

## Psychological Portrait of Alice: Ego Defenses in Lewis Carroll's "Through the Looking Glass"

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to analyze the ego defence mechanisms of the main character in "Alice Through the Looking Glass". This research identifies specific response to the challenges she faces in the fantastical world. Employing a text-oriented context methodology to analyze her psychological behaviour throughout the narrative. These mechanisms are crucial for understanding Alice's character development, as they reveal her struggles with identity, self-perception, and the pressures of her environment. The findings indicate that Alice's use of ego defense mechanism serves as a coping strategy, allowing her to navigate the complexities of her experiences. The motivation behind her reliance on these defenses is explored, highlighting her desire to protect herself from emotional pain and uncertainty. By analyzing Alice's character through the lens of ego defense mechanisms, this research provides valuable insight into her psychological landscape and the broader themes of identity and resilience in the film. The study underscores the significance of understanding psychological mechanisms in character development, offering a nuanced perspective on Alice's journey and the intricate dynamics within the narrative.

**Keywords:** ego defense mechanism, character analysis, psychology, context-oriented approach, anna freud's theory, movie.

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### 1. Introduction

Movies have become popular storytelling media because they provide viewers with an engrossing blend of sound and visuals that make difficult stories understandable and emotionally stirring. Film is a form of art that integrates theoretical reflection and creative practice, demanding that it both represent reality and maintain artistic autonomy within the global context (Zhang, 2024). Enabling audiences to immerse themselves in narratives. The success of fantasy films is largely due to the film industry's preference for works that are widely attractive and simple to watch. With the help of emotive characters, many movies-particularly those with young or adolescent heroes, like "Alice Through the Looking Glass", efficiently communicate emotions, allowing viewers of all ages to empathise with the story.

Christian Metz viewed films as a complex system of signs, much like language, which can be examined through semiotic analysis. He proposed that film functions as a "Visual Language", conveying meaning through images, sounds, and movement rather than through words. Although film lacks the formal grammar of written language, it communicates through a variety of codes, which include both

denotative and connotative meanings. Metz emphasised that films, like literary works, tell tales by weaving these codes into a continuous narrative framework that can be dissected and analyzed in a manner similar to literary studies. (Metz, 1991)

A psychological perspective is necessary to comprehend the inner emotional world of a character like Alice, especially the idea of ego defense mechanisms. These unconscious defense mechanisms, which can take many different forms, including denial, displacement, and rationalization, are employed by people to shield themselves from worry and internal conflict. These processes are frequently more apparent in children and teenagers through their behaviours and facial expressions, which offer a clear window into their psychological states. Alice's issues with identity, emotional fortitude, and interpersonal connections are reflected in the various situations throughout Wonderland where her ego defense mechanisms are activated. The emotional impact of the film derives from the actor's journey and their connection with the public.

This research aims to examine the specific ego defense mechanisms that Alice uses throughout the movie and how these psychological strategies contribute to her character development. It also explores the reasons behind her use of these mechanisms and their impact on other characters. Using a text-oriented contextual method, this study analyses Alice's relationships and behaviours to reveal her complex inner workings, supported by Anna Freud's theories on ego defense mechanisms.

Defense mechanisms are unconscious psychological operations that function to protect a person from anxiety-producing thoughts and feelings, mediating the individual's reactions to emotional internal conflicts and to external stressors. (Anggraeni & Widyaningrum, 2024) Ego defense mechanisms are classified as psychological strategies since they originate involuntarily. A person's psychological condition shapes their beliefs, which lead to specific behaviours. This unconscious procedure is referred to as an ego defense mechanism. People use a variety of strategies to shield themselves against anxiety, stress, despair, and other negative feelings.

The scope of this study focuses on Alice's psychological responses during her adventures in Wonderland, with the Mad Hatter and other significant characters. It seeks to uncover the relationship between her ego defense mechanisms and her adventurous spirit, highlighting how narrative and visual design represent these mechanisms. Although fictional, Alice's experiences provide insights into human emotional development and behaviour, making this study valuable for psychological character analysis in film.

In the journal "Gender Inequality Experienced by Jo March in the Film "Little Women" by Surakarta English and Literature Journal discusses the forms of gender discrimination faced by Jo March in the film "Little Woman" and her efforts to fight against gender inequality. Jo takes various actions, such as continuing her work, rejecting gender norms, pursuing independence in education and finances, and advocating for women's rights. Her determination reflects emotional strength and strategies to cope with the pressures of a patriarchal society, which relates to the concept of ego defense mechanisms. These mechanisms are ways people protect themselves from emotional conflict and social pressure. (Feby Angelia, Agnes Widyaningrum, 2024)

The connection to Alice's ego defense mechanisms in "Alice Through the Looking Glass" lies in how both female characters deal with complex social and mental challenges. Alice often uses defense mechanisms like rationalization and distraction to cope with her confusing and absurd world, while Jo actively fights

against the discrimination she faces. Both characters show how women can use different psychological strategies to maintain their emotional balance and fight for their rights in limited social contexts. Therefore, studying Jo March's struggles provides valuable insight into understanding how ego defense mechanisms work in literature, including in "Alice Through the Looking Glass."

Lastly, this study adopts a context-oriented methodology, considering the ways in which social, cultural, and environmental factors impact Alice's psychological makeup and resilience. This approach recognises that conduct and emotional coping do not occur in a vacuum and demonstrates how Alice's own development is interwoven with the environment she lives in. The paper is organised so that the theoretical foundations and background are presented first, followed by an analysis of the film and its findings, before providing insights and suggestions for additional research.

According to the research titled "Representation of Self-Defense Mechanism of The Main Character in The Blind Side Movie". There are eight ego defense mechanism action mechanisms found in Big Mike's character. They are Repression, Formation, Reaction, Displacement, Rationalization, Sublimation, Diversion, Aggression, Fantasy, and Rejection. These eight types of self-defense represent the strengths, weaknesses, and emotions contained in Big Mike's character, which, as the plot goes, shows that he later turns into a better version with a better personality. Big Mike's character through the eight aspects of self-defense mechanism was defined as someone who used to run away when under pressure, did not know how to communicate his feelings, but it provided the perspective of how Big Mike's character had a soft spot and a caring nature for his family's safety, and he was willing to learn from his shortcomings and was willing to become a better person. This research was conducted in 2022 at the English Department, Faculty of Language and Communication, Harapan University, in the city of Medan. (Agita Br Tarigan Hidayati, 2023)

As indicated by the research titled "Analysis of Anxiety and Defense Mechanism on the Main Character Reflected in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland 1865 Novel by Lewis Carroll examines how Alice's character relates to Sigmund Freud's theories on anxiety and defence mechanisms. This study discovered that Alice's strong imagination puts her in continual danger within Wonderland, causing her to feel reality anxiety, moral anxiety, and neurotic anxiety. Her nervousness is heightened by her voyage, which is full of challenges and odd encounters. But she keeps investigating because she is curious. Repression, intellectualisation, displacement, regression, response creation, and introjection are some of the defence strategies Alice employs to deal with her situation. She is able to depart Wonderland and resume her regular life thanks to these coping mechanisms. Her employment of these tools demonstrates her attempts to live in a strange and frequently hazardous environment. (Ulfa & Wulandari, 2019)

Based on the research titled "Defense Mechanism On The Main Character Of Shutter Island (2010) As Psychoanalysis Study". It investigates Teddy Daniels' coping strategies for trauma through ego defense mechanism. These mechanisms, in Freud's view, are unconscious psychological defences against anxiety brought on by unfavourable sensations or ideas. Teddy fabricates a story and employs suppression to stifle recollections of his past. His refusal to acknowledge that he is a patient at Ashecliffe Hospital is an example of denial. He exhibits projection when, rather of confronting the reality, he attributes his wife's death to "Laeddis." He manifests displacement when he uses medicine to treat physical symptoms like headaches that are caused by his anxiety. These tactics show the intricacy of psychological to stress

by highlighting Teddy's avoidance of facing his upsetting reality. (Dewi Fortuna & Yuliani Rahayu, n.d.)

## **2. Methodology**

Methodology is the overall approach to research, which includes the theoretical framework and philosophical assumptions that guide the study. (Adeoye, 2024) This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing a context-oriented framework to analyze the ego defense mechanisms of Alice in "Alice Through the Looking Glass." In addition, the context-oriented approach is particularly effective in literary analysis because it enables a thorough comprehension of the text by taking into account a variety of viewpoints, including the historical, cultural, and psychological settings that influence character behaviour and story development.

The primary data for this study is derived from the film Alice Through The Looking Glass, which serves as the main source for analyzing the ego defense mechanism of the character Alice. The film "Alice Through the Looking Glass," which focuses on Alice's character and her role and relationships in the story serve as the main source of data for this study. The results will also be supported by secondary evidence, such as psychological ideas, especially those proposed by Anna Freud, as well as pertinent character analysis and emotional resilience literature.

There are several steps in the data gathering process. Initially, the movie is seen to get a general sense of its plot and characters. Alice's speech, behaviour, and interactions with other characters are then examined in order to determine her ego defence methods. In order to ascertain how each defense mechanism affects her psychological growth and relationships within Wonderland, these mechanisms are subsequently categorised in accordance with Anna Freud's theory. To ensure data validity, this study applies triangulation by cross-referencing dialogues and scenes with established psychological theories, and includes peer review or feedback from experts in literary analysis and psychology to strengthen credibility and accuracy.

## **3. Result and Discussion**

### **3.1 Result**

The findings from this research are structured based on the principle of Anna Freud, as reflected in Alice's character in Alice Through the Looking Glass.

#### **3.1.1 The Spesific Ego Defense Mechanism of Alice**

By analyzing these defense mechanisms, aims to uncover the underlying motivations and anxieties that influence her actions and relationships. This investigation not only enhances our understanding of Alice's character but also contributes to the broader discourse on the role of ego defense mechanisms in navigating psychological challenges. To better understand the reasons behind her actions. Through a detailed examination of Alice's experiences, the complexities of her psyche and how these mechanisms serve as both protective strategies and potential barriers to personal growth are sought to be illuminated. Through this analysis, five specific ego defense mechanisms were identified in Alice are Denial, Regression, Projection, Rationalization, and Sublimation.

##### **3.1.1.1 Denial**

According to Anna Freud, denial is an immature defense mechanism where individuals refuse to acknowledge a painful reality to protect themselves from distress

(Freud, 1966) In the case of Alice, her denial about the fate of her father's ship serves as a poignant example of how this mechanism operates. Denial is an

immature defense mechanism in which individuals refuse to acknowledge a painful reality to protect themselves from distress. (Halim & Sabri, 2013) The individual deals with emotional conflicts or internal/external stressors by refusing to acknowledge some aspect of external reality or of his or her experience that would be apparent to others. The subject actively denies that a feeling, behavioural response, or intention was or intention is not present, even though its presence is considered more than likely by the observer. The subject is unaware of both the ideational and emotional content of what is denied. (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021)

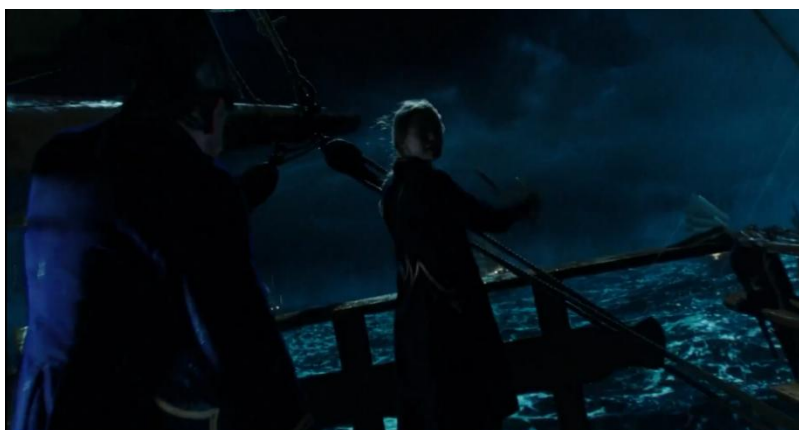


Figure 1. Alice forced the captain to keep going despite the storm.  
01:44

*Alice : "The fund is low. Line, extended candles! Captain, the ship will run aground there."*

Alice exhibits denial in these scenes by refusing to acknowledge the ship's financial constraints and hazardous state. While her relationship to the ship keeps her from realising its possible loss, her order to "extend candles" symbolically deflects attention from the impending peril. Although Alice's denial delays her sadness and maintains her relationship with her father, it also makes it more difficult for her to accept reality, highlighting her conflict between situational knowledge and emotional attachment.



Figure 2. Alice debated with her mother

11:35

*Alice's mother : "The wonder is just a ship."*

*Alice : "Is not just a ship. It's father ship. Everything he loved. Everything I love. He never let this happen."*

The dialogue between Alice and her mother illustrates denial as an ego defense mechanism. When Alice's mother states "The wonder is just a ship" she attempts to downplay the significance of the ship, reducing it to a mere object. In contrast, Alice's response reveals her deep emotional attachment and the weight of her memories associated with the ship. Alice's insistence on the ship's importance signifies her refusal to accept the reality of its current state and the implications of its potential loss.

### 3.1.1.2 Regression

As an unconscious defense mechanism, it often emerges in individuals under high stress or experiencing emotional challenges. Regression involves reverting to earlier developmental behaviours, such as dependence or childlike responses, as a way to cope with overwhelming emotions or situations. (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021) regression can be seen "when the ego is threatened, the person may return to an earlier, more infantile form of behaviour as means of coping with the disorder. (Caroll et al., 2019) The film deftly incorporates the notion of regression into its story, demonstrating how the characters' emotional states impact their actions and relationships.



Figure 3. Alice talk to Mr. Time and remembers her past  
01:14:30

Alice : *"I used to believe I could change anything. If I was brave enough, I could fix everything."*

Alice's reflection reveals her use of ego defense mechanisms. Regression involves a return to earlier stages of development when faced with stress, manifesting as childlike behaviour to cope with present difficulties. (Békés & Perry, 2020) When Alice considers her early beliefs, she exhibits regression because she avoids accepting her present limitations and yearns for a time when she felt omnipotent. She is shielded from her current vulnerability by this mechanism, but it keeps her from accepting adult responsibilities and reasonable boundaries.

### 3.1.1.3 Projection

Projection is a defense mechanism in which people attribute their unacceptable thoughts and feelings to others instead of acknowledging them as their own. (Tang & Peng, 2022) One of the notable mechanisms identified in the film is projection, a psychological process wherein individuals attribute their unacceptable thoughts, feelings, or motives to someone else. An individual that project her feelings onto other things. This defense mechanisms allows a character to distance themselves from internal conflicts by perceiving them as external threats or flaws in others. Psychological projection is an unconscious defense mechanism where



individuals transfer their unwanted emotions, thoughts, or desires onto others. In the context of stress management, they highlighted that projection is often used to mitigate emotional pressure caused by internal conflicts or overwhelming stress.



Figure 4. Alice talks with Time to bring Chronosphere

00:33:47

*Alice: It's not trouble—it's hope. My friend, Hatter, is suffering. He believes his family is alive, but no one believes him. If I could just borrow the Chronosphere.*

*Time: Borrow? You speak as if time were something to be lent like a pocket watch. The past cannot be changed, Alice.*

*Alice: But what if it can? What if I could go back and find the truth?*

*Time: If you take the Chronosphere, you risk unraveling time itself. Past, present, future—all will collapse.*  
*Alice: Then I will be careful. Hatter needs me, and I won't let him down.*

*Time: You are stubborn, just like Time itself... Very well, Alice Kingsleigh. But beware—time has a way of teaching lessons the hard way.*

Instead of admitting that she needs to make amends for what she cannot accept, Alice frames her dangerous want to alter the past as being just for the Hatter, projecting her own anxieties and desperation onto her friend's demands. Although projection helps Alice avoid feeling guilty or powerless, it also warps her goals and makes it more difficult for her to see herself as completely selfless.

#### 3.1.1.4 Rationalization

Rationalization involves creating logical explanations to justify unacceptable behaviours or feelings. (Freud, 1966) In the film, characters regularly use rationalization to maintain control or their sense of self-worth in the face of failure, fear, or shame. Analyzing these incidents reveals the deeper impulses driving crucial character behaviors, adding psychological depth to the story. Rationalizes the plan by saying that she just wants to get the food to fulfil her hunger. (In et al., n.d.)



Figure 5. Alice Make a Plan for Everything in Wonderland 01:25:49  
*Rabbit* : “What are we going to do?”  
*Rat* : “Yeah, what’s the plan?”  
*Mr. Time* : “It’s up to you now, Alice.”  
*Alice* : “Take the Time to His castle. Hatter and I will retrieve the chromosphere and restore order the universe. Do you understand?”

Here, Alice justifies her actions to keep a sense of control and purpose by framing her risky strategy as honourable and essential. Although it keeps her confident as a leader, this defence mechanism might keep her from seeing how reckless or self-serving her decisions were.

### 3.1.1.5 Sublimation

Sublimation converts unacceptable impulses into socially acceptable actions, reflecting maturity and adaptability. (Freud, 1966) Sublimation converts socially unacceptable impulses into constructive, socially approved activities, reflecting maturity and adaptability. (Daudie Presdyasmara et al., 2022) Alice, the principal character, best exemplifies sublimation via her adventurous spirit and willingness to serve others, despite dealing with personal tragedy and societal pressure. Rather than falling to despair or revolt, she channels her inner turmoil into acts of bravery and issue resolution within Underland. Her journey to rescue the Mad Hatter, for example, demonstrates how she transforms grief and uncertainty into a purposeful quest that not only benefits herself but also restores harmony to the world around her.



Figure 6. Hatter feels hopeless when he doesn’t find his family  
01:05:00

*Mad Hatter* : “It’s too late. We’ve lost.”  
*Alice* : “No, we haven’t. I won’t give up. We can still change things, we can make it right.”

In this sentence, Alice tries to help her friend, Hatter, to bring back his deceased family, even though it looks impossible. However, she attempts to do, because she wants to help her friend avoid pain or depression. Psychologically, she appears somewhat ambitious or driven to achieve the impossible, she still chooses to pursue it. This elevates her character as resilient and altruistic, using her emotional pain to inspire and support others.

### 3.1.2 The Ego Defense Mechanisms Contribute to The Development of Alice’s Character



The development of Alice's character in "Alice Through the Looking Glass" is deeply shaped by her use of ego defense mechanisms. Ego defense mechanisms are unconscious psychological strategies used to protect individuals from anxiety and internal conflicts. By examining these mechanisms in Alice's character, this study aims to uncover the underlying motivations and anxieties that influence her behaviours and relationships. (Freud, 1966)

### 3.1.2.1 Motivating Action and Struggles

Ego defense mechanisms are unconscious strategies used to reduce anxiety and manage internal conflicts, often motivating behaviour to protect the self. (Freud, 1966) Defensive control processes help individuals plan immediate action to reduce overwhelming emotions and motivate adaptive struggle. (Horowitz & Znoj, 1999) Alice instinctively employs denial, projection, and rationalization to cope with emotional obstacles such as her father's death and social expectations. These processes frequently affect her actions, causing her to flee reality and return to Wonderland in quest of control and purpose. "The main character's actions reflect his struggle against the oppressive forces in his life." (Fortuna & Rahayu, 2023)



Figure 7 .Alice is angry with Hamish

00:10:00

*Hamish: "You have a choice, Alice. The Wonder would be mine, and your mother can keep her home."*

*Alice: "That ship is my father's legacy. I won't give it up."*

Alice exhibits denial and rationalisation in this exchange. Her reliance on the ship as her father's legacy justifies her choice by presenting it as a moral obligation rather than an emotional response, while her failure to take Hamish's offer into consideration demonstrates a rejection of the practical ramifications. By upholding her sense of purpose and protecting her father's memory, these defence mechanisms drive Alice's behaviour, but they also emphasise her conflict between emotional attachment and outside expectations and her inability to accept harsh reality.

### 3.1.2.2 Providing a Sense of Control in a Difficult Situation

Defense mechanisms like denial and sublimation as tools for individuals to regain control in stressful situations by distorting or transforming reality into manageable forms. (Freud, 1966) Alice frequently relies on psychological barriers such as denial and sublimation to regulate her emotions. These answers enable her to face obstacles without being emotionally immobilised, giving her the strength to keep going. Alice can use these techniques to take action when she feels powerless.

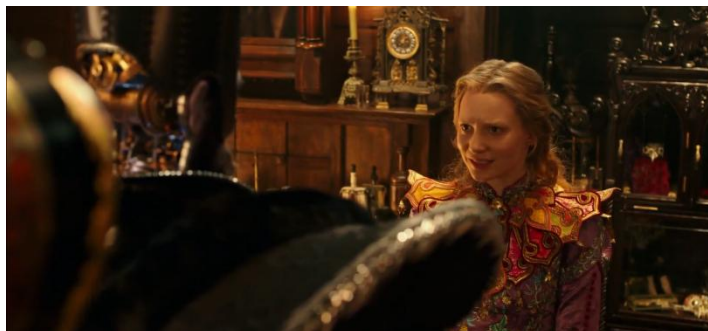


Figure 8. Alice Provide Her Reason to Mr.Time

00:56:00

*Time: "You cannot change the past."*

*Alice: "No, but I can learn from it. And maybe I can help him."*

Alice's reaction demonstrates sublimation as she transforms her loss and powerlessness into a positive objective of education and service to others. Her perseverance transforms an unalterable history into a chance for development and contribution. This defence mechanism demonstrates her capacity to turn vulnerability into purpose-driven activity in spite of outside constraints, enhancing her resilience and leadership. Continue.

### 3.1.2.3 Keep Identity and Purpose

Defense mechanisms such as projection and denial help maintain identity by shielding individuals from conflicting realities that threaten their self-concept. (Freud, 1966) By guarding her inner world, Alice defies society's expectations and retains her commitment to live life on her own. Her resistance to accepting confining positions, as well as her conviction that Underland exists, demonstrate a strong desire to defend her identity and mission. Ego protection systems protect her from uncertainty and pressure while also reinforcing her sense of direction and self-worth during her path. Maintaining a sense of identity and purpose is crucial for individuals, as it helps them navigate their experiences and reinforces their self-concept amidst external challenges. (Adi Saputra, 2022)



Figure 9. Alice and her mother rejected the signed contract

01:41:00

*Mother: "It won't be easy."*

*Alice: "Nothing worth doing ever is."*

Alice's statement demonstrates both rationalisation and projection. Her belief keeps her identity as strong and independent in spite of her inner worries by projecting her uncertainties externally and presenting difficulties as intrinsically

valuable. This mechanism demonstrates how defence mechanisms maintain her sense of self in the face of emotional difficulties and societal expectations, reaffirming her dedication to her objectives and values.

#### 3.1.2.4 Alleviating Guilt

Rationalization and reaction formation can alleviate guilt by justifying actions or replacing unacceptable impulses with their opposites to maintain psychological balance. (Freud, 1966) Alice saves herself from severe emotional discomfort by explaining her behaviour or transferring responsibility. While these answers may not address the underlying difficulties, they provide short respite that keeps her functioning and focused on her goals. Over time, this process becomes part of her emotional development, allowing her to address guilt with greater honesty and resilience. Reaction formation replaces unacceptable impulses with their opposites, thereby preventing feelings of guilt from emerging into consciousness. (Yura Lascalzo; Marco Giannini, 2022)

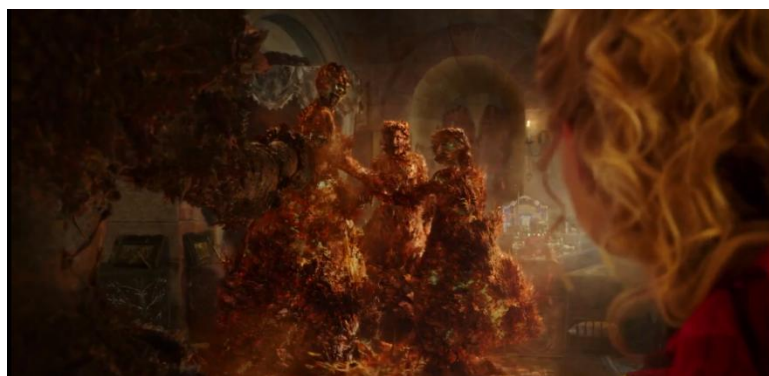


Figure 10. Alice sees the truth of the tragedy

01:20:00

Alice (softly): “*It wasn’t just her fault...*”

(She realizes Mirana's lie contributed to the tragedy.)

By recognising shared culpability rather than blaming just one person, Alice utilises rationalisation to disperse guilt in this situation, lessening her emotional weight. Her connections are strengthened and her psychological development is aided by this mechanism, which enables her to handle complicated emotions and develop empathy and emotional maturity.

#### 3.1.3 The Reason Alice Uses that Ego Defense Mechanism

Ego defense mechanisms are unconscious psychological strategies that individuals use to manage anxiety, protect their self-concept, and maintain psychological balance. (Freud, 1966) Alice frequently employs ego defense strategies, which are essential tools for her psychological functioning and define her character. Her battles with bewilderment, powerlessness, and the demands of social norms give rise to these coping techniques. Alice uses these defenses to control her inner conflicts and safeguard her identity as she makes her way through a fanciful world is full of absurdity and unpredictability. In addition to illuminating Alice’s character development, her dependence on these techniques also highlights the more profound emotional and psychological themes that run throughout her journey. The intricacies of her personality and the difficulties she has in her search for identity and belonging may be better understood by looking at her motives.

##### 3.1.3.1 Achieve The Goal

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Defense mechanisms like denial, rationalization, and sublimation help individuals achieve goals by reducing emotional disturbances that could hinder their focus and determination. (Freud, 1966) The use of defense mechanisms can facilitate goal achievement by enabling individuals to cope with obstacles and maintain focus on their aspirations despite emotional turmoil. (Adi Saputra, 2022) One of the key reasons Alice employs ego defense mechanisms in *Alice Through the Looking Glass* is to achieve her goals despite emotional and external obstacles. Whether trying to save the Mad Hatter, protect her father's legacy, or assert her independence, Alice often relies on mechanisms like denial, sublimation, and rationalization to stay focused and determined. These defenses help her block out fear, doubt, or grief that might otherwise hinder her progress, allowing her to pursue her mission with clarity and purpose.



Figure 11. Alice act cool when rejected the contract

01:43:00

*Hamish: "You'll regret this."*

*Alice: "I don't think I will."*

Alice employs denial and rationalization in this conversation. By ignoring Hamish's warning, she shields herself from uncertainty and dread and avoids any possible remorse. Her justification presents her choice as self-assured and legitimate, enabling her to stay focused on her objectives in spite of peer pressure. These strategies support her will to go her own way and bolster her feeling of autonomy, demonstrating her development into a self-reliant person who puts her goals ahead of social norms.

### 3.1.3.2 Self Projection

Projection involves attributing one's unacceptable thoughts or feelings to others to avoid internal conflict. (Freud, 1966) Through projection, individuals externalize their own feelings and motives onto others as a way to avoid cognitive dissonance and self-confrontation. (theconstellinguist, 2024) People with deficits in emotional self-regulation blamed others for their own unattractive choices. (Kaufmann et al., 2022)





Figure 12. Chronosphere steal by Red Queen

01:23:00

*Red Queen: "You're foolish to defy me."*

*Alice: "I'm not afraid of you."*

*Red Queen: "You should be."*

*Alice: "I'm protecting my friends. That's worth any fear."*

Here, Alice frames her fear as bravery for her friends' sake, using projection to externalise it. She avoids facing her own fears by concentrating on defending others, turning anxiety into bravery aimed at an outside objective. This technique enables her to control her fear without coming across as weak, while also reaffirming her identity as a brave and devoted friend. Because her bravery stems from defending herself against deeper insecurities, it also demonstrates her psychological complexity.

### 3.1.4 Impact of Alice's Ego Defense Mechanism

Alice's use of ego defense mechanism has several positive impacts on her character development and journey, allowing her to be resilient in the face of hardship, make courageous decisions, and remain loyal to her principles. Adaptive defense mechanisms enhance resilience and promote psychological well-being by managing stress effectively. (Cherry, 2024) By channelling her emotions through defenses Alice transforms her inner struggles into meaningful activity, enabling her to grow, lead and overcome the obstacles she encounters. However, while these mechanisms help her cope, they also have a negative effect. The effective use of mature defense mechanisms can lead to positive outcomes, fostering resilience and emotional well-being in individuals facing psychological stress. (Freud, 1966) Overreliance on immature defense mechanisms can lead to psychosocial impairments and inhibit effective coping.(Cherry, 2025)

Table 1. Impact of Alice's Ego Defense Mechanism

IMPACT	CONVERSATION	Result
Positive Impact	00:42:00 <i>Hamish: "Surely you can't believe a woman belongs at sea, commanding ships?"</i> <i>Alice: "My father believed in me. That's enough."</i>	-Ego defense mechanism is a psychological strategy that helps individuals cope with stress, anxiety, or internal conflict. -Mechanisms can promote resilience and emotional stability.

	00:56:00 <i>Time: "You cannot change the past." Alice : "I have to try. He's my friend. If there's even a chance, I must."</i>	-Alice benefits from these mechanisms by maintaining her determination -Defense mechanisms seek professional help if needed to manage emotions and stress.
	01:10:00 <i>Red Queen: "You think you can lead us?" Alice (confidently): "Yes, I do."</i>	
Negative Impact	00:42:00 <i>Hamish: "You can't do this, Alice. You're a woman, and this is not a world for you." Alice : "You don't understand. I will prove you wrong."</i>	-Negatively impact her journey by causing impulsive actions and avoidance of difficult emotions. -For instance, her decision disrupts the balance of time and creates new complications. -Denial leads her to refuse to acknowledge unpleasant truths, such as addiction. -Her defensive behaviour alienates her from others, making it difficult to seek help or trust those around her.
	01:01:00 <i>Red Queen: "You think you can lead us? You've never led anyone." Alice : "You've always been the problem. It's you, not me."</i>	
	01:10:00 <i>Red Queen: "Maybe you should let me help you." Alice : "Help? You're just trying to manipulate me!"</i>	

Ego defense mechanisms are unconscious strategies used by individuals to protect themselves from anxiety and internal conflicts. (Freud, 1966) Table 1 shows that Alice's defense mechanisms have both positive and negative impacts on her development.

The benefits demonstrate how Alice's ego defence strategies, such as denial and rationalization work as psychological instruments to support her in preserving her self-esteem, defending her self-concept, and controlling her emotions under pressure. Denial enables people to reject parts of reality that are too painful to accept, so as to lower tension and allow them to carry on with their daily lives. For instance, when Alice says, "My father believed in me," in response to Hamish's scepticism. That's enough," she says, brushing off his disparaging remarks with denial. This system maintains her sense of self-worth and strengthens her resolve to succeed in spite of socially imposed gender-based constraints. In a similar vein, rationalisation aids her in defending her choices and preserving her feeling of command and direction. However, the adverse effects show that when overused or applied improperly, these same defence mechanisms can impede Alice's emotional development and personal growth. Alice says the Red Queen, for example, "You've always been the problem." In order to avoid introspection and the awkwardness of admitting her weaknesses, she uses projection, assigning her own concerns or imperfections to someone else. "It's you, not me." Projecting can skew reality and keep people from identifying and dealing with their inner problems. Although this activity may momentarily reduce anxiety, it can also result in rash choices, broken relationships, and a lack of true self-awareness. In the end, these defences could



shield Alice temporarily, but they would hinder her capacity to get a more profound understanding of her emotions and make healthy adjustments to the difficulties she encounters.

## **3.2 Discussion**

### **3.2.1 Role of Mechanisms in Character Development**

This analysis explores the motivations and anxieties that shape Alice's actions and relationships, particularly through the lens of ego defense mechanisms. By examining Alice's experiences, uncover five specific mechanisms: denial, regression, projection, rationalization, and sublimation. Alice's denial, for instance, isolates her from those who wish to help, as she clings to her imagined adventures instead of confronting her grief. Her regression manifests in childlike behaviours when faced with disappointment, reflecting a psychological strategy to maintain self-coherence during crises. This behaviour allows viewers to connect with her struggles with loss, identity, and the pressures of growing up.

In *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, Alice's use of ego defence mechanisms has a significant impact on her character development. These are unconscious defence mechanisms to shield the ego from internal conflict and distress. Five distinct mechanisms are identified by the analysis. (Freud, 1966) Because she clings to her imagined experiences rather than facing pain, Alice's denial, for example, separates her from others who want to assist. Her inability to remain coherent in times of crisis is reflected in her regressive infantile actions when she is disappointed. These actions not only show her internal difficulties with identity and loss, but they also make it possible for spectators to empathise with her as she deals with the demands of growing up.

### **3.2.2 Coping Strategies and Motivations**

Alice's determination to help Hatter illustrates her projection of anxieties onto him, diverting attention from her own challenges. Her desire to change the past and assist Hatter serves as a coping mechanism for her feelings of helplessness. Additionally, her rationalization of her quest to restore Hatter's family as a moral obligation allows her to justify an emotionally charged goal, masking her deeper fears of loss and lack of control. Overall, as Alice makes her way through an unpredictable environment, her behaviours show her internal conflict and need for a distinct identity. Alice highlights the intricacies of her character development and exemplifies a good method of handling internal tensions by directing her fears into a strong commitment to help her buddy.

Alice's character development in "*Alice Through the Looking Glass*" is shaped by her use of ego defense mechanisms, which help her navigate emotional challenges and internal conflict. Strategies like projection and denial allow her to manage fears and anxieties, adding depth to her character. However, reliance on these mechanisms can lead excessive expectations. Trapping her in a cycle of striving for the impossible and resulting in emotional exhaustion. Alice's denial serves as a way to maintain her identity amidst external invalidation, enabling her to act decisively despite her grief. Her struggle against societal labels highlights her quest for autonomy and self definition. By declaring herself the "captain of her fate," she asserts her agency and resilience in the face of pressure.

The defense mechanism arises from struggles with confusion, powerlessness, and social expectations, helping her navigate a whimsical and unpredictable world. By examining her motivations to gain insight into her search for identity and belonging. According to Anna Freud, these mechanisms are not random but serve to

protect the ego from inner conflict and maintain psychological integrity. (Freud, 1966) The previous studies on Big Mike illustrate how his eight identified mechanisms contribute to his transformation into a better person. It shows that despite his initial tendencies to run away from pressure and struggle with communication, he learns from his shortcomings and develops a caring nature for his family. The current discussion effectively links Alice's defense mechanisms to her character development, showcasing her journey toward self-identity and agency. In contrast, the study on Big Mike provides a more extensive exploration of various mechanisms but may not delve as deeply into the specific emotional growth associated with each mechanism. This could limit the understanding of how each mechanism uniquely contributes to character development.

### **3.2.3 Comparative Analysis with Previous Studies**

The previous studies on characters like Jo March and Big Mike also identify various defense mechanisms, such as repression, rationalization, and denial. They focus more on character motives and emotional struggle than they do on the precise processes, though. gives a thorough explanation of Alice's unique mechanisms and a sophisticated insight into her mental terrain. Previous research, on the other hand, might not have gone as in-depth, concentrating instead on more general character development themes rather than breaking down specific systems. The research on Big Mike shows how his eight recognised mechanisms help him change and become a better person. It demonstrates how, in spite of his early propensity to avoid stress and his communication difficulties, he grows to care for his family and learns from his mistakes.

The current conversation skilfully illustrates Alice's path towards self-identity and agency by connecting her defence mechanisms to her character development. The Big Mike research, on the other hand, offers a more thorough examination of several processes but might not go as far into the particular emotional development connected to each mechanism. This could restrict our comprehension of the distinct roles that each system plays in character development. Teddy's research demonstrates how his defence mechanisms keep him from facing his horrific reality, which results in a vicious cycle of avoidance and further psychiatric issues. Although initially protective, his systems ultimately impede his capacity to recover and move on. The current discussion effectively balances the positive and negative impacts of Alice's defense mechanisms, providing a holistic view of her character. In contrast, the study on Teddy focuses more on the negative consequences of his mechanisms, which may limit the exploration of any potential positive aspects of his character development.

### **3.2.4 Adaptive and Maladaptive Implications**

Alice's character development in "Alice Through the Looking Glass" is shaped by her use of ego defense mechanisms, which help her navigate emotional challenges and internal conflict. However, reliance on these mechanisms can lead to excessive expectations. Trapping her in a cycle of striving for the impossible and resulting in emotional exhaustion. Alice's denial serves as a way to maintain her identity amidst external invalidation, enabling her to act decisively despite her grief. Her struggle against societal labels highlights her quest for autonomy and self-definition. By declaring herself the "captain of her fate," she asserts her agency and resilience in the face of pressure. These defense mechanisms not only help Alice sustain her goals but also reinforce her motivation to support Hatter. These defense mechanisms not only help Alice sustain her goals but also reinforce her motivation to support Hatter. Ultimately, these strategies provide her with a sense of purpose, helping her cope with challenges and strengthen her connections to those around her.

Adaptive defense mechanisms can motivate individuals to take constructive action in stressful situations, enhancing coping and performance. (Cavalera et al., 2022)

Immature defense mechanisms partially mediated the relationship between unresolved shame and guilt and psychopathological symptoms, indicating that these defenses may hinder emotional processing and contribute to the development or maintenance of psychological disorders. (Cesare Cavalera , Paolo Andreani , Oliver Baumgartner, 2022)

Alice's use of ego defense mechanisms positively impacts her character development, enabling her to be resilient, make courageous decisions, and stay true to her principles. The use of mature defense mechanisms, such as humor and sublimation, could be considered an indirect indicator of a higher biological reserve and thus of a better psychophysical condition, as confirmed in the literature by several studies reporting a positive correlation between the use of mature defenses and indicators of better mental and physical health status. (Požatić, 2024) Higher levels of perceived stress, state anxiety, worry, and neurotic and immature defenses were associated with higher severity of post-traumatic stress symptoms, suggesting that maladaptive defenses may play a role in exacerbating psychological distress following traumatic events.(Alessio Gori, Eleonora Topino, 2023)

#### 4. Conclusion

Alice's employment of ego defense mechanisms helps her navigate both internal and external conflicts. The mechanisms are unconscious strategies employed to protect individuals from anxiety and inner turmoil. Mechanisms such as denial, regression, projection, rationalization, and sublimation serve as protective strategies that may also pose barriers to her personal growth. For instance, denial shields her from painful truths, as seen when she refuses to accept the limitations imposed on her by society after her father's death, allowing her to maintain emotional stability despite grief. Rationalization provides justifications for her actions, often diverting attention from her insecurities, such as when she frames her decision to help the Mad Hatter as a moral duty rather than acknowledging her fear of losing control.

Alice naturally uses these defense mechanisms to overcome emotional challenges, particularly in coping with her father's passing and responding to social expectations that undermine her agency. These strategies provide her with momentary solace and a sense of control, but also highlight the complexities of her inner conflicts and the risk of emotional exhaustion from striving for impossible ideals. Her steadfast dedication to supporting her friends, especially the Mad Hatter, demonstrates how these defenses motivate her to act decisively and assert her identity.

Overall, Alice's use of these psychological techniques illustrates her development and resilience. By asserting her individuality and turning her vulnerabilities into strengths, she overcomes the difficulties of her journey and confronts inner suffering and external skepticism. This progression demonstrates her emotional growth and the complexity of human psychology.

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