed. Consequently, people who are trapped in difficult situations usually seek ways to escape them, or at least to resist against them.

In this novel, Hazel is facing the fact that she has an incurable illness which has drained her both: physiologically and psychologically. This chapter has traced all the theories needed for this psychoanalytical study. It will provide a solid background which will aid in conducting a thorough analysis of the psychology of Hazel.

The next chapter of the present research shall shed light on the core issues that have been affecting this character's behaviors and also find the effect of her illness on her psychology, thoughts, and attitudes throughout the novel.

**Chapter Two:
The Essence of Hazel Grace's Core
Psychological Issues**

Chapter Two: The Essence of Hazel Grace's Core Psychological Issues

2.1 Introduction

In order to understand the reasons behind Hazel's behaviors and life choices, it will be significantly helpful to analyze her psychology in order to take an insight into the problems that she has within her personality.

This chapter provides a study of Hazel Grace Lancaster, the narrator and the protagonist of the story under the light of the psychoanalytical theories. At first, Hazel's physiological dimension and its relation to her psychological dimension will be studied through the use of Egri Lajos' theory of *The Three Dimensional of Human Character* where we shall extract the effect of one dimension on the other on the human character. Moreover, the theory of *Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs* shall be employed in order to observe whether her unsatisfied needs would affect her motivation to accomplish other goals like finding love and making friendships according to the novel.

Eventually, for better visualization of Hazel's personality and character, a close study shall be conducted with main focus on her core issues, their relation with one another and their influence on her behaviors.

2.2 Hazel's Physiological and Psychological Dimensions

Although Hazel has survived her close death, she is aware that her life shall not last for too long. Due to her health condition, Hazel is obliged to take medications regularly and carry an oxygen tank with tubes tangled around her face in order to breathe properly. This medical equipment that accompanies her wherever she goes makes her feel embarrassed and uncomfortable especially around strangers. After suffering from cancer at a young age, Hazel's life starts to mainly center around two main concepts: death and cancer. She starts isolating herself from people, preferring to stay at home and read books. Furthermore, since Hazel's condition is hopeless and her death's potential is higher than other people she starts believing that the ultimate solution in order not to hurt the ones that she admires after passing away is by avoiding any emotional attachments, having relationships, or friendships. Gradually, her perspective towards life starts to become more of a pessimistic one. Hazel ends up believing more and more that a person who is dying is unworthy of being loved.

The physiological dimension has a great effect on the psychological dimension that is usually responsible for the human character, attitudes, moodiness, complexes,

Chapter Two: The Essence of Hazel Grace's Core Psychological Issues

motivation, behaviors, or anger management; therefore, when looking for a way to comprehend the sources of any human behavior one should refer to their motives. For instance, a person who has lost his legs would notice everybody's legs wherever he goes, while another person with two legs would not do the same and perhaps never appreciate such a privilege until losing it. The first person would be affected by his disability in a way that makes his view to the world radically different from the second person.

In *The Fault in Our Stars* Hazel spends most of her days either at hospitals or being sick at home which has deprived her from having a normal childhood in the past, and also from enjoying her adolescence now. In this passage, Hazel is describing her condition and the difficulty that she faces when breathing without her oxygen tank and the tubes:

The cylindrical green tank only weighed a few pounds, and I had this little steel cart to wheel it around behind me. It delivered two liters of oxygen to me each minute through a cannula, a transparent tube that split just beneath my neck, wrapped behind my ears, and then reunited in my nostrils. The contraption was necessary because my lungs sucked at being lungs (Green 8).

As it can be observed Hazel's health condition has obliged her to be different from other teenagers. She spends most of her time at home reading books, isolating herself from others and disconnecting from her old friends. Her health issues made her feel uncomfortable when engaging in any outdoor activities, especially when being around her friends that are having healthier bodies and easier lives.

Even when spending time with her friend Kaitlyn at the mall, there was always something that reminds her of death and dying: "Is it even possible to walk in these? I mean, I would die ---" and then stopped short, looking at me as if to say I'm sorry, as if it were a crime to mention death to the dying. "You should try them on," Kaitlyn continued, trying to paper over the awkwardness. "I'd sooner die," I assured her" (Green 31). So, Hazel decides to finally meet an old friend and change the dull routine that she has at home, yet she is more assured that she cannot be normal again due to the awkwardness which interrupts the flow of the conversations with her friends each time.

Hazel also feels embarrassed for carrying an oxygen tank and tubes everywhere she goes, especially when a little girl asks: "What's on your nose?" And I said, "Um, it's called a

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cannula. These tubes give me oxygen and help me breathe'. Her mother swooped in and said, "Jakie," disapprovingly, but I said, 'No it's okay'" (Green 32). Another similar incident happens when Hazel, Augustus and her mother are at the airplane: "That was the worst part about having cancer, sometimes: The physical evidence of disease separates you from other people. We were irreconcilably other, and never was it more obvious than when the three of us walked through the empty plane, the stewardess nodding sympathetically" (Green 144). In this textual evidence, Hazel admits that her physiological state is affecting her thoughts through making her believe that she will never belong to normal people again which arouses simultaneously with the sense of oddity which she receives when seeing how people are treating her differently due to her disease.

Eventually, Hazel concludes that she will never be a normal person again nor will she be able to maintain her old life back. This is shown when she says: "The other thing about Kaitlyn, I guess, was that it could never again feel natural to talk to her. Any attempts to feign normal social interactions were just depressing because it was so glaringly obvious that everyone I spoke to for the rest of my life would feel awkward and self-conscious around me" (Green 33). After her few attempts in socializing and meeting people again, Hazel has the firm belief that her illness and death thoughts shall be carry with her till the end.

Despite Hazel parents' constant attempts to make her feel better and happier, she is stubbornly convinced that she has nothing to live for and the only remaining thing for her is to isolate herself from people as much as possible.

"I'm like. Like. I'm like a grenade, Mom. I'm a grenade and at some point I'm going to blow up and I would like to minimize the casualties, okay?"..."I'm a grenade," I said again. "I just want to stay away from people and read books and think and be with you guys because there's nothing I can do about hurting you; you're too invested, so just please let me do that, okay?" (Green 62).

According to the previous quote, we can see that Hazel decides to isolate herself from others, and the only people who she cannot isolate herself from are her parents. However, due to her feeling of guilt she keeps insisting that they need to get a life which is not only based on taking care of her. "I want you guys to have a life," I said. "I worry that you won't have a life, that you'll sit around here all day with no me to look after and stare at the walls and want to off yourselves" (Green 173). Clearly, Hazel is worried about the day when she passes

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away leaving a huge gap in her parent's life especially since she is the center of their attention, also because they devote most of their time to her.

Under the light of the given quotes and explanations, one can observe how Hazel starts accepting the fact that she is never going to regain her old normal life back. Consequently, she starts convincing herself that she likes her new life and how she is needless of anyone by constantly saying: "Anyway, I really did like being alone" (Green 33). According to this quote it is evident that her incurable illness has made her change her view to life and accept to live in isolation from the world.

As it can be observed, this character's physiological dimension is affecting her psychology and personality as well. After failing at being a normal healthy teenager, Hazel has a character distortion which made her an introvert (a person who enjoys spending time alone and isolating himself from social interactions). Additionally, Hazel reaches a point of pessimism where she truly believes that she cannot give anything to others except for pain. This conviction makes her call herself "a grenade" which means that just like a real grenade she will explode (when she dies) at any moment leaving behind her a number of hurt people. Eventually, she becomes a sad, pessimistic person who sees nothing positive ahead except for death and prefers isolation rather than being around other people.

2.3 Hazel's Lack of Motivation for Social Interaction

In *The Fault in Our Stars*, Hazel has not yet met her physiological needs. She has an illness which made breathing itself a hard task that requires carrying medical equipment in order to breathe properly. Consequently, she starts feeling unsafe to go outside and make social relations, which makes her unable to fulfill her safety needs as well. Hazel decides staying at home because every time she goes out people would look at her with pity.

Due to her health condition, Hazel finds it useless to love or to get emotionally attached to anyone since she is aware that she might die at any moment. She expresses these thoughts when saying: "NO!" I shouted. 'I'm not eating dinner, and I can't stay healthy, because I'm not healthy. I am dying, Mom. I am going to die and leave you here alone and you won't have a me to hover around and you won't be a mother anymore, and I'm sorry, but I can't do anything about it, okay?!'" (Green 173). According to what Hazel says in this quote, she obviously reaches a state where she is unable to have faith in her health's

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amelioration because of her incurable disease. At some point, she gives up even on having a healthy lifestyle since nothing will change the fact that she is dying.

In the novel, Hazel explicitly tells her mother that she has no motives to love or to be in an emotional relationship with anyone by saying: “I’m not going on dates,” I said. ‘I don’t want to go on dates with anyone. It’s a terrible idea and a huge waste of time and—’ “Honey,” my mom said. “What’s wrong?” “I’m like. Like. I’m like a grenade, Mom. I’m a grenade and at some point I’m going to blow up and I would like to minimize the casualties, okay?” (Green 62). From this quote, it is clear that Hazel is distancing herself from everyone since she is aware of her hopeless condition.

Hazel also believes that she is troubling her parents by being their ill daughter. “The inexorable truth is this: They might be glad to have me around, but I was the alpha and the omega of my parents’ suffering” (Green 72). Eventually, Hazel confronts her parents with her fear of leaving them after dying: “I want you guys to have a life’, I said. ‘I worry that you won’t have a life, that you’ll sit around here all day with no me to look after and stare at the walls and want to off yourselves” (Green 173). Although all parents are responsible for taking care of their children since they are the ones that brought them to life be it healthy or not, this declaration shows that Hazel feels as if she is a heavy burden on her parents’ shoulders and an everlasting pain if she ever dies one day.

In Hazel’s case, she lacks motivation for any sort of social interactions which makes her prefer spending time alone as an escape from being reminded of the things that make her feel uncomfortable. Since Maslow’s theory of *Human Motivation* employs that when the two first basic needs are not fulfilled an individual will not be able to reach for other higher-level needs, then Hazel’s lack of motivation in finding love or making friendships signifies a lack of motivation to fulfill her social needs. This latter originates from her inability to meet her physiological and safety needs due to her bad health condition and her inability to be a regular teenager and interact with people on daily basis. Therefore, this character starts believing that being a friend or a lover is useless since she will eventually die and become a sad memory for every person she met.

2.4 Hazel’s Core Issues

When Hazel was first diagnosed with cancer all her survival chances seemed limited. Since that time, she has always been prepared for leaving this world at any moment regardless

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of the miracle that has blessed her with the ability to live again. With a regular intake of chemical fluids, the doctors were able to control the tumor that she has.

Along her cancer journey, Hazel has her loving and supporting parents doing their best to provide a joyful environment for her at home since she decides that it is the only place where she feels safe. However, her social interactions become less by the day, her attention deviates towards reading books and watching TV instead of going out and meeting her friends.

In adolescence, most teenagers find difficulty in loving and accepting themselves. Such a transitional period affects even normal teenagers, much less a teenage girl with an incurable disease that is leading to her definite death. Moreover, Hazel's battle against cancer seems to never have an end. Regardless of her constant and daily intake of medications and chemicals like Phalanxiphor, it is only to prevent cancer from spreading to the rest of her body and not to help her regain healthy lungs again.

Usually, all patients that suffer from severe illnesses tend to respond psychologically to their new health conditions by adapting the role of the patient and accepting the side effects or the inevitable outcomes of their diseases. Nevertheless, before accepting the massive changes that their lives go through, they might find it difficult to live with such a reality especially since it includes the constant threat of dying at any moment.

After years of suffering from an exhausting illness and dealing with the disturbing fact that she can never have her normal life back, Hazel starts to detach herself from people and conclude that isolation is the only solution for a girl who has a larger possibility of dying than healthier people. This was the result of a combination of issues, fears and complexes which she has in her personality; hence, a study of her core psychological issues shall provide a clearer understanding of her behaviors, attitudes, and decisions in the novel.

2.4.1 Fear of Abandonment

In *The Fault in Our Stars*, Hazel's idea of dying and abandoning her loved ones becomes an obsession and a recurrent nightmare which prevents her from enjoying her days while she is still alive. She realizes that her parents spend most of their time either taking care of her or worrying about her; thus, she is constantly worried about what might happen to them when she passes away.

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Throughout the novel, Hazel seems to carry an immense feeling of guilt. She constantly feels that she is responsible for protecting others by distancing herself from them. Hazel also feels guilty for troubling her parents with her illness. When looking back, we find that this was the result of an incident which happened years ago when she first had cancer. Hazel was too close to death and at that moment in the hospital while having both of her parents terrified of losing her. Hazel hears her mother expressing her fear of her daughter's death:

Just before the miracle, when I was in the ICU and it looked like I was going to die and Mom was telling me it was okay to let go, and I was trying to let go but my lungs kept searching for air, Mom sobbed something into Dad's chest that I wish I hadn't heard, and that I hope she never finds out that I did hear. She said, "I won't be a mom anymore." It gutted me pretty badly. I couldn't stop thinking about that during the whole Cancer Team Meeting. I couldn't get it out of my head, how she sounded when she said that, like she would never be okay again, which probably she wouldn't (Green 73).

This previous quote indicates that although Hazel's disease is not something which she can control, she has a huge feeling of guilt for it. After hearing her mother expressing her fear of losing her and not being able to be a mother anymore, she starts considering herself responsible for the sadness and pain which might happen to others because of her. Hazel is afraid that after her death, her parents will not have any occupations or hobbies since their life is mainly dedicated to taking care of her. Therefore, she is worried that she will leave a hollow space in their life. "I want you guys to have a life," I said. "I worry that you won't have a life, that you'll sit around here all day with no me to look after and stare at the walls and want to off yourselves" (Green 173). From this textual evidence, we can also see the reasons behind her fear of abandoning her dear ones. Hazel is clearly overthinking about how their life is going to be and whether they may ever be able to obtain a happy peaceful life after her death.

In addition to Hazel's fear of abandoning others, she also has a fear of being abandoned. In the opening of the twenty-fifth chapter, there is a part where Hazel is talking about a dream that she had: "I woke up the next morning panicked because I'd dreamed of being alone and boatless in a huge lake. I bolted up, straining against the BiPAP, and felt mom's arm on me" (Green 176). According to Sigmund Freud (1900): "The interpretation of

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dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind". This means that through dreams we can discover a lot about the unspoken and repressed fears or desires which inhabit one's unconscious mind. While sleeping, our defenses do not operate in the same manner as when we are awake. The unconscious will be free enough to express itself through dreams. This means that Hazel's dream of being alone in a huge lake is an expression of her fear of abandonment. So, she is afraid of being abandoned and hurt after demolishing a wall which she has been building during years of isolation and social distancing for the sake of protecting herself and her feelings from being hurt.

Eventually, it can be concluded from the previous analysis and the textual evidence that Hazel is not only afraid of abandoning the people whom she admires, but also of being abandoned. This conclusion leaves us with an affirmation that the first and main core issue behind her complexes is her fear of abandonment. This fear of being abandoned usually leads people to having another core issue which is the fear of intimacy. This latter happens by avoiding any emotional attachment or intimacy with anyone in order to avoid being hurt or abandoned.

2.4.2 Fear of Intimacy

Throughout the story, Hazel was isolating herself from people and having neither friendships nor emotional relationships. Instead, she prefers staying at home and re-reading her favorite book *An Imperial Affliction*. Although her mother tried to convince her to go out with her friends and engage in activities where she can meet new people, Hazel prefers the companionship of books since she was constantly reminded of being ill and treated differently outside.

After making sure that her life would not last for too long, Hazel decides that being temporarily present in people's lives then leaving them forever was unfair and hurtful to others. Therefore, isolating herself from people seems like the ultimate solution for her. She expresses the way that she sees herself by saying:

"I'm a grenade," I said again. " just want to stay away from people and read books and think and be with you guys because there's nothing I can do about hurting you; you're too invested, so just please let me do that, okay? I'm no depressed. I don't need to get out anymore. And I can't be a regular teenager, because I'm a grenade" (Green 62).

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Through the use of this metaphor “Grenade”, this character seems to be aware of the consequences which will occur to the ones who are too close to her once she dies and that they will spend days if not months or years grieving her departure when she “explodes”. Consequently, she believes that isolating and distancing herself from people is the only way to “minimize the casualties” (Green 62).

Another reason behind Hazel’s fear of intimacy is her fear of abandonment. As has been previously discussed in her first core issue, Hazel is afraid of being abandoned. Although she tries to prove that she enjoys spending time at home on her own, deep down in her true self she is afraid of not having a safe distance between her and other people which will allow her to detach herself from them whenever she feels threatened. This can be observed through the dream that she had and how terrified she felt of being alone in that huge lake. As a result, Hazel is avoiding intimacy because she is afraid of being left alone.

In closing, after the previous analysis it can be found that Hazel is both: afraid of intimacy due to her fear of hurting others and of being abandoned by the ones that she might get emotionally invested with. Therefore, it can be concluded that her fear of intimacy is not only the outcome of her fear of abandonment, but it is also due to the fact that these two fears are deeply related and empowering each other which confines Hazel in an entangled intricacy of complexity and fear.

2.4.3 Low Self-esteem

A common issue for teenagers is low self-esteem. This issue, however, varies from one teenager to another. It happens when an individual feels that his/her value is less in comparison with other people in terms of being worthy of receiving love, appreciation, and attention.

In the novel, Hazel feels that she is less worthy of being loved than the rest of teenagers. Being a young girl with cancer made her lose her self-confidence. In her view, suffering from a serious disease, spending most of her time at hospitals, taking daily medications, and carrying an oxygen tank wherever she goes makes her “a non-regular teenager”, she declares this by saying:

“I’m not going on dates,” I said. “I don’t want to go on dates with anyone. It’s a terrible idea and a waste of time”...”There’s nothing I can do about hurting you; you’re too invested, so just please let me do that, okay? I’m not depressed. I don’t

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need to get out anymore. And I can't be a regular teenager, because I'm a grenade" (Green 62).

It is obvious from this quote that Hazel sees herself unworthy of being loved and that being in a relationship with her is only a waste of time since she is dying.

It is true that most teenagers feel worried about their looks and tend to be less confident during their adolescence; however, in Hazel's case that feeling of insecurity is more intense due to her difficult situation and to the fact that she feels different and odd from the rest of teenagers.

So I excused myself on the grounds of pain and fatigue, as I often had over the years when seeing Kaitlyn or any of my other friends. In truth, it always hurts. It always hurts not to breathe like a normal person, incessantly reminding your lungs to be lungs, forcing yourself to accept as unsolvable the clawing scraping inside-out ache of underoxygenation (Green 32).

One of the things which Hazel detests most about her illness is that it made her a "non-regular teenager". She believes that she can never feel normal again especially when going out or meeting new people. Everyone would treat her differently in order not to hurt her feelings as if they only feel pity for her. An example of this is when she goes out with her friend for shopping and Kaitlyn feels anxious when she mentions the word "dying" in front of Hazel. Although Kaitlyn said it accidentally, she was still afraid that it might hurt Hazel's feelings which made Hazel even more uncomfortable knowing that people will always feel self-conscious around her. "Any attempts to feign normal social interactions were just depressing because it was so glaringly obvious that everyone I spoke to for the rest of my life would feel awkward and self-conscious around me" (Green 33). In the end, Hazel concludes that she will always suffer from being different and that people will never be fully themselves around her even when she tries to feel normal again, she will always be reminded of being different.

All in all, Hazel's low self-esteem is related to her conviction that she does not deserve to love or to be loved. Since her health condition and the side effects of her illness compel her to appear different, she starts constructing a negative self-image where she sees herself as inferior and unworthy of having people to love and care for her.

2.5 Conclusion

Under the light of Egri Lajos' *The Three Dimensional of Human Character*, the relationship between Hazel's physiological and psychological dimensions has been clarified as well as the way in which her bad health condition was affecting her character and psychology in the sense of making her an introvert who lost all hope for having a normal social life. According to Maslow's theory of *Human Motivation*, it has been deduced that due to this protagonist's health issues and her inability to maintain her basic needs (physiological needs and safety needs). Hazel has no motivation to achieve the higher-level needs which are social needs. Consequently, this resulted in losing her motivation in finding love, making friendships or any sort of social interactions. Later, her three main psychological issues were analyzed and illustrated with textual evidence from the novel proving that she was suffering from low self-esteem, as well as fear of abandonment which has caused her another issue that is her fear of intimacy. All these issues were being interrelated and induced one another. They are also deeply engraved in her personality for years, which made it quite hard for her to become sociable or lower her guards around people.

Eventually, all the things which have been mentioned previously had a major effect on Hazel's behavioral attitudes, thoughts and how she chooses to deal with the inescapable reality and the hardships that she encountered due to her illness.

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Hazel's Self-defense Mechanisms

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3.1 Introduction

After discussing the essence of Hazel's core issues, the effect of her physiological state on her psychological one, and the reasons behind her lack of motivation for social interactions in the previous chapter, we shall now introduce the defense mechanisms that are operating in order to decrease Hazel's anxieties and fears. These defenses are a chief element which is affecting her behaviors in the novel. Therefore, this chapter tackles all the defense mechanisms that are unconsciously employed by this main character throughout *The Fault in Our Stars*. In addition to providing explanations for each defense mechanism accompanied by illustrations from the novel in order to reveal the reasons behind the manifestation of these defenses, and how they are revealed according to Hazel's behaviors, thoughts and acts in the story.

3.2 Hazel's Self-defense Mechanisms

In *The Fault in Our Stars*, Hazel's unconscious employs a set of various defense mechanisms in order to maintain her peace and self-balance through repressing her fears and anxieties in the unconscious level while rejecting any direct confrontation with people or situations that she believes she is incapable of facing or managing.

Often in psychoanalysis, someone's use of defense mechanisms would be attributed mainly to his/her past traumatic experiences especially before the age of ten. Another reason for having defense mechanisms is encountering a threatening incident which might provoke one's ego to defend itself. Nevertheless, when looking back at Hazel's childhood in the novel, we find that the author has not mentioned any traumatic experiences before being diagnosed with cancer at the age of thirteen. Perhaps the absence of her memories in this work is due to the fact that there are no noticeable events that require being included or mentioned in the novel. Indeed, Hazel was said to have a normal happy childhood until she starts suffering from cancer.

On the other hand, once Hazel reaches thirteen things start to change as she gets diagnosed with stage four of thyroid cancer. Since then, she starts being aware that healing from this disease is impossible. Thus, Hazel loses all traces of hope, belongingness and she collapses into the depths of melancholy. Along with her firm belief that death is a shadow that follows her everywhere, Hazel descends on a journey of despair, self-hate, and takes an

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endless road full of suffering which triggers a variety of defense mechanisms which facilitate coping with such a despising life.

3.2.1 Denial

Often patients that have terminal chronic diseases would refuse the idea that their health condition is deteriorating; much less dealing with the fact that their disease is incurable or their death is nearer than they presumed. In such cases, all patients would go through a long period of denial while having their battles with the disease. Despite the fact everyone is aware of the likelihood of their own mortality, the immortal self-image that inhabits their minds makes it difficult for them to consider the possibility that they might simply vanish from existence and they will no longer have a role in life.

In Hazel's case, regardless of her suffering from cancer and her inability to maintain a normal life, she still denies that this entire experience has been affecting her negatively. Instead, she is constantly pretending and telling others that she is fine despite the fact that she is aware of how hopeless her condition is. An example of her denial can be observed when she goes to a support group where cancer patients and cancer survivors share their experiences. Everyone starts introducing themselves and when it is her turn she says: "I'm Hazel, sixteen. Thyroid originally but with an impressive and long-settled satellite colony in my lungs. And I'm doing okay" (Green 10). One can observe from this textual evidence that Hazel wants herself and others to believe that she is a normal person, and that she is doing well even while suffering from an illness that is leading for her definite death.

Through constantly saying that she is fine, Hazel refuses to look like a weak person who is dying and continues lying to herself and others by saying that everything is alright and pretending to have everything under control even though she is disparate. "I told myself that imagining a met in my brain or my shoulder would not affect the invisible reality going on inside of me, and that therefore all such thoughts were wasted moments in a life composed of a definitionally finite set of such moments. I even tried to tell myself to live my best life today" (Green 62). As the previous quote shows, Hazel is trying hard to fake her wellbeing and to convince herself to enjoy life despite having a disease that is consuming her and while deep down in her true self she feels the opposite.

Another illustration of denial is shown when Hazel's shoulder starts aching in a terrible way as well as her head, yet she keeps pretending that everything is alright and

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remains at denial for all the pain that she is going through. “Is everything all right?” asked Mom as I ate” (Green 61). Hazel response is: ““Uh huh’, I said. I took a bite of burger. Swallowed. Tried to say something that a normal person whose brain was not drowning in panic would say. ‘Is there broccoli in the burgers?’”(Green 61). In this quote, there is a manifestation of denial for being under pain yet pretending to be all well.

Considering all that has been said, it is confirmed that this character is having denial as a defense mechanism in order to fake normality and convince herself that things are under control. This mechanism works as a protection after dealing with unexpected painful situations; especially since Hazel was not expecting herself to have such an illness at this very young age. Moreover, denial enables people to deal with the shock through providing a considerable period of time for the mind to accept and to cope with the harsh facts, and overtime to trigger other less intense defense mechanisms. Therefore, being at denial is shielding Hazel from confronting the fact that the chance for her health’s amelioration and for her lungs to heal is null and how she is heading towards her inevitable demise.

3.2.2 Selective Perception

The second defense mechanism is selective perception. In the novel, Hazel tends to receive and accept to hear only the facts and the things that satisfy her. This means that she selects what she agrees upon and ignores everything else which might cause her discomfort or remind her of what she is trying to avoid thinking about in order to maintain her peace of mind.

One of the things that Hazel enjoys most is reading books, precisely her favorite book *An Imperial Affliction* which narrates the story of the main character Anna who is suffering from cancer at a young age just like Hazel. According to Hazel, this book expresses all the ideas that she supports and believes at. “It’s not a cancer book, because cancer books sucks. Like in cancer books, the cancer person starts a charity that raises money to fight cancer... But in AIA, Anna decides that being a person with cancer who starts a cancer charity is a bit narcissistic, so she starts a charity for people with cancer who want to cure Cholera” (Green 34). From this textual evidence, we deduce that Hazel dislikes being reminded of her disease. Therefore, she avoids cancer books because she finds them tedious. According to her, they all revolve around the sufferings and the difficulties which are experienced by cancer patients. Hazel sees that these books always tend to portray the stereotyped image of sick people where they all seem vulnerable and unable to have neither goals nor life accomplishments.

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Through reading this book several times she is trying to focus more on what makes her feel better and neglect her reality. This book which is a safe sanctuary for Hazel from the real world seems to offer only the truths that she accepts to hear and provides her with positive feelings about herself. “Also, Anna is honest about all of it in a way no one else really is. Throughout the book, she refers to herself as the side effect, which is just totally correct. Cancer kids are essentially side effects of the relentless mutation that made the diversity of life on earth possible. So as the story goes on, she gets sicker...” (Green 35). From this quote, one can find that Anna says exactly what Hazel wants to hear. This can be illustrated in Anna’s belief that cancer patients and especially those who were diagnosed with it at a young age like herself and Hazel are not those who suffer from illness, but they are merely side effects of a mutation process that eventually will make the world more beautiful with diversity.

We conclude that through isolating herself from social connections and being attached to a fictional character, Hazel is avoiding anyone that might say the things which she prefers not to hear since they remind her of how depressing her situation is. Hazel also hates being treated and observed as a weak victim; therefore, she dislikes when others look at people who are suffering from cancer as a charity case or in a pitiful way. In short, Hazel’s unconscious is employing selective perception by only accepting to hear the things that comfort her and neglecting the discomfoting ones.

3.2.3 Avoidance

Once Hazel was diagnosed with cancer, she starts feeling uncomfortable about being around other people. Thus, she decides to quit studying and become homeschooled by her parents instead. After that, not only does she start spending the entire day at home, yet she isolates herself from her friends. In the next passage, Hazel clarifies how she feels about her friends and the reasons behind her discomfort when spending time with them:

And I liked Kaitlyn, too. I really did. But three years removed from proper full-time schoolic exposure to my peers, I felt a certain unbridgeable distance between us. I think my school friends wanted to help me through my cancer, but they eventually found out that they couldn’t. For one thing, there was no through. So I excused myself on the grounds of pain and fatigue, as I often had over the years when seeing Kaitlyn or any of my other friends. In truth, it always hurt. It always hurt not to breath like a normal person, incessantly reminding your lungs to be lungs, forcing yourself to

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accept as unsolvable the clawing scraping inside-out ache of underoxygenation. So I wasn't lying, exactly. I was just choosing among the truth (Green 32).

According to what Hazel said, she is avoiding her friends and being sociable because she always feels hurt and inferior when dealing with people who are healthier than her. Being unable to have a normal teenage life with a healthy body, and seeing how all of her old friends are enjoying their lives as "regular teenagers" reminds her of the joyful moments that she is missing. This causes her to feel jealous and uncomfortable when being around them.

Hazel's friends start treating her in an overly nice way after she became ill. They avoid mentioning any topics related to death even if in a sarcastic way in order not to hurt her feelings. Thus, all their conversations become restricted and far from being spontaneous as they once were. "...it was so glaringly obvious that everyone I spoke to for the rest of my life would feel awkward and self-conscious around me" (Green 33). Consequently, Hazel starts avoiding these unpleasant feelings by isolating herself and spending time at home all day. Such a behavior clearly shows that Hazel is avoiding all social interactions which might hurt her feelings or remind her of her insecurities. Lastly, choosing indoor activities like reading books over going outside and meeting her friends is a clear manifestation of avoidance since she is avoiding any sources of fear or anxiety.

3.2.4 Displacement

Due to the previous defense mechanism, Hazel is avoiding her friends and other people in order not to get hurt. Displacement as another defense mechanism also includes avoiding anything that causes any sort of negative feelings. In addition to provoking the individual to search for a less threatening object or person in order not to face the major source of the threat which he/she cannot handle. Similarly, Hazel finds her safe shelter in staying at home and spending all her days reading books and watching television instead of dealing with people that would make her feel uncomfortable for the pitiful way in which they were treating her.

After Hazel was diagnosed with cancer, she starts feeling that there is always a barrier between her and her friends which makes it impossible for them to have the same connection that they used to have in the past.

But three years removed from proper full-time school exposure to my peers, I felt a certain unbridgeable distance between us....Any attempts to feign normal social

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interactions were just depressing because it was so glaringly obvious that everyone I spoke to for the rest of my life would feel awkward and self-conscious around me (Green 28-29).

Hazel starts feeling intimidated by everyone in her life, be it her friends or her parents. Consequently, she chooses to be alone at her room and spend her time reading books instead of going out and being obliged to face any unpleasant feelings which might result from interacting with other individuals. When looking for less threatening things to replace the presence of people in her life, Hazel finds ease with the companionship of fictional characters. Therefore, she starts observing books as the best escape from the things which cause her anxiety: “Anyway, I really did like being alone. I liked being alone with poor Staff Sergeant Max Mayhem” (Green 29). This example is a manifestation of how displacement operates as a defense mechanism. In addition to making Hazel avoid everyone, it provokes her to look for the least “dangerous” alternation to dealing with people which is reading books. This is the result of Hazel’s belief that she is unable to defend herself in the presence of other human beings; thus, she decides that books are a sanctuary for her from all the disturbing emotions that she endures when dealing with other people.

All things considered, it is asserted that Hazel is unconsciously employing displacement as a way to substitute what triggers her anxiety and the feeling of vulnerability with an alternative that is less threatening as reading a fictional story with a character who shares the same way of looking at the world as hers.

3.2.5 Fixation

In *The Fault in Our Stars*, Hazel has a habit of constantly reading *An Imperial Affliction*. This habit starts when her cancer journey begins. The fact that this book narrates the stories of young people who suffer from cancer, makes her feel that she is not the only teenager fighting against this disease. However, among all the characters Hazel finds a strong connection with Anna. Unlike others in the story, this character has a strong determination and refuses to play the role of a helpless sick child. Instead, she creates an organization that gathers donations for helping those who suffer from Cholera and she names it “The Anna Foundation for People with Cancer Who Want to Cure Cholera”. This has made Hazel realize that cancer patients can have a role in helping others in their society, and that they are not a mere charity case. All of this causes Hazel’s fixation on the book in general and the character Anna in specific.

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Hazel is a huge fan of the book and she expresses this when saying: “My favorite book, by a wide margin, was *An Imperial Affliction*, but I didn't like to tell people about it. Sometimes you read a book and it fills you with this weird evangelical zeal, and you become convinced that the shattered world will never be put together unless and until all living humans read the book” (Green 23). Although there are several books that tackle different themes and topics including cancer, Hazel chooses this particular book and reads it repeatedly without ever getting bored of reading the same events over and over.

Another reason behind her fixation on the book is the open ending of its story. The book ends in the middle of an unfinished sentence with no hints for what might happen after. Therefore, Hazel finds herself imagining different scenarios and closures to the story. Her imagination exceeds predicting the probable death of Anna, and goes further to other characters such as her mother and how she will deal with the loss of her daughter. “And then I started reading *An Imperial Affliction* for the millionth time... I know it's a very literary decision and everything and probably part of the reason I love the book so much, but there is something to recommend a story that ends” (Green 30). Since Hazel was worried about the way that her parents will survive her loss, she finds herself questioning the state of Anna's mother after she passes away too. The similarities between her story and Anna's attach her even more to this book.

The obsessive attachment that Hazel develops on reading this particular book multiple times indicates the utilization of fixation as another defense mechanism. Fixation takes place when an individual does not feel safe enough to try new things; therefore, he/she prefers the familiar side of things. Similarly, the fact that Hazel is re-reading the same novel over and over signifies that she is afraid of trying unfamiliar things. Also, she prefers remaining at her comfort zone without taking any risks. This is shown not only through the previous illustrations, but also through her rejection of renovation be it engaging in new activities or meeting new people and having new social interactions.

3.2.6 Rationalization

At the beginning of the novel, Hazel attempts to provide a rational justification for her illogical conduct. This can be observed when she insists that she dislikes going to Support Group and socializing with other people but she is obliged to do so since her mother has been constantly asking her to make friendships with new people, especially with the ones that have been through the same experience with cancer as well. “I went to Support Group for the same

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reason that I had once allowed nurses with a mere eighteen months of graduate education to poison me with exotically named chemicals: I wanted to make my parents happy” (Green 11). According to this quote, Hazel justifies taking all these medications and injections by saying that everything she does is only for making her parents happy. While in fact, she is making these efforts because somewhere in the hidden corners of her true self she desires to have a healthy body and a normal teenage life.

Although Hazel rationalizes her acts by saying that everything she does is for the sake of her parents' happiness, her true desires reveal while she has an interior monologue where she admits that she wishes for a better and healthier life: “In truth, it always hurt. It always hurt not to breathe like a normal person, incessantly reminding your lungs to be lungs, forcing yourself to accept as unsolvable the clawing scraping inside-out ache of underoxygenatio” (Green 32). From this textual evidence, one can see how painful it is for Hazel to convince herself to accept and live with the fact that she will always be unable to possess a healthy body for the rest of her life. Nevertheless, she feels obliged to fake strength and carelessness because she dislikes being vulnerable.

Lastly, since Hazel refuses to show her vulnerability in front of others, she always pretends that cancer is not affecting her. She also dislikes admitting that she feels bad about being sick and lonely; thus, she justifies her acts as all being done for the sake of her parents' happiness and not for herself. Then, we deduce that Hazel's ego employs rationalization to conceal her true motives. Since she feels incapable of facing her anxiety and hiding the real reasons behind her behaviors, Hazel always tends to provide more logical and acceptable explanations to this latter.

3.2.7 Identification

In *The Fault in Our Stars*, Hazel imitates her favorite fictional character Anna from *An Imperial Affliction*. After reading the book several times, Hazel starts identifying herself with Anna to the point where she ends up believing, just like Anna, that all young cancer patients are a side effect of the relentless mutation and that they can be viewed differently from the common pitiful look that they get from others since they contribute to the heterogeneity of the universe.

Hazel does not only adopt Anna's beliefs but also her behaviors and even her style in clothing: “I spent like thirty minutes debating with Mom the various benefits and drawbacks

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of the available outfits before deciding to dress as much like Anna in AIA as possible: Chuck Taylors and dark jeans like she always wore and a light blue T-shirt” (Green 89). Hazel here is making an act of emulating Anna’s style in clothing by wearing the very same outfit that she wore, which signifies a manifestation of identification as a defense mechanism.

Hazel’s obsession with this character turns her into a copy of Anna without even being aware of it. “Also Anna is honest about all of it in a way no one else really is: Throughout the book, she refers to herself as the side effect, which just totally correct. Cancer kids are essentially side effects of the relentless mutation that made the diversity of life on earth possible. So as the story goes on, she gets sick” (Green 30). As her speech shows, Hazel was amazed by Anna till the point where she starts agreeing and supporting everything that this character says in the book. Hence, her adoption of Anna’s beliefs and way of thinking is another sign of identification as well.

Eventually, since all of Hazel’s friends had never experienced the things that she is going through, none of them could understand her feelings and the challenges that she goes through. So, even when they try to comfort her, it always seems as if they are talking merely out of their perspective and not from the way that she sees things. Therefore, when Hazel finds a fictional character who says all the things she needs to hear and make her feel better about herself, she instantly gets attached to it and unconsciously starts imitating her in everything that she does because she perceives her as an idol.

3.3 Conclusion

In *The Fault in Our Stars*, the main character Hazel had a set of defense mechanisms which were employed on her behalf via her unconscious. These defenses were identified when closely analyzing her actions and speech in the novel.

In this last chapter, there was an identification of the various defenses that have been operating in order to facilitate for Hazel the process of coping with her fears and anxieties which were the consequence of years of suffering from cancer. In addition to providing an analytical reading accompanied with textual evidence in order to demonstrate how did these defense mechanisms operate and manifest, as well as revealing the ways in which they were affecting the character’s thoughts and behaviors throughout the story.

As a conclusion, it can be said that these defense mechanisms are mainly employed in order to shield Hazel from facing any threats, or having a direct confrontation with her fears

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and the facts that are quite difficult for her to accept like her inability to regain her healthy lungs and her normal life back. Therefore, we conclude that defense mechanisms have a significant role in protecting human beings from facing traumatic experiences or dealing with hard situations as in the case of Hazel in *The Fault in Our Stars*.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The protagonist Hazel in John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* represents an intriguing case which can be studied under the light of the Freudian psychoanalytical theories. The fact that Hazel has been diagnosed with stage four of thyroid cancer has had a great effect on her psychology. This character decided to isolate herself at home and prevent any interactions with other people. Also, her perspective towards life started to become more of a pessimistic one which constantly brought all the negative thoughts to her mind.

When looking for the reasons behind the manifestation of these defenses, it has been important to connect Hazel's health condition and the side effects of cancer on her psychology through the application of Egri Lajos' *The Three Dimensional of human Character* theory. Thus, after analyzing the relationship between Hazel's physiological state and her psychological one, it became clear to observe that her health issues and their side effects had affected her overall personality and character in the novel. She started feeling desperate since her illness is incurable, which transformed her into an isolated person who believes that any attachment towards other individuals will result in a painful heartbreak.

After studying the reasons behind her lack of motivation according to Maslow's hierarchy of *Human Motivation* and how her inability to fulfill her physiological and safety needs has affected her ability to seek for social relationships, it became more asserted that her core psychological issues including her fears, her insecurities, and her lack of motivation for finding love or making friendships were mainly derived from her physiological state. This once more highlights the effect of her health condition on her mental health. Therefore, when life obliged Hazel to spend her days being hunted by death thoughts while enduring pain and being unable to regain her old life back, she developed fears of intimacy and abandonment, as well as low self-esteem due to being "a non-regular teenager". Hence, finding the essence of her psychological issues has facilitated the interpretation of her behaviors through the acknowledgment of the motives behind her isolation and social distancing.

Hazel's defense mechanisms are numerous due to the hard situation that she was going through. All these defenses were operating as a reaction from her unconscious to the sudden life changes that has occurred to her once she got diagnosed with cancer. In order for Hazel to accept and live with such a harsh reality, her unconscious needed to use certain defenses such as denial, which provided her with a period of time in order to get accustomed

to what was happening in her life or avoidance, which made her perceive only the things that would not bring her any sort of unpleasant feelings. Thus, defense mechanisms were working as protection for Hazel so that she would not be obliged to deal with the things which were too difficult for her to face.

Accordingly, the hypothesis that has been suggested is validated. The defense mechanisms which Hazel has are indeed the consequence of her fears and anxieties. These defenses protected her conscious mind from being directly exposed to the negative emotions that she was having. This also emphasizes the vital role of defense mechanisms in contributing to Hazel's ability to have emotional balance.

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المخلص

تهدف هذه المذكرة إلى استكشاف آليات الدفاع عن النفس لدى هايزل غرايس لانكاستر و هي الشخصية الرئيسية في رواية "ما تخبئه لنا النجوم" لكتبتها جون جرين عن طريق استخدام نظرية التحليل النفسي. وفقا لنظرية اجري لاجوس "الأبعاد الثلاثة للشخصية البشرية"، و انطلاقا من منظور أن الحالة الصحية للإنسان تؤثر بشكل كبير على حالته النفسية يهدف هذا البحث لإيجاد أصل المشاكل النفسية لدى هايزل. سنستخدم نظرية الدوافع البشرية لأبراهام ماسلو في هذا السياق كذلك لإثبات كيف أن عدم قدرة هذه الشخصية على التمتع بصحة جسدية أفضل قضت على حاجتها للتواصل الاجتماعي. بالإضافة إلى هذا، تسمح لنا الدراسة بكشف و تحليل مخاوف هايزل و مشاكل انعدام الأمان لديها من أجل إبراز تأثيرهم على تصرفاتها و طريقة تفكيرها في الرواية. بعد التحليل المعمق لمشاكل هذه الشخصية، تم أخيرا استخلاص آليات الدفاع العديدة التي استخدمتها هايزل لا شعوريا وأسباب ظهورها على حسب تصرفاتها و أفكارها في القصة .

الكلمات المفتاحية: آليات الدفاع عن النفس، البعد النفسي، البعد الفيزيولوجي، الدوافع البشرية، الخوف، التحليل النفسي.

Résumé

Ce mémoire vise à explorer les mécanismes d'auto-défense de Hazel Grace Lancaster, qui est le personnage principal du roman "Nos Etoiles Contraires" de l'écrivain John Green en utilisant la théorie psychanalytique selon la théorie de Egri Lajos des "Trois Dimensions de la Personnalité Humaine" du point de vue que l'état de santé humaine affecte grandement son état psychologique, cette recherche vise à trouver l'origine des problèmes psychologiques de Hazel. Nous utiliserons également la théorie de "La Motivation Humaine" d'Abraham Maslow dans ce contexte pour démontrer comment les l'incapacité de ce personnage a joué d'une meilleure santé physique a éliminé sa besoin de contact social. De plus, l'étude nous permet de découvrir et d'analyser les préoccupations de Hazel et les problèmes d'insécurité afin de mettre en évidence leur influence sur sa comportement et sa façon de penser sur le roman.

Mot clés : Mécanismes d'auto-défense, La dimension psychologique, La dimension psychologique, Les motifs humains, La peur, Psychanalyse.