

**PSYCHOANALYZING RESISTANT FEMALE CHARACTERS IN CHIMAMANDA
NGOZI ADICHIE'S *DREAM COUNT* AND BESSIE HEAD'S "LIFE"**

BY

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE
FACULTY OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY**

NOVEMBER 2025

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**AN ORIGINAL ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND
LITERATURE, FACULTY OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN
CITY, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this project entitled Psychoanalyzing Resistant Female Characters in Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie's *Dream Count* and Bessie Head's "Life" was carried out by Temidayo Testimony Omali Odey in the Department of English and Literature, University of Benin, Benin City, under my supervision.

Dr. S. Eguavoen

Project Supervisor

Date

DEDICATION

This research paper is dedicated to myself for believing in me and a sky full of stars, even when everywhere seemed pitch black.

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I begin with acknowledging God for his kindness, love and tender mercy in my life. I also appreciate my project supervisor, Dr. Samson Eguvoen whose wisdom and guidance helped me during the course of writing this research paper. To all the lecturers who held my hands and supported me with academic advice, goodness and prayers, such as Dr. Egbah, Mrs. Efobi, Mrs. Oplalaku, Mrs. Bazuaye. Prof. Ogoanah, and Dr. Odia, I say thank you again and again. My immense love goes to my parents who funded my academics and kept me sane when I felt like I was running mad. To Goodness and Benevolence Odey who brought joy and light to my life in unexpected ways during my undergraduate days, thank you and I love you to the moon and beyond! To Food Faculty who fed me with the most healthy and delicious delicacies, thank you and I love you so much! To Gloria, my senior colleague whose excellent footsteps blew my mind from day one, thank you. To Tennyson who always showed up for me, thank you. To friends like Dorcas, Uche, Jennifer, Francis, who taught me days to exams and studied with me for dangerous tests, thank you for being the best buddies a student could have asked for. To those whose names are not mentioned here, please know you are in my hearts and I truly appreciate you all. Last but not least, I appreciate myself because you can bring a horse but cannot force it to drink. I commend myself for making use of the resources God, my parents, lecturers and friends made available for me to be successful in my studies.

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ABSTRACT

This research, titled *Psychoanalyzing Resistant Female Characters in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Dream Count and Bessie Head's "Life,"* explores the psychological workings of women who choose unconventional paths in the texts. It examines how the way of thinking and being, particularly within patriarchal contexts clashing with feminist liberation and choice, serves as a representation of resistant and unconscious drives. The analysis of *Dream Count* and "Life" reveals that the thoughts and actions of characters like Omelogor and Life, which may be seen as irrational, are not really "irrational" but are backed up by a psychological framework that prioritizes authenticity, truth, self and freedom. The study extends to the role that personal experiences play in shaping one's psyche and deviant choices in life. Ultimately, this work underscores that deviance, whether in personality, characterisation or behaviour, is not merely a show-off, but a representation of desires and authenticity backed by psyche

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose Of Study

This study psychoanalyzes Binta, Omelogor, Kadiatou, and Chiamaka in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dream Count* and Life in Bessie Head's "Life" as resistant female characters in a patriarchal society. The purpose of this study is to answer the question, 'why do people behave the way they do?', as well as uncover the underlying reasons behind human behaviour, most especially women who choose a different path in society.

1.2 Scope of Study

The scope of study is limited to certain characters in the narratives. For Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dream Count*, the focus is on Binta, Omelogor, Kadiatou, and Chiamaka, while for Bessie Head's "Life", the focus is on Life. The analysis will focus on themes of characterization and non-conformity on many levels in the characters and how they relate with their desires against the backdrop of their society. Therefore, the following will be looked at: deviation in personality, sexuality, and behaviour.

1.3 Methodology

Through qualitative research, a research method that prioritizes subjective interpretations and descriptive data, extracts from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dream Count* and Bessie Head's "Life" which serves as the primary sources of data are examined through the lens of literary criticism and used as evidences for the points in the research.

1.4 Theoretical Background

From the psychoanalytic theory, Freud's Drive Theory serves as the theoretical background for this study. According to Mahroof Hossain, 'Psychoanalysis is not simply a branch of medicine or psychology; it helps understand philosophy, culture, religion and first and foremost literature.' The theory, rooted in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach to

treating his patients, examines how human behaviour is primarily motivated by unconscious drives or instincts. The mental framework that drives the actions, words and personalities of *Dream Count*'s Omelogor and Binta, as well as Life in "Life" will be analysed, through id (strong biological forces and drives), ego (defence mechanisms that seeks to control wild biological forces) and superego (which regulates the id and ego). As noted by Hossain, 'Freud proposed three structures of the psyche or personality. Id, Ego, Ego and Super-Ego. Id refers a selfish, primitive, childish pleasure –oriented part of the personality with no ability to delay gratification. Super Ego refers internalized societal and parental standards of 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong' behaviour'. Ego refers the moderator between the Id and Super-Ego which seeks compromises to pacify both. It can be viewed as our 'sense of time and place.'

In Sigmund Freud's early years as a student pursuing a medical degree at the University of Vienna, he worked under the supervision of with a well-known physiologist, Ernst Brucke. During this time, he became acquainted with Josef Breuer who introduced him to the complexities of hysterical illnesses—something that Sigmund Freud would later have first-hand experience treating later in his career. He also had the opportunity to spend four months in Paris with Jean Charcot, a famous French neurologist and hypnotist, which led him 'to consider the importance of the unconscious mind and the way in which feelings and behaviours can be influenced to create psychopathological symptoms' (Sharf, 30).

The psychoanalytic theory, although originated from Sigmund Freud, branched to include other fields of the human life and environment apart from the unconscious such as social or interpersonal factors of living, and these branches that emanated from psychoanalysis came from students, disciples or other psychologist that built on what Sigmund Freud had already done: 'A later student of Freudian psychology in the name of Carl Gustav Jung re-directs his view to suit his own social milieu in the understanding of psychoanalysis. It is Jung who sees the basic human behaviours in myths and legends. A later

development of psychoanalysis embraced Alfred Adler who sees man as a social being. In the sense of Adler as documented by McConnell, we are motivated by social needs, “we are self-conscious and capable of improving ourselves and the world around us.”

In a research paper titled “A Critical Approach to Freud and Psychoanalysis” by Tekel Yigit, it says: ‘Freud claims that human behaviour and motivation lies in the deepest levels. Many works bear the traces of its author’s life. The data that supports the psychoanalytic theory are largely based on his own analysis. Therefore, in order to understand psychoanalysis, one has to examine Freud in detail.’ However, this research does not focus on or psychoanalyze Freud’s life, but resistant female characters in a story through his theory.. On his theory, the research paper says: ‘The psychoanalytic theory involves the use of methods that will reveal the unconscious to a great extent. Modernists believe in the objective reality that can be observed and systematically known. In Freudian psychoanalysis which was influenced by this movement, he argues that people will face a problem when they move away from known objective norms and therefore they will need therapy. Centuries ago, Freud, Adler and Jung became a part of this great paradigm of change that led to a great transformation in psychology as well as philosophy, medicine and even art.’ Unfortunately, the imitations of this theory according to the paper is its emphasis on ‘...the importance of biological and impulsive factors by ignoring social, cultural and interpersonal factors.’

Despite its limitations, Hossain notes that ‘Among the critical approaches to literature, the psychoanalysis has been one of the most controversial and for many readers the least appreciated. In spite of that it has been regarded one of the fascinating and rewarding approach in the application of interpretative analysis.’ In *Psychoanalytic Theory used in English Literature: A Descriptive Study*, it explores how the psychoanalytic theory has been used in works of literatures, as well as the various literary theories born from Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalysis. But first, it simply explains the origin of psychoanalysis, its stretch

into other friends including literature, and psychoanalysis in literature seeks to uncover in relation to characters and their actions: ‘The idea of psychoanalysis revolves round the concept that peoples’ actions are determined by their prestored ideas of the recurrent events. According to Monte’s *Beneath the Mask*, “Psychoanalytic theories assume the existence of unconscious internal states that motivate an individual’s overt actions.”’

On the importance and dissecting power of the theory on the level of literature, Hossain reveals that ‘Psychoanalysis emphasized on motives, it focused on hidden or disguised motives which helps to clarify literature on two levels, the level of writing itself and the level of character action within the text... Psychoanalysis has a great importance in contemporary understandings of reading, meaning and the relation of literature to culture.’

Psychoanalysis emphasized the importance of one to be able to articulate their deepest desires, fears and trauma. In the words of Hossain, ‘Psychoanalysis examines the articulation of our most private anxieties.’ However, the psychoanalytic theory, as is used in this research paper, does not only examine the resistant female characters lives through articulation of their thoughts and dialogue, but their actions, interpersonal relation in social settings and self-perception.

As quoted by Hossain, ‘The modern theory that is used in literature has two accepted meanings. Firstly, it means a method of treating mentally disordered people. Secondly, it also goes to mean the theories on human mind and its various complexities.’ The meaning used in this research paper is the latter, as it focuses on dissecting the complex unconscious in the human mind and how this unconsciousness drives conscious desires, thoughts, actions and relations to the world and people around them.

According to Hossain, one of the main theories relating to psychoanalysis is the Freudian theory. As explained by Freud, the Oedipus Complex, (a concept that is a desire for sexual involvement with the parent of the opposite sex, which produces a sense of

competition with the parent of the same sex and a crucial stage in the normal developmental process). The Freudian theory prioritizes this Oedipus complex, the unconscious (that part of the mind that lies outside the somewhat vague and porous boundaries of consciousness and is constructed in part by the repression of that which is too painful to remain in consciousness), and our id, ego and super-ego. Freud proposed three structures of the psyche or personality. Id, Ego, Ego and Super-Ego. Id refers a selfish, primitive, childish pleasure –oriented part of the personality with no ability to delay gratification. Superego refers internalized societal and parental standards of ‘good’ and ‘bad’, ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ behaviour’. Ego refers the moderator between the Id and Super-Ego which seeks compromises to pacify both. It can be viewed as our ‘sense of time and place.

The psychoanalytic theory is one that has been used to critic many works of literature. In a research paper titled “Psychoanalytic Theory used in English Literature: A Descriptive Study”, the psychoanalytic theory is looked at across works of literature. It believes that the Sigmund Freud’s Oedipus Complex is reflected in D.H Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers*. According to Monster, “A mother that lives in an unsatisfactory relationship both emotionally and sexual, with her husband, will easily be inclined to have a closer bond with her child.” According to Encyclopaedia Britannia, “[The] Oedipus complex, in psychoanalytic theory, [is] a desire for sexual involvement with the parent of the opposite sex and concomitant sense of rivalry with the parent of the same sex, a crucial stage in the normal development process.” A more extensive definition of Oedipus Complex according to a research paper titled Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory Oedipus complex: A critical study with reference to D. H. Lawrence’s “Sons and Lovers” by Sofe Ahmed says, ‘Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory Oedipus complex is one of the most influential as well as divisive theories of twentieth century. Freud coined the term Oedipus complex to refer to a stage in the development of young boys. He felt that in early development, around the age of

five young boys wish to have all their mother's love, thus, jealousy causes them to resent and even unconsciously wish for the death of their fathers.

The paper also mentions Albert Camus's *The Stranger* as a novel the inner psychological wiring of a human being who lives detached from a world he considers absurd and lives according to his own principles outside societal expectations through the main character, Meursault: 'The character Meursault also lacks enthusiasm and interest. He is primarily passive, because he has no ambitions. He lacks what the psychologist calls achievement motivations. Meursault in this novel doesn't want to commit himself into any relationship. Camus decides that human being always looks for happiness although they are conscious of the ultimate defeat of death...Albert Camus has tried to portray the psychological mind of the character Meursault in his novel *the stranger*. Meursault knows that the only happiness lies in accepting the present.'

There's a psychoanalytic study of Arthur Miller's play where the actions of the characters are things that is driven by the unconscious: '*Death of a Salesman* is a play that is psychoanalytic because of the problems Willie faces with himself and his dysfunctional family....The scene in Willie's daydream at Frank's chop house where Biff meets with Willie at the hotel shows the sign of the 'pleasure principal' problem that Willie has. He is having an affair with another woman which would break the sanctity in Willie and Linda's marriage. Freud would agree that the psychoanalysis behind this is that Willie seeks pleasure and that he wants to get away from his problems at home. He does not like to face problems head on and rather decides that he will get away from all that and avoid the problems he has in his life...Willie uses 'regression' which is a defence mechanism that means when thoughts are temporarily pushed back...out of consciousness and into unconsciousness. His daydreams are a good example of that. These aspects in *Death of a Salesman* proves why this can be a psychoanalytic play.'

Walt Whitman's 'The Sleepers' can also be considered a poem exploring the idea of dreams, therefore psychological in nature. On a psychoanalysis of the poem, the research paper states: 'Richard Maurice Bucke, a friend and disciple of Whitman, described 'The Sleepers' as a poem that represents the 'mind' during 'sleep'. He went on to say that the mind is made up to connected, half-connected and disconnected thoughts and feelings as they occur in dreams... Miller, Jr. read the poem 'The Sleepers' as a 'psychological dramatization' of a flow of images.... Psychological critics like Miller and Black described the poem 'The Sleepers' as 'an evocation of psychic depths. In Freudian terms 'The Sleepers' is the sexual maturation of a young boy as he grows into manhood. It is a poem of consciousness which revealed the poetic identity in its purely private context. The poem went through an implied cyclical process: implied innocence or oneness, psychic fragmentation, incompleteness, despair and then a unifying process in the last section.'

1.5 Literature Review

Many works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Bessie Head, especially the nature of their resistant female characters, have been critically reviewed over the years. About *Dream Count*, an Afrocritik essay by Chimezie Chika says, '*Dream Count* leaves no illusions that it is a repudiation of the boxes into which women are placed from birth, such as marrying before thirty, bearing their husband's name after marriage, performing subordination at their own expense, etc.' And on the resistant female characters in the novel, he says, 'Omelogor is the rational crusader holding out for a abetter society with her clandestine Robyn Hood grants, in which as a banker she takes from the stashes of stolen money to give less-privileged women while also maintaining a blog titled, "For Men Only." On unconventional practices by women, the essay notes that, 'One particular statement by a character in *Dream Count* seems to be a direct reference to Adichie herself and the kind of criticisms she had received in the past (in short, if I may project, the personal can be seen reaching into the realms of fiction in

this novel): Upon reading a news piece, a character named Enyinnaya said, “Look at this young Nigerian writer. She’s doing very well, we’re proud of her, but I heard she is married and decided to keep her maiden name. Why is she confusing young girls?”” The writer of the essay notices, ‘Adichie pitches that there are infinitely more fulfilling pursuits in women’s lives than the monolithic institutions of patriarchal expectations.’ This project expands on this using Omelogor as a case study in the following chapters. The essay above ends well by highlighting the philosophical and thoughtful observation of one of the most resistant female characters in the novel: ‘In the end, “life can change because of what could have happened,” as Omelogor observed.’

Paula Willie-Okafor says of Omelogor, ‘If Chiamaka and Zikora are archetypal Nigerian women, then Omelogor subverts them as models. A successful banker living in Nigeria, who has attained wealth of her own, however morally skewed, Omelogor consists of ideals, of independence and identity, er life lit with dinner parties and contentment, ambition and sexual freedom, and unrestrained agency. Unencumbered by desire for marriage and children, she is routinely pursued by men mystified by her self-possession. In America, she seeks to temper her moral failings and enrolls in graduate school to study pornography (it is unclear how she ultimately seeks to utilize this knowledge) but classmates do not take kindly to her philosophies, and she is turn antagonizes what she considers the country’s base, loveless ideologies. She even starts a blog called For Men Only, sarcastically doling out relationship advice to men.’

When it comes to the characterisation of her female characters, an Oxford Review of Books by Sarah Moorhouse states, ‘Adichie’s sympathy is not limited to her female characters, nor does she idealise her narrators, especially Omelogor, who comes across as prickly and often rude.’ This project psychoanalyzes Omelogor’s attitude, why she’s labelled

prickly and rude when really, she is just a woman unafraid to express her brash opinions and heartfelt desires and thoughts.

In *The Conversation* by Frances Egan, Omelogor is labelled ‘the fearless Omelogor (who quits banking to move to the US to do a masters degree in porn as an “educational tool”)', therefore labelled by her approach to life (‘fearless’) and actions (moving to the US for her masters degree), without considering the unconscious drives that sponsoring her approach to life and actions. Omelogor is even allegedly suspected or accused of pretence in the paragraphs that follows her label as fearless: ‘Child-free in her forties, full of self-love (where self means African and community love too), and developing intimacy with a woman, Omelogor is suspected of pretence. A call from a nosy aunt comes with unsolicited information on adoption centres and cutting advice: “Don’t pretend that you like the life you’re living”’. But this project asks: Is it pretence? Or that fact that it is inconceivable to some people’s minds for a woman to live a bold, resistant life that defies every expectation that has been put in place to police her? Omelogor’s brilliance and thoughtfulness is depicted in the way she advises her friend, Chia about her relationship with her ex. This brilliance and thoughtfulness are displayed in an excerpt of *The Conversation* essay: ‘When Chia is reflecting on her relationship with Darnell, the feisty Omelogor says: “You’re allowed to be victim and something else, not just victim.”’

According to Owoyele and Oladeji, Omelogor contests things, rather than accept them without questioning or occupy ‘an ambivalent middle ground, reinforcing the weight of cultural conditioning’ like Chia. Chia occupies an ambivalent middle ground, reinforcing the weight of cultural conditioning. She defends the Pope, not necessarily out of conviction, but out of habit, nostalgia, and the religious reticence instilled in her upbringing. Omelogor, however, delivers the final rapture: "Pope John Paul was too much of a politician and a stage

performer." This statement violently deconstructs the idealized image of the Pope, reframing him as a man of spectacle rather than spirit, of diplomacy rather than divinity.

Dream Count, although filled with resistant female characters asking questions and living life on their own terms, is one out of other works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's work that features such characters. In a research essay titled 'Educated Women in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Possibilities, Choices or Obligations?' the writer says of Kainene, one of the central characters in the novel: 'The depiction of Kainene in the novel show a confident, witty and somewhat mysterious woman, a bit cool and hard to get close to.' These characteristics closely mirror Omelogor's, whose resistant actions are mysterious and incomprehensible to her aunty and most of the men she comes across. While Omelogor is often worshipped and detested for her assertive skill, Kainene is respected for her business skills (a skill that Omelogor gives other women the opportunity to exhibit with her Robyn Hood grants) to the extent that she is compared to being better than a male child by her father who says: "she is not just like a son, she is like two."

On Bessie Head's "Life", Obakeng Mompoti Motshwakae writes in his review: 'Life Morapedi was welcomed by a group of women who ensured that her resettlement back in the village is diligently executed. She went on to be the centre of attention in the village because the way she carried herself and interactions with others. It was more pronounced when she started to change the way people viewed sex and its associated morality in the village. Her home became a cesspool of what is often found in the city particularly habits and degeneracy, like prostitution. Life Morapedi changed the socio-cultural landscape of the Botswana village.'

According to Thembelihle Thandi Ncube's *A Feminist Analysis Of Bessie Head's Oeuvre with Reference to Migration and Psychoanalysis*: 'The protagonist in the short story "Life" was called "Life" because she brought life to a village in Botswana...Life was a free

and empowered woman, but Head introduced Lesego [one of the most honoured and respected man in the village] to disempower her. According to Head, leadership and power have often been in the hands of men. For this reason, she mentions, "I love these big men. If I haven't got them, I create them." Lesego married Life with the intention of maintaining order in a corrupted village. This was witnessed by Lesego when he said, "I thought that if she was doing a bad thing with Radithobolo as Mathata said, I better kill her because I cannot understand a wife who could be so corrupt." Bessie Head therefore, positioned Life as a figure who disrupted the very foundation on which patriarchal dominance depends. The issue of the definition of women in society has plagued feminist theorists for a long time. As a woman, Life encountered gender oppression in her marriage, for instance. Lesego took control of the money and Life was supposed to account for the money she wanted to use. This proved that she had no right to control the economy because she was the woman. Head juxtaposed Life and Lesego with the intention of revealing how Lesego resisted multiculturalism. The protagonist [Life] represented the new culture of being a free woman, but there was no cultural tolerance in the village. The character of Life was in contrast to Lesego's character. For instance, Life was the singer, beauty queen, advertising model and prostitute. The story ends with a popular tune of that time by Jim Reeves: "That's what Happens When Two Worlds Collide."

When deeper research is carried out on Bessie Head's work, one notices that 'Life' in her short story is a reflection of several other women across her writings who share same or similar characteristics such as bravery, non-conformity and rebellion and liberation against societal constraints. In *The Treatment of Women in Selected Works by Bessie Head* by Al-Ghalith et al, it notes: 'Within the structure of her novels, Head shows that women can succeed in assuming roles other than the traditional roles of mother, sister, wife, and daughter. The woman in Head's novels has power, and her voice can be heard while struggling for her

rights and trying to express her issues...As suggested by Qutami, Dikeledi Mokopi, the protagonist of *The Collector of Treasures*, represents women's suffering in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras. Despite suffering; however, she is very strong as she represents the power of an independent woman. Importantly, the focus of the author's literary texts rests on giving an insight into the influence and effect of the life and discourse of masculine characters on women's lifestyles and social stand.'

In *Life*, Lesego is supposedly pushed to the wall by his wife's actions and decides to kill her. However, in Bessie Head's *The Collector of Treasures*, there is an exchange of roles. As stated by Al-Ghalith, 'Garesego makes other women suffer until Dikelide, who is oppressed by his vileness, is forced to kill him...*The Collector of Treasures* is a comprehensive feminist work. It portrays the African conventional man-woman conflict and all the agony that comes with it. In detail, it vehemently opposes the perceived inferiority of women, regardless of the terrible consequences, and envisions a new reasonable equilibrium based on a new kind of man and a new kind of woman: "The conditions of a society in upheaval: the women of Head's bustling Botswanan village face religious conflict, the burden of poverty, and, partly as a result of the clashes of ancient custom and the modern way, stressful marriages," writes Chapman...For better or worse, her female protagonists are willing to leave the oppression of the past behind them, as all the oppressed women move ahead into the future without looking back...Bessie Head is not a die-hard fanatic. Her novels are also not anti-male. It is just the negative kind of man, the one who prevents transformation, is metaphorically attacked and literally castrated and killed. It is not just his responsibility. Much of the guilt lies with history, but it is now hard for him to change.

In Ingersoll's "Sexuality in the Stories of Bessie Head", the character of *Life* as light and the tragedy of her death is explored: 'singer, beauty queen, advertising model, and prostitute.' Because she is a "city girl," the village women find her attractive and hope that

she can bring a "little light" into their lives. Things change, however, when Life becomes the "first and the only woman in the village to make a business of selling herself." To demonstrate that Life is different only in taking money for her sexual responses, the narrator offers the reader the following context: "People's attitude to sex was broad and generous - it was recognised as a necessary part of human life, that it ought to be available whenever possible like food and water, or else one's life would be extinguished or one would get dreadfully ill. To prevent these catastrophes from happening, men and women generally had quite a lot of sex but on a respectable and human level, with financial considerations coming in as an afterthought."

The tragedy for Life is marriage to Lesego, a cattleman, who insists that she accept him as the only man in her bed. His overconfidence that Life can renounce forever her earlier experience is put to the test when he must be away on business, so to speak, and is immediately informed upon returning that his wife has been "unfaithful." When he asks for tea, Life tells him she has to go out for sugar, but once she has gone he discovers the canister has plenty and surmises that she is off to complete an assignation. He surprises her - perhaps - with her "John" and kills her, of course, not the man whom she is with and for whom this is all an exciting drama.

The word tragedy is not an intrusion here, since Head crafts this narrative so well that the reader has the sense of Life as a tragic figure, virtually from the moment she agrees to marry Lesego. Afterward, her friends, the "beer-brewing women," recall hearing Life say: "My motto is: live fast, die young, and have a good-looking corpse." To them, Life was a heroic figure who had reached "dizzy heights" - foreclosed from their more ordinary lives - "the bold, free joy of a woman who had broken all the social taboos." Indeed, readers like Maxine Sample go too far in their judgments about "the sinful, perverse activities" which

make Life's yard a "place of inevitable destruction because of the moral decay." The narrator seems much less judgmental.

With marriage Life has descended from the independence of full personhood to a boring existence with a man who insists that she ask him for every cent she spends. On the other hand, he has been made well aware of what Life is about by the chorus of male villagers, whose leader took upon himself to warn Lesego: "You can't marry that woman. She's a terrible fuck-about!" Lesego proceeds with a kind of overweening pride that he is "man enough" to fulfil her sexual hunger, when obviously no one man likely can. The judge, a white man, gives Lesego five years - it is a "crime of passion" - and the leader of the chorus returns to ask why Lesego was so stupid as not simply to walk away. The narrator ends with the ironic commentary: "A song by Jim Reeves was very popular at that time: That's What Happens When Two Worlds Collide. When they were drunk, the beer-brewing women used to sing it and start weeping. Maybe they had the last word on the whole affair." The sentimentality here is only apparent : Life is indeed tragic when all avenues to fulfilment are closed.'

In conclusion, 'The works of Bessie Head depict the roles of women in different eras. Head depicts women's suffering as a result of a colonial system that hinders them from bettering their circumstances. As confirmed by Abd-Rabbo, social distinction and freedom can only be attainable under the prevailing social standards that may lead to the excellence and achievement of women, and thus women are required to respond differently to the prevalent social norms and traditions. In her stories, she demonstrates that a woman is capable of more than just being a mother, sister, wife, and daughter. We can hear the female, as it is the voice of all other women in Head's writings, as she fights and seeks to express herself. In Africa, Bessie Head depicts the notion of the New Woman. She looks into the

subject of sexual discrimination. Her works depict the agony of her female protagonists while also raising women's awareness of their predicament.'

However, while this Literature Review focuses on a broad range of resistant characters that spans many works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Bessi Head, this research paper limits its analysis to the four female characters of Binta, Omelogor, Kadiatou, and Chiamaka in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dream Count*, and one female character in Bessie Head's "Life" named Life. The analysis will not be outside the scope of the psychoanalysis of the female characters mentioned above.

1.6 Thesis Statement

Through the lens of psychoanalysis and qualitative research, this study argues that the psyche of women who choose to think, act and live in unconventional ways is a representation of the desire for freedom and authenticity in a world that tries to keep everyone in boxes.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STRUCTURE OF PERSONALITIES IN *DREAM COUNT* AND “Life”

This chapter looks at how Freud’s proposed three structures of the psyche or personality: the id, ego and super-ego, play out in the lives of the resistant female characters in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Dream Count* and Bessie Head’s “Life”.

2.1: Id in *Dream Count* and “Life”

Id, according to Freud is the wild and impulsive desire humans have to act in a way that satisfies their craving for pleasure, without any care of any external factors whatsoever. Id shows itself in the life of Omelogor and most especially Life who takes actions that satisfies her sexual desire, without a care in the world of the consequences it might have on her marriage.

2.1.1: Id and Characterization in *Dream Count*

In *Dream Count*, id shows itself through Omelogor’s actions, thought processes as well as dialogues. From stealing money where she works, to her views on relationships, Omelogor’s action can be seen as rather strange and rash. An example of this would be the scene at the bank where she decides to steal money she believes can be of greater benefit to other women:

I looked at the figures on my screen: so many zeroes, a parade of zeroes, lined up one after another, dizzying and daring. How many lives all that money could change. What dreams it could make...I had never thought of this before, but in that moment a clear map formed in my mind as though it was long fated to be...We often registered new companies to move money around, and so I called the lawyer to check if the name Robyn Hood was already taken...When he said I wasn’t, I felt like laughing a mad and happy laugh. I didn’t even feel afraid when I slipped out the first packets of cash hauled into CEO’s office that evening...The first women I gave grants to, I marginally knew. They were from my own

village...I stopped at their shops and greet them, and they greeted me, pleased that I stopped by...'I want to support your business. Use this for your business, keep it between us, and the only way you will thank me is to help another woman when you can.' (p 316 - 319)

Omelogor does not overthink doing what might be considered morally wrong or corrupt in order to help those who truly deserve the money to make not only their lives but the lives of their family better. She is fearless and leans towards her id, making a decision she feels she must.

Then, on loving different men, even men she doesn't expect, and being in control of her feelings no matter how powerful they are, she says:

I call it emotion. 'Emotion happened' is how I put it. I met someone and emotion happened. Sometimes I think emotion will happen with a self-aware or cerebral or very dark man, my usual draws, but it doesn't. Other times, with the most unlikely man there's that cackle in the air and our share and seeking eyes and a shiver down my neck. I enter an exalted state of being, with everything exaggerated; his glance becomes a beam and my thoughts come in torrents. Emotion happens, a rush and crush of emotion. Always it brings happiness in reckless gusts. It doesn't grow; it strikes fully formed, electric and intense, my mind suffused by him, and I want it all right away, today, now. It lasts a few months, at most. Usually, I start it and always I end it...For so long I have known myself to feel emotions without being inside of them, as if to feel it was merely to watch it, myself and the emotion separate things, eternally unable to coalesce. (p 279 - 280)

Omelogor's approach to love is quite unique. She allows herself to be free, to desire the unexpected if the universe wills it. She does not condition herself to stay within a certain limit when it comes to the men she might end up liking or having emotion happen with. It seems her idea and approach to love is very id-centred as its unpredictable and always brings with it 'happiness in reckless gusts.'

Her feelings when it comes to men and love is also quite dynamic:

There was a man I wish I could have loved, a man I wanted to love. Chijioke. It always felt comfortable being with him...I didn't feel that rising force, that raw excitement...There was no rush of emotion, and yet I felt a need to protect him or preserve him. (p 283)

She does not protect herself from her feelings or desires, neither does she pretend to feel what she doesn't feel in order to conform to what she thinks she should be feeling. Rather, she lets herself feel everything fully, even if it is what she would rather not be feeling.

Her interest in sexual pleasure and her decision to pursue the study of how pornography affects our sexual lives is a reflection of id:

“I want to do a proper master's,” I said.

‘Not that you need an MBA,’ CEO said.

‘Not an MBA. A master's in cultural studies. I'm interested in pornography.’

I became interested in pornography after a young man slapped my breast.

Where, I wondered, do we learn what we learn? And how do we learn what we know?... (p 324 - 325)

Wherever her primal curiosity takes her, she follows, ready to shine a torch and discover.

When she experiences a shocking experience of a man slapping her breast in her sex life, something he thought she would find pleasurable but she didn't, she decides to go on a quest to get to the root of the matter. Why would he think such action should bring her pleasure?

Where, as she says, ‘do we learn what we know?’ Omelgor questions the roots of assumption and knowledge itself which is very imperative to our core as people, because humans have ideas, habits and expectations about sex that can be shaped by many things such as culture, pornography and gender norms. She asks as seen below:

‘Why would he slap my breast? Not caress, slap. Actually slap,’ I told Jide.

‘If you watched porn, it wouldn't be so strange...’ (p 327)

When she gets her answer to why she was treated that way, she doesn't accept it without question. She goes ahead to take a degree to examine and question this, and what this does is show her desire to understand the pleasurable experiences associated with her id.

Her attitude to react as she pleases, as she does in not responding to Arinze, is also significant:

He was looking at me. ‘You don't realize this industry is the largest global teacher of men? Who do you think teaches men stuff?’

I didn't respond because I didn't want to continue the conversation about porn, and his lopsided smile seemed suddenly unsavoury, as if he had seamy sides to him that I did not know, but I thought of his words Who do you think teaches

men stuff?, and I began to feel sorry for men. Can this be said, that I began to feel sorry for men? Some time passed before I set up an anonymous website and paid for analytics and advertising, and in weeks I had men sending messages to me, an anonymous woman who would tell it like it is, but was on their side. (p 331)

Her id also shows in her flail for meaning:

I do like my life. I flail for meaning sometimes, maybe too often, but it is a full life, and a life I own...I should have said to Aunty Jane, 'There is always another way to live, Aunty, there are other ways to live.'(p 249)

2.1.2: Id and Characterisation in “Life”

Id in “Life” reflects itself throughout the story and life of Life. She is naturally wild and carefree, and would dress up so elegantly to the most basic of situations. Her wild impulsive character and personality is shown below:

The girl wore an expensive cream costume of linen material, tailored to fit her tall, full figure. She had a bright, vivacious, friendly manner and laughed freely and loudly. Her speech was rapid and a little hysterical but that was in keeping with her whole personality. (p 606)

From the unconstrained comes ideas that could turn everything around in the craziest and best of ways, so it is not strange that the village women did notice Life’s id and said about it: “‘She is going to bring us a little light,’” the women said among themselves, as they went to fetch their work tools. They were always looking “for the light” and by that they meant that they were ever alert to receive new ideas that would freshen up the ordinariness and everydayness of village life.’ But Life brought more than a little light. As the id is known for being something that could be likened to a flowing river, rather than in constrained measurements, Life’s light, that is what it meant for her to shine, could not be controlled or poured out in a ‘little’ measure, or rather in a way that would be acceptable to some the women of the village, which contributed to them stepping away from Life when some of her actions tested their sense of morality.

Life’s life was so free. The id in her did not only reflect in her personality but also her relational skills with the villagers, especially those who worked in her compound to make it beautiful when she arrived to the village:

The work party in her yard would suggest that the meat of a goat, slowly simmering in a great iron pot, would help the work to move with a swing, and Life would immediately produce the money to purchase the goat and also tea, milk, sugar, pots of porridge, or anything the workers expressed a preference for, so that those two weeks of making Life's yard beautiful for her seemed like one long, wedding-feast; people usually only ate that much at weddings. (p 606 - 607)

Life here as a representation of life itself embodies the idea whatever you ask the universe for, is what it gives you. It poses the question: When does the id become a problem? This is because it seems as though when the id is expressed in a place where the rules are lax, there are no issues, but in a society where the rules are rigid, it then becomes an issue.

Her id also reflects itself in terms of how she thinks and gets her money:

“How is it that you have so much money, our child?” one of the women at last asked, curiously.

“Money flows like water in Johannesburg,” Life replied, with her gay and hysterical laugh. “You just have to know how to get it.” (p 607)

The ability to be anything and everything as Life wanted had been available to her in the city, but not so much in the village: ‘Life had had the sort of varied career that a city like Johannesburg offered a lot of black women. She has been a singer, beauty queen, advertising model, and prostitute.’

These career choices show how important Life's beauty was to her survival in the city. However, in the village, Bessie Head writes: ‘None of these careers were available in the village – for the illiterate women there were farming and housework; for the literate, teaching, nursing, and clerical work.’

Life's id in terms of her sexuality reveals itself a page or two into the story. Sexual desire, which is a good example of a desire that follows the id pleasure principle is explored in the following excerpt that illustrates Life's choice to sell her body and the villagers' broad reactions towards Life's sexual actions:

The first wave of women Life attracted to herself were the farmers and housewives. They were the intensely conservative hard-core centre of the village life. It did not take long to shun her completely because men started

turning up in an unending stream. What caused a stir of amazement was that Life was the first and the only woman in the village to make a business out of selling herself. The men were paying for her services. People's attitude to sex was broad and generous – it was recognized as a necessary art of human life, that it ought to be available whenever possible like food and water, or else one's life would be extinguished or one would get dreadfully ill. To prevent these catastrophes from happening, men and women generally had quite a lot of sex but on a respectable and human level, with financial considerations coming in as an afterthought. When the news spread around that this had now become a business in Life's yard, she attracted to herself a second wave of women – the beer-brewers of the village. (p 607)

Those who let their id run wild, drive them and live their lives prioritizing their id above her super-ego and ego cannot help being separated from those who have done otherwise. Even if they live together, their ways of life single them out. This shows itself in the sentence of the beer-brewing women emancipating themselves some time ago who were everyday 'drunk' and 'staggering.', These were a group of women who rejected conformity shamelessly and who did not align with the conservative lifestyle of the conservative, normative village women.

The beer-brewing women were a gay and leave crows who had emancipated themselves some time ago. They were drunk every day and could be seen staggering around the village, usually with a wide-eyed, illegitimate baby hitched on to their hips. They also talked and laughed loudly and slapped each other on the back and had developed a language all their own.

"Boyfriends, yes. Husbands, uh, uh, no. Do this! Do that! We want to rule ourselves." (p 607)

Life's light attracted the beer-brewing women, and with her, they could be themselves freely without fear of condemnation. It reminds one of Williamson's famous quotes, '...As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.' However, one of the most prominent displays of id is in one of Life's philosophies on life, which is: "My motto is: live fast, die young, and have a good-looking corpse." The story continues: 'All this was said with the bold, free joy of a woman who had broken all the social taboos. They never followed her to those dizzy heights.' 'They' refers to the beer-brewing women, and this is to

say that although they were attracted to the light of Life's life, they could not contain it in all of its brightness.

When it comes to how people look at expressions of id, this is seen in Lesego's statement about Life after his public announcement of marriage to her: '...with a smile, Lesego said, "She has told me all about her bad ways. They are over."' There shows how many characters perceive Life's ways in the story – for Life, it is a bold, carefree expression of the woman she is who is not bound by anything the society considers taboo; for the beer-brewing women, it is a bolder, brighter life than they are used to but one they do not entirely condemn even if they don't follow Life all the way; for the conservative village women, they shun Life completely; and for Lesego, Life's way of living is 'bad ways.'

In conclusion to id in Life's story, one must look at how:

...one evening, death walked quietly into the bar. It was Lesego, the cattle-man, just come in from his cattle-post, where he had been occupied for a period of three months. Men built up their own, individual reputations in the village and Lesego's was one of the most respected and honoured...He was honoured for another reason also – for the clarity and quiet indifference of his thinking. People often found difficulty in sorting out issues or the truth in any debatable manner. He had a way of keeping his head above water, listening to an argument and always pronouncing the final judgement: "Well, the truth about this matter is..." (p 608 - 609)

Lesego represents rigidity and constraints, while Life the very opposite. It is almost as though Lesego is an embodiment of the super-ego while Life is the embodiment of id, and what this does is how they contrast against each other, and how heady free will cannot be allowed to flourish in a place with cages unreasonable expression of desire, which is exactly what is depicted at the end of the story with Lesego putting an end to Life's life.

2.2: Super Ego in *Dream Count* and "Life"

The super ego according to Freud refers to 'internalized societal and parental standards of 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong' behaviour'. Therefore, in other words the super ego is the opposite of id; it's the rules or regulations or rather constraints that can come

not only from society or parents but religion, as compared to the id that's impulsive and cares only about pleasure. This section looks at how the Super Ego reveals itself in *Dream Count* and "Life."

2.2.1: Super Ego and Characterization in *Dream Count*

In *Dream Count*, Omelogor is set against the backdrop of a society rich in Super Ego. It is her defiance against these constraints or expectations that positions her as a resistant female character. For example, there is a certain meekness expected from traditional women that Omelogor lacks. With a boldness that intimidates both genders, Omelogor's spirit is one that people crave and resent at the same time. Chia, her cousin and friend says this of her:

I would never say this, of course, because I was not brave like Omelogor...Omelogor could be so cutting about people... – and nobody's gaze pierced more than hers. She saw people, through people... (p 28)

Omelogor's personality type isn't the soft, dormant kind that allows others walk over her, or restricts her from expressing her truest emotion. And even though she isn't the most liked by other women, such as Zikora, her character is spoken of with reverence and bluntness.

When it comes to societal expectations regarding marriage as well as what it means to be a first son, chapter three of *Dream Count* capture a conversation between Omelogor and Jide:

It's midnight by the time everyone leaves, except for Jide, who is spread out on a sofa with the thousandth can of beer balanced on his chest.

'My mother has found another girl,' he says. 'And listen to this, she went to a polytechnic. A polytechnic. Remember the days of "Jide you should marry a medical doctor?" See how desperate my mother has become? She even started crying and doing that self-pity thing: why is her own different, all her friends have grandchildren, this and that. She never asks me "how are you" before she starts. Then my father came on to say I need to do a borehole for our compound in the village.'

The nasal ring of Jide's complaining voice irritates me and I feel guilty for my irritation. He is the only son, and he is burdened enough with expectations even without this pressure to marry. The other day his parents said he has to start building a house in their village, as if anybody with a telecoms job like his can afford to build a house.

'Omelogor,' Jide says. 'Can we get married?'

I look at him, surprised. 'What?'

‘And stay married for a few years, so they can stop harassing me.’

‘The incestuous energy will be out of this world, Jide. Even our parents won’t believe it,’ I say. Still, I imagine marrying Jide. What a way to stick it to Aunt Jane. Look, Aunt, I have a husband! So much for my empty life!

‘They just want me to marry and marry a woman that I will marry,’ Jide slurs. He has lost command of his tongue; until his chin drops to his chest in sleep, his words emerge mangled and torn. His loud snoring rises and vibrates and ends on a mournful note. (p 257 - 258)

Another display of superego is evident in Omelgor’s conversation with Aunt Jane:

‘Aunt, I don’t want to adopt.’

‘It is the only option left to make sure your life does not remain so empty,’ she said, as if we had previously agreed on the emptiness of my life. ‘Just because a husband did not come for you, it doesn’t mean you must live an empty life. Even in the olden days single women could adopt. You perform some ceremonies and if the child is a boy, he will become a full member of the lineage and inherit property like any other male in the family.’

‘Aunt, I don’t want to adopt a child.’

‘Omelgor,’ she said, sighing. ‘Don’t pretend that you like the life you are living.’ (p 247)

2.2.2: Super Ego and Characterization in “Life”

Societal constraints are one constant thing in “Life.” From the conservative women of the village to people’s perception of Life’s lifestyle, everything depicts societal constraints. One of the first example of super ego in the story has to do with the villagers’ perception of finance:

“How is it that you have so much money, our child?” one of the women at last asked, curiously.

“Money flows like water in Johannesburg,” Life replied, with her gay and hysterical laugh. “You just have to know how to get it.”

The women received this with caution. They said among themselves that their child could have lived a very good life in Johannesburg. Thrift and honesty were the dominant themes of village life and everyone knew that one could not be honest and rich at the same time; they counted every penny and knew how they had acquired it – with hard work. They never imagined money as a bottomless pit without end; it always had an end and was hard to come by in this dry, semi-desert land. (p 607)

Next is how the conservative women (those who lived prioritising their super ego over the id) reacted to Life's practice of selling herself which they considered a threat to their idea of 'right' and 'wrong:'

The first wave of women Life attracted to herself were the farmers and housewives. They were the intensely conservative hard-core centre of village life. It did not take them long to shun her completely because men started turning up in an unending stream. What caused a stir of amazement was that Life was the first and the only woman in the village to make a business out of selling herself. (p 607)

The strong, judgemental undertone that often follows the super ego exhibits itself in how the people of the surrounding village predict the destruction of Life, her business, followers which were made of the beer-brewing women of the village, and customers:

They found their queen in Life, and like all queens, they set her activities from themselves; they never attempted to extract money from the constant stream of men because they did not know how, but they liked her yard. Very soon the dim and riot of a Johannesburg township was duplicated, on a minor scale, in the central part of the village. A transistor radio blared the day long. Men and women reeled around drunk and laughing and food and drink flowed like milk and honey. The people of the surrounding village watched this phenomenon with pursed lip and commented darkly:

"They'll all be destroyed one day like Sodom and Gomorrah." (p 608)

2.3: Ego in *Dream Count* and "Life"

The concept that attempts to balance the id and super ego is the ego. As mentioned by Hossain, 'Ego refers the moderator between the Id and Super-Ego which seeks compromises to pacify both. It can be viewed as our 'sense of time and place.' And this concept runs through both works of literature as looked at below.

2.3.1: Ego and Characterization in *Dream Count*

Omelogor struggles to balance her wild, ambitious nature with what is expected of her, or rather as a woman in the workplace setting. While her id is responsible for her speedy career growth, her challenging her boss and boldness, her superego is responsible for her performance of respect as expected from a person under a boss, as seen below:

"I like this girl! Mr David said.

But only a year later and he did not like me at all, because I had too much power too soon. Each time we met in CEO's office, he sized me up with distrustful probing eyes, as if to gauge the details of my latest dark intentions....I brought new ideas to CEO...kept telling CEO about his legacy...until he absorbed the words and began to say my legacy this, my legacy that...I didn't stutter or say 'yes sir, yes sir, yes sir' before he was done talking like other staff did. I disagreed with his suggestions. I revived documents he preferred to forget. I memorized tiny details and recited them to him, and when something was overlooked, I pointed it out. But in my boldness, I never failed to perform respect. (p 310)

Another display of Omelogor's ego is her decision to go to a party with strippers and some guys doing tantric massage, and still let her classism and restraints keep her from allowing it to the fullest. It begins with Hauwa inviting her to the party:

'So, Omelogor, there's something I want to tell you. There's a party on Friday, my friend's friend. I don't know if you would like to go,' she said.

'You could ask with a bit more animation,' I said.

'Well, it's not...it's a bit alternative. Okay, look, she's going to have strippers, and some guys doing tantric massage. I'm not sure I you'll be interested, I mean...'

'Are you serious?'

'How can I be joking?'

'Of course I'm interested.' (p 272)

Then, her behaviour at the party:

The room was dark, and for a moment I thought it was Hauwa, until I saw, in the light from the bathroom, the woman's weave falling over her shoulders. Not Hauwa. The woman's moans sounded theatrical and I stood at the door watching, feeling faintly theatrical myself and thinking that the man's muscles look theatrical too, glistening in the low light like an oiled bodybuilder.

'Do you want happy ending?' he asked her, and she moaned again before she said. 'No, I have some stripper girls coming. Let me save yourself.' Then she laughed. The man turned to me and asked, 'Do you want me to massage you?'

I didn't like his forwardness and I didn't realize he had known I was standing there, and there was no greater turn-off than his bush accent. 'No,' I said coldly. A feeling came over me, of self-disgust, to be in this tawdry place watching this scene and to be spoken to by this man whose voice was edged with mocking disrespect. But Hauwa appeared and the feeling disappeared. It was the first time I had seen her without her scarf, her hair in cornrows snaking down to her neck, and she looked younger and smaller and jauntier, like a very pretty popular prefect in school.

'I went downstairs to look for you!' she said, 'Come, I made sure they have good whisky.'

When the two strippers arrived, slender and shapely, and not more than twenty-five, I watched them dance naked, touching and licking and shimmying. One of them playfully pretended to push her nipple into my mouth, and I smiled and moved my mouth away and asked, ‘How long have you been doing this work?’ ...

...One stripper was trailing her tongue down Jamila’s body.

Hauwa turned to me. ‘You want her to do it to you?’

‘No,’ I said. ‘Not my thing.’ (p 273 - 274)

2.3.1: Ego and Characterization in “Life”

The way the beer-brewing women of the village manages to balance both their id (their lifestyle and Life’s way of life) and super ego (societal constraints) is reflected below:

The beer-brewing women were a gay and leave crows who had emancipated themselves some time ago. They were drunk every day and could be seen staggering around the village, usually with a wide-eyed, illegitimate baby hitched on to their hips. They also talked and laughed loudly and slapped each other on the back and had developed a language all their own.

“Boyfriends, yes. Husbands, uh, uh, no. Do this! Do that! We want to rule ourselves.”

But they too were subject to the respectable order of village life. Many men passed through their lives but they were all for a time steady boyfriends. (p 607)

And this was unlike Life, who did not care about the men being ‘steady’ in her life for any amount of time, in whose life men passed like breeze. Bessie Head notes that even the beer-brewing women could not follow Life to the dizzying heights she took, and this can be seen as due to their ego:

Life, like the beer-brewing women, had a language of her own too. When her friends expressed surprise at the huge quantities of steak, eggs, liver, kidneys, and liver they ate in her yard – the sort of food they too could not and then afford but would not dream of purchasing – she replied in a carefree, off-hand way: “I’m used to handling bog money.” They did not believe it; they were too solid to trust this kind of luck which had such shaky foundations, and as though to offset some doom that might be just around the corner they often brought along their own scraggy, village chickens reared in their yards, as offerings for the day’s round of meals. And one of Life’s philosophies on life, which they were to recall with trembling a few months later, was: “My motto is: live fast, die young, and have a good-looking corpse.” ‘All this was said

with the bold, free joy of a woman who had broken all the social taboos. They never followed her to those dizzy heights. (p 608)

In conclusion, the ego prevails when it comes to how the all women in the village, from the conservative ones to the beer-brewers. The beer-brewers move from whole heartedly welcoming Life, to giving her some space in certain aspect, to completely shunning her decision to make the pub her second home when it comes to prostitution, as illustrated below:

A few months after Life's arrival in the village, the first hotel with its pub opened. It was initially shunned by all the women and even the beer-brewers considered they hadn't fallen that low yet – the pub was associated with the idea of selling oneself. It became Life's favourite venue. It simplified the business of making appointments for the following day. None of the men questioned their behaviour, not how such an unnatural situation had been allowed to develop – they could get all the sex they needed for free in the village, but it seemed to fascinate them that they should pay for it for the first time. (p 608)

The ego in the lives of the beer-brewers limits them from following their id all the way like Life does. Instead, they restrain themselves against the backdrop of what is considered honourable in the village, telling themselves that 'they hadn't fallen that low yet.'

CHAPTER THREE

DEFENSE MECHANISMS IN *DREAM COUNT* AND "Life"

The resistant female characters in *Dream Count* and “Life”, although fearless and brave, are women whose humanity reflects in the way they employ certain defence mechanisms. According to The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, ‘Defence mechanisms are a group of mental processes that enables the mind to reach compromise solutions to conflicts that it is unable to resolve. This chapter addresses how three defence mechanisms: introjection, undoing, and compensation, can be seen in the lives of Omelogor, Kadiatou and Life.

3.1: Introjection in *Dream Count* and “Life”

As said by McLeod, introjection involves internalization external influences without conscious awareness. In *Dream Count* and “Life”, introjection moves beyond the internalisation of people to the internalization of places too. Therefore, we have characters are not only shaped by people, but their environments too.

3:1.1 Introjection in *Dream Count*

One of the first examples of one absorbing the external happens in the beginning of Kadiatou’s story where her elder sister, Binta, mimics the mannerisms of Tantie Fanta.

Tantie Fanta...She smelled of the city, of perfume and metal, an intoxicating, intimidating scent. Binta said that it was the smell of beautiful avenues lined with trees where if you strained hard as you walked past you heard pampered children playing into piano. Not that Tantie Fanta lived in such a place, that Kadiatou knew, because Tantie Fanta was a secretary in the government ministry. Kadiatou watched how Tantie Fanta’s long fingers grasped food, her relaxed hair, shiny and thin-stranded, the glitter of her gold necklace, her dress belted slimly at the waist, her red fingernails. Binta watched too, but differently, not admiring but absorbing, to mimic what she knew she could become. She would become even more, Kadiatou thought, and it made her happy, imagining Binta in the future, her nails red and her hair straight, coming back to see her, bringing sardines and bread for children. (p 156)

3.1.2 Introjection in “Life”

It was these settlers who were disrupted and sent back to village life in mainly rural country. On their return they brought back bits and pieces of a foreign culture and city habits which they had absorbed. (p 605)

Life returns to her people in the village with bits and pieces of Johannesburg and the lifestyle there in her. She has absorbed so much of the lifestyle and the characteristics of those trying to thrive in Johannesburg, so much so that her attitude and way of life in the village is prominently unconventional, as seen below:

They were impressed with the smartness of this city girl. They generally wore old clothes and kept their very best things for special occasions like weddings, and even then those best things might just be ordinary cotton prints. The girl wore an expensive cream costume of linen material, tailored to fit her tall, full figure. She had a bright, vivacious, friendly manner and laughed freely and loudly, Her speech was rapid and a little hysterical but that was in keeping with her whole personality. (p 606)

3.2 Undoing in *Dream Count* and “Life”

According to Baumeister et al, undoing refers to a behaviour when individuals ruminate on previous events, replaying and reimagining them as a way to change what happened and, as a result, help protect against certain feelings or behaviours. The women in the novels being looked at go through certain traumatic events that alter them significantly and lean towards undoing.

3.2.1: Undoing in *Dream Count*

Kadiatou experiences undoing as a result of being raped. Kadiatou, after the traumatic event, goes through the order of events that day and how she like a twinkle of an eye, everything turns around:

The detective asks her to show him exactly where – where she was standing when she saw the naked guest, where he pulled her, where he pushes her down to her knees. As soon as she points to where she spit, one of the men bends down and begins cutting out the carpet there with a small buzzing knife. She is horrified. No, she wants to say, no please don't destroy it. She will lose her job, they have destroyed the room carpet because of her. She feels a sudden smothering inside her, a heaviness in her chest. (p 223)

She thinks:

If this guest had not been so fast, so much like a crazed animal, so lacking in control, she would not have been as shaken and she would have had time to collect herself, and not report this, and all would be normal now. (p 223)

3.2.2: Undoing in “Life”

The undoing in “Life” is expressed in how the women of the village recall Life’s words with terror after her demise. They do not ruminate on them as a way to change what happened, rather they do so as a way that features foreshadowing, regret and rejection, as seen in the excerpts below:

Village people reacted in their own way; what they liked, and was beneficial to them, they absorbed – for instance, the faith-healing cult churches which instantly took hold like wildfire; what was harmful to them, they rejected. The murder of Life had this complicated undertone of rejection... (p 605 - 606)

It is as though the village people already expected the tragic end of Life due to the fact that her way of living defied what they considered moral and right. This expectation is seen in the way they believed in rejecting what was harmful to them, and how Life’s murder had a ‘complicated undertone of rejection.’ This simply means they saw Life’s life as one that was harmful to them, and therefore served as a limit to full and proper mourning of a person truly honoured for a life well-lived. For how can she be mourned properly and with respect if they believed her life while she lived was devoid of respect to the traditions they hold dear? One could say that that is why her murder did not spark some sort of protest and anger, as it seems the village people accepted her murder with more of shock and regret than objection

However, while she lived:

Life, like the beer-brewing women, had a language of her own too. When her friends expressed surprise at the huge quantities of steak, eggs, liver, kidneys, and liver they ate in her yard – the sort of food they too could not and then afford but would not dream of purchasing – she replied in a carefree, off-hand way: “I’m used to handling bog money.” They did not believe it; they were too solid to trust this kind of luck which had such shaky foundations, and as though to offset some doom that might be just around the corner they often brought along their own scraggy, village chickens reared in their yards, as offerings for the day’s round of meals. And one of Life’s philosophies on life, which they were to recall with trembling a few months later, was: “My motto is: live fast, die young, and have a good-looking corpse.” ‘All this was said

with the bold, free joy of a woman who had broken all the social taboos. They never followed her to those dizzy heights. (p 608)

Despite the fact that they admired her, it is as though they already know what her path is one that has foreshadowed ‘regret and rejection’ in their village. And perhaps, that is why they never followed her to those dizzy heights.

3.3: Compensation in *Dream Count* and “Life”

According to Hentschel et al, compensation refers to the client’s attempt to make up for what they consider to be their flaws or shortcomings or for dissatisfaction in one domain of their lives. In these two texts, compensation portrays itself in how the characters make up for situations that are either traumatic or unusual.

3.3.1: Compensation in *Dream Count*

Compensation is expressed in how Kadiatou feels guilt or self-blame for her assault and reporting it, even though she had no control over it, and how that reflects in her dialogue and behaviour.

The weight is growing on her chest. She knows, in that moment, that she has lost her job, she will never come back here again, to clean rooms to put worlds in order. How will she find another job? The relief agency she works with will say she has been long enough with George Plaza to get a recommendation letter, but she does not know if the manager will write one for her, after she has reported something that left him so shaky....

‘Can I call my daughter?’ she asks.

‘Yes, of course,’ the detective says.

She whispers in Pular to Binta, tells her there has been an accident at work and she will tell her details later. Sorry we can’t go to the movie, she tells Binta.

‘Mon, why are you whispering?’ Binta asks. ‘Are you hurt? What kind of accident?’

She says it’s not serious and she will explain when she comes home. She ends the call feeling ashamed. (p 223 - 224)

3.3.2: Compensation in “Life”

Compensation in “Life” is quite interesting and reverse. It is as though Life’s decision to be in a monogamous relationship with Lesego is a shortcoming that clashes with her sexually free and wild side. A return to her old life despite her marriage – adultery – can be considered as a form of compensation for the dissatisfaction she feels in her marriage to one man. Or rather, a form of counter-compensation for a life that doesn’t feel true to her authentic self:

Life made the announcement too, after she was married, to all her beer-brewing friends: “All my old ways are over,” she said. “I have now become a woman.”

She still looked happy and hysterical. Everything came to her too easily, men, money, and now marriage. The beer-brewers were not slow to point out to her with the same amazement with which they had exclaimed over the steak and eggs, that there were many women in the village who had cried their eyes out over Lesego. She was very flattered... (P 610)

He wasn’t the kind of man to fuss about the house...He took control of all the money. She had to ask him for it and state what it was to be used for. Then he didn’t like the transistor radio blaring the whole day long.

“Women who keep that thing going the whole day have nothing in their head,” he said. Then he looked down at her from a great height and commented finally and quietly: “If you go again with those men, I’ll kill you.”

She hadn’t the mental capacity to analyse what had hit her, but something seemed to strike her a terrible blow to her head. She instantly succumbed to the blow and rapidly began to fall apart...When the hysteria and cheap rowdiness were taken away, Life fell into the yawn; she had nothing inside herself to cope with this way of life that had finally caught up with her...No one noticed the expression of anguish that had crept into Life’s face. The boredom of the daily round was almost throttling her to death and no matter which way she looked, from the beer-brewers to her husband to all the people who called, she found no one with whom she could communicate what had become an actual physical pain. After a month of it, she was near collapse...Sodom and Gomorrah started up all over again...The old, reckless wild woman awakened from a state of near death with a huge sigh of relief. The transistor blared, the food flowed again, the man and women reeled around dead drunk. (p 610 - 611)

At first, Life feels like she can adjust to the changes that will come to marriage. She is also proud of the fact that despite the fact that Lesego was wanted by a lot of women he settled down with her. However, she soon discovered that she couldn’t bear the changes that came

with marriage. And not because there might be inherently wrong with these changes, especially within the context of her village, but because they fight against her authenticity. Her truest, wildest self is an embodiment of a free spirit, something that cannot be caged. And marriage in “Life” is a terrible cage, from having to turn off the transistor radio she would rather have playing because her husband wants it so, to not having control of her finances. At the end of the day, she realizes she must return to a life that makes it easier for her to breathe, that awakens her ‘from a state of near death with a huge sigh of relief.’

CHAPTER FOUR

PSYCHOSEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

This chapter explores the mindset on how characters like Omelogor, Chiamaka, Kadiatou and Life see sex. Their approach, behaviour and thoughts in regard to sex will be examined in order for us to identify their psychosexual behaviour.

4.1: Introduction to Psychosexual Behaviour in *Dream Count*

Psychosexual Behaviour in *Dream Count* is both loud and subtle in the lives of the characters. From Omelogor's bold thought and approach towards sexual matters, to Chiamaka's self-depreciating own, this section brings out excerpts that shows how psychosexual behaviour is demonstrate in the novel.

4.1.1: Psychosexual Behaviour in Chiamaka

In *Dream Count*, Chiamaka drives her relationship with Darnell. She is a slave to her love. She finds acceptance in Darnell's acceptance, finds meaning in his presence and weak consideration of her, who almost questions why the idea of projection doesn't work for her ('how could my force of feeling not cause in him a similar obsession?'), and all these can be reflected in the excerpt below:

I have never lied in my life as often as I Darnell. I liked to please him, to be the person he wanted me to be, and sometimes, I lied to wrest wretched scraps of reassurance from him. I'm sick, I would write, to force a reply, after days of sending him unanswered texts. Sometimes he replied right away, and other times he waited a day or two. Feel better, was all he would write; not a question that opened the door for more, not How are you feeling now? Or What's going on? My days passed as emptiness until I saw him again. My phone lay always beside me on my desk, never on silent, for fear I might miss his call. When it beeped with a text message, I snatched it up and felt annoyed with whoever had texted, as if by texting they had taken up the space meant for him. His silences astonished me; how could my force of feeling not cause in him a similar obsession? I imagined him looking through boxes of papers in the bowels of the library, sneezing from the dust, and not thinking of me, while my every moment was mined in thoughts of him. I was trying again to write a novel and already failing again, but in his silences I failed more. I kept starting and restarting, making tenuous connections to Darnell in everything I read, and lingering over sentences that had to do with love, or men, or relationships, as if they might shine a light on the mystery of Darnell. (p 15)

With Darnell, Chiamaka lies not only about how she feels, but things she has never experienced. She feels a need to be ‘unusual, interesting,’ because that is what Darnell wants. She cannot stand in her own light and truth when it comes to her sexuality, because she would rather bask in the shadows of Darnell’s idea of desire, when deep inside what really matters to her in terms of sex is ‘hope for connection, meaning, beauty...even bliss’. On her sex life, she finds herself saying:

‘What nasty things have you done?’ he would ask. ‘Tell me.’

I told him of things that had never happened, rich detailed stories plucked from the air: the massage therapist with supple hands who paused in the middle of my massage to unwrap a dildo from a roll of silver cloth. Sex, that primitive interlacing of bodies, to me has always been about hope for connection, meaning, beauty, even bliss. But I lied to Darnell, because he wanted the unusual more than he wanted the true. With each story, he watched me, as though assessing its worth. Sometimes he wanted me to retell the stories he liked, and each time I did, I added small embellishments. I always had the sensation of something about to slip through my fingers. We were two adults, and Darnell made a living from teaching adults, but there was a terrible childishness in my lies and in his expectations, He told me his ex-girlfriend had carved blood-filled rifts on her thighs with razor blades. A Somali woman named Sagal. Even the name alone. Sagal. I imagined her lithe and lissom, moving liquidly through a room, He said she was brilliant and adventurous, but didn’t say what he meant by adventurous. I did not want to ask what became of her. She was a ghost that existed only to make me feel insecure. (p 16)

4.1.2: Psychosexual Behaviour in Omelogor

Omelogor’s psychosexual behaviour is bold and unconventional. She does not wait for pleasure to be handed over to her, she believes in taking it. And she is not passive about her pleasure or things she finds uncomfortable, rather she is fierce, opinionated and curious, always in charge of her game, desire and sexual life, as the excerpts below illustrates:

I knew there was some girth , his suits always seem strained, but I was taken aback by the force of the full belly unleashed. ‘Am I hurting you?’ he asked over and over, while I thought: Hurting me with what? I barely felt a thing, never mind navigating that belly. I saw behind him a trail of faking women; it was the only reason he could ask, ‘Am I hurting you?’

He walked to the bathroom and back, walked to the window to draw the curtains, with no inhibitions at all, this bulky naked man who so loved his own inadequate bits. I felt he should have had the grace to be even if only fleetingly abashed... (p 280)

Omelogor's refusal to be one of those women whom she saw, the trail of faking women, is what sets her apart. Her unapologetic and blunt feelings regarding her sexual life allows her to prioritize herself above her sexual partner. Therefore, one can say she approaches sex from an angle that allows her say what she feels concerning a person and her experience without the need to sugarcoat in order to please. She thinks and feels what she feels within herself without filter. And that also reflects in the interpersonal relationships as seen below:

There was a man who said 'I love you' over and over in bed, like an incantatory chant for raising the dead, which distracted and disrupted my desire.

'Stop saying that, please,' I told him.

He looked warily at me. He went to a Pentecostal church and I could only imagine his thoughts. What else but a demon would cause a woman to say I don't want to hear you say I love you? He had proposed not long after we met, saying the Spirit revealed to him that I was his wife. I planted little heart stickers all over his things, his shoes, his laptop bag, and each time he discovered one he laughed and asked whose child's pencil case I was raiding.

There was a lovely man who stated at me at a conference in Lagos until I went over and asked for his number, He liked grilled croaker, and so I would order grilled croaker and have it delivered to him at random hours. At the time he asked me, 'Have I done anything wrong? Tell me what and I will correct it.' His saying 'correct' and being so welcoming of blame filled with wistful sorrow.

'No, no it's me. I'm sorry. I just switch off. I can't do the kind of commitment you want.' I said. (P 282 - 283)

The thoughts Omelogor thinks finds expression through the words that come out of her mouth, She doesn't want to be told 'I love you' over and over again, but when she says it and sees the expression on her partner's face, she judges herself through his eyes, wondering if he may think she has been possessed by a demon. However, knowing that she might be judged does not stop her from saying what she feels need to be said. And that is strength and courage, the ability to know what you think or say might be received through a judgemental filter, but still choose to say it nonetheless.

4.1.3: Psychosexual Behaviour in Kadiatou

Kadiatou is a conservative Muslim woman who values sexual encounters. When Francois, the man who owns the beachside restaurant where she works rapes her, she feels such great sense of shame and shock. She desires better, does not want to be treated like she is not worth being asked for consent. At the beginning, her thoughts and attitude to Francois because on the way he barks at the men who molest her is positive as she is grateful for his protection, only for him to turn around and hurt her. She buries this grief of this sexual encounter deep inside her where no one will ever know. Therefore, one can say her psychosexual behaviour is affected by deep, terrible trauma. Below is the excerpt the statement above is made on:

She did not expect the owned, Francois, s busy, important man, to protect her, but he barked at the men who did more than leer: the one who brushed her hip, and another who grasped her arm as she placed down a plate,. She was grateful that he deigned to protect her...Francois was light-skinned, his eyes light like marbles, his hair curly from his Lebanese mother; he was so handsome, like someone on television. He would never notice her, of course, not like that. She wishes it but she did not dream it, because she dreamed only of achievable things. Francois came by one evening as she was closing up the storage room where crates of soft drinks were stacked. He stood at the door and said, 'Well done, Kadiatou,' and she flushed with excitement, to be praised by Francois, to be here with Francois. He came into the room. He smelled of ginger. He was always sucking something, a ginger sweet maybe, his mouth puckered to a kind of insolence...She thought he would leave after glancing at the crates but he didn't leave. She was done but stood there, respectfully, waiting for him to leave first. He walked towards her. The room was too small for the crates of drinks and her and him. Usually when the other waitress came in here, Kadiatou waited outside until she was done. Francois was now inches away from her and Kadiatou felt awkward, wanting to apologize, ask if there ws something she could help him do. He pushed her against the table, saying, 'Just a little, just a little, be nice to me.' Surprised, she looked at him. Then came the stark startling clarity that he intended to hurt her.

Kadiatou's notion towards sex happens to be that of purity at first. She understands the world around her can be unfriendly and assaulting towards women. However, she is also aware that there are good men who would protect you and preserve your dignity. So, when Francois who

first feel in the category attempts to hurt her, like those he was supposedly protecting her from, she is stunned, as seen below:

‘No sir, no sir,’ she said. Not like this, she wanted to add. Not like this. The shock of his heavy alien weight...Why did he not ask her, why treat her as though he was not worth asking? It could have been different, he could have asked her, she could have gently touched that soft, foreign hair. When he was done, in a minute or two, he looked at her in the face and she thought for an incredulous moment that he would say he cared for her. But his lips curled in disgust and he said, ‘Cover yourself.’ He was telling her to cover herself, but it was he who had yanked up her dress and pulled down her underwear. He stood hulking over her, his disgust so palpable it turned the air rancid. She heard the hatred in his voice. He did not know her but he hated her, and he did not need to know her to hate her. ‘Cover yourself,’ he said again, a threat in his tone. Would he harm her again? He warned her to cover her body and cover his crime, to look as she had before he walked into the store. As if nothing had happened. Shame, shame like hot water scalded through her. And shock. Shame and shock. (p 183 - 185)

Kadiatou is unpleasantly shocked at the fate that befalls her in the hands of Francis. With that experience comes distrust and influences her approach to sex, as it makes her close in more on herself in terms of sexuality and increase her boundaries.

4.2: Introduction to Psychosexual Behaviour in “Life”

Life's view on sex is far from traditional. If it was, she would have stuck to the village's conventional approach to sex. Rather, her thinking and action concerning sex is tied to her past experiences, as she worked as a prostitute, and her thoughts toward sex seem to be from a capitalist perspective that not only allows her make money, but be free too.

4.2.1: Psychosexual Behaviour in “Life”

Life's psychosexual behaviour is one that defies norms and traditions of her village, as the excerpt below shows:

Life had had the sort of varied career that a city like Johannesburg offered a lot of black women. She has been a singer, beauty queen, advertising model, and prostitute. None of these careers were available in the village – for the

illiterate women there were farming and housework; for the literate, teaching, nursing, and clerical work. (p 607)

Because none of these careers were available in the village, Life finds herself recreating the life she had in Johannesburg in the village.

What caused a stir of amazement was that Life was the first and the only woman in the village to make a business out of selling herself. The men were paying for her services... A few months after Life's arrival in the village, the first hotel with its pub opened. It was initially shunned by all the women and even the beer-brewers considered they hadn't fallen that low yet – the pub was associated with the idea of selling oneself. It became Life's favourite venue. It simplified the business of making appointments for the following day. None of the men questioned their behaviour, not how such an unnatural situation had been allowed to develop – they could get all the sex they needed for free in the village, but it seemed to fascinate them that they should pay for it for the first time. (p 608)

Life's entrepreneurial spirit does not leave her even as she moves from the city to the village.

From working different jobs and earning a living from beauty and sex centred jobs in the city, to making a business of selling herself in the village, she is not afraid to use her sexuality to get what she wants. Although she is paid for her sexual services, money is not the only thing Life gets out of her sexual life. It also aligns with her free spirit life which enables her live the life she desires both financially and sexually.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This paper takes one through the psychological workings of resistant female characters in both Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dream Count* and Bessie Head's "Life". In chapter one, a pivotal question is introduced: 'why do people behave the way they do?' From there, the theory of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis and how it relates to literature is explored. A literature review on the above-mentioned works and other works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Bessie Head in relation to resistant female characters and sexuality is conducted.

Next, the three structures of the psyche are examined in chapter two: the id (the wild and impulsive desire humans have to act in a way that satisfies their craving for pleasure), superego (internalized societal and parental standards of 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong' behaviour) and ego (the moderator between the id and super-ego which seeks compromises to pacify both) expresses itself in *Omelogor* and *Life*.

Defence mechanisms, that is mental processes that protect us in time of physical, emotional or mental conflict are analysed in chapter three against the backdrop of the lives of not only *Omelogor*, *Kadiatou* and *Life*, but also *Binta*, *Kadiatou's* older sister. From introjection, undoing to compensation, the chapter looks at how these are reflected in the character's lives.

In chapter four, the psychosexual behaviour of the characters is studied. Due to the importance of the sexual experiences of these characters, as well as their predisposition towards sexual matters, this chapter sheds light on how their thoughts and actions towards sex and relationships are more than just an irrational way of life, and instead a reflection of their unconventional psyche.

Last, but not least, chapter five, the concluding chapter, sums up the essence of this project by a short summary of each chapter. The conclusion on the whole matter is that the reason these women are even seen as resistant characters or deviants in their ways of thought

or living, is because of the presence of societal and patriarchal standards. If there were no laws, there would be no transgression of law. Do these societal, religions and patriarchal laws need to be brought down? Perhaps. However, it is important to recognize that culture takes a long time to die, and because culture might not appeal to some people's taste does not mean they should be brought down, as long as it doesn't cause of champion the death or inhumane treatment of these group of people. That is, nobody should be killed because of not doing the 'right thing' or living in a culturally correct way, like Life was.

Everyone should be true to the way they feel like living their lives like Omelogor, and people should learn to respect the way a woman choose to live her life, regardless of whether or not it aligns with how they think she should be living her life. Neither should they bother her with these societal pressures like Omelogor's aunty did, disturbing her to marry give birth, or adopt a child. In conclusion, 'Let the kite perch and let the egret perch too, If one says no to the other, let his wing break,' as Achebe says. In other words, everyone should live and let live.

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