



# The Weight of the Past: A Psychoanalytical Exploration of Trauma and Guilt in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "Tomorrow is too Far"

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## Abstract

Adichie's "Tomorrow Is Too Far" portrays the psychological effects of childhood trauma on the personality of an individual. The story depicts the psychological effects of trauma on the protagonist, who accidentally became the reason for her brother's death. Several research studies are available, critically analysing Adichie's "Tomorrow Is Too Far" but inadequate research is available highlighting the narrator's psychological trauma and its implications. The psychoanalytical approach to this text will explore the narrator's inner conflict, which includes guilt, repression, and self-loathing. Using a qualitative method, the study will explore and identify the elements of the narrator's psyche that influenced her actions and perceptions of the world through the application of Freudian theory of psychoanalysis. The research explains the effect of trauma of childhood in an individual's life and how people deal with it through discussing aspects like defence mechanisms. The narrator's psychological state has been analysed by Freud's concept of id, ego, and superego. The study finds that the guilt of narrator is a kind of self-punishment brought on by herself. The unresolved inner conflict of the narrator, because of her suppressed feelings and longings for blood relations, shapes her identity and isolates her from society.

## Key Words

*Psychoanalysis, Trauma, Guilt, Repression, Freud, Cathy Caruth.*

## Introduction

"To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event." Caruth, C. (1996). The theory of psychoanalysis examines the unconscious mind of a person through various techniques, such as dream interpretation and free association, to



uncover the repressed feelings of an individual. This study applies the elements of psychoanalytical theory to explore the repressed feelings of the character in the short story "Tomorrow is too far" and how their repressed feelings affect their identity. "Tomorrow is Too Far" is a short story by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie published in her short story collection "The Thing Around Your Neck". She is a Nigerian writer prominently known for her postcolonial feminist writings. Her writings are embedded with intense cultural stereotypes and the portrayal of women as suppressed beings. Her "Tomorrow is Too Far" is the haunting legacy of trauma and guilt, which unfolds the narrator's past experiences of siblings' rivalry. The setting of the story is the Nigerian summer. The unnamed narrator came back after thirteen years from abroad to the site of her brother's death. The memory of the mysterious death of her brother provoked her feelings of guilt and repression. Her past life flashed back in her memory, which was full of familial problems, maternal favouritism, and ultimately the death of her brother. Several scholarships on Adichie's works include postcolonial, feminist, and diasporic analysis, while "Tomorrow is Too Far" requires a deeper inspection through a psychoanalytical lens. The story is the examination of sibling rivalry, childhood trauma, and the long-lasting effects of guilt and repression. The psychological struggle of a girl who unintentionally kills her brother in a mysterious accident is explored in this story. The study aims to identify the psychological process that affects the narrator's behavior through Freudian psychoanalytical theory of guilt and repression and Cathy Caruth's trauma theory. The excellent examination of the human psyche and the effect of the unconscious mind is provided by the story's elements of guilt, repression, and its long-lasting effects. The human psyche in this short story is explored through the use of Freud's concepts of the id, ego, and superego. "The ego is not master in its own house" (Freud, S.1955). The painful experience of childhood has a significant impact on the emotional and psychological development of people. The narrator's memory of a painful incident of her brother Nonso's death has become the focus of the examination of childhood trauma in "Tomorrow is Too Far". The study is a complex psychological study of the narrator's suppression, envy, rivalry, and guilt. Adichie's works are mostly studied through a feminist perspective, while the psychoanalytical examination of her works is largely unexplored. This study intends to fill this gap by exploring the narrator's emotional landscape and how the guilt she suppressed during childhood now haunts her adulthood by using Freud's psychoanalytical theory and Cathy Caruth's trauma theory. "The patient does not remember anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but acts it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he repeats it, without knowing that he is repeating it" (Freud, S.1920). The autobiographical elements of Adichie's own life have been seen in her works like family trauma, identity issues, shame and loss are perfect for psychoanalytical exploration. "Adichie's characters are frequently influenced by cultural standards that dictate gender roles,

especially in patriarchal settings" (Ato Quayson, 2012). Freudian psychoanalysis is the best framework for the exploration of the narrator's coping mechanism with trauma, repression, denial, and the unconscious mind. Traumatic memories are frequently forced into the unconscious to shield the person from psychological suffering, according to Freud's theory of repression (Freud, 1915). These suppressed memories, however, do not go away; rather, they show up in different forms, including behaviours, nightmares, or, in this instance, the narrator's enduring sentiments of shame and guilt. Freud maintained that "repressed memories do not simply fade; they are transformed into a different psychic reality" (Freud, 1915, p. 151). The narrator's adult thoughts about Nonso's passing demonstrate how persistent this suppressed trauma is, even though she tries to ignore or explain it away. According to Freud's beliefs, trauma is frequently described as an "unassimilated experience" that is unable to be completely incorporated into a person's self-narrative (Caruth, 1996). In "Tomorrow Is Too Far," the narrator's interpretation of herself and her family is disrupted by the pain of her brother's death, resulting in a fragmented sense of self. The narrator must use suppression and denial to manage her contradictory feelings of remorse, jealousy, and love because the traumatic event has not been resolved. Cathy Caruth claims that trauma occurs "in the gap between the experience and the narration of it" (Caruth, 1996, p. 4), implying that the narrator's adult memories and emotional reactions are distorted because of her inability to properly address the traumatic tragedy. Because Nonso's death is never completely incorporated into the narrator's conscious awareness, it is evident how her psychological state is still impacted by her suppressed guilt.

This research focuses on the psychological foundations of trauma, even though Adichie's "Tomorrow Is Too Far" has been examined for its gendered critique of familial hierarchy, particularly regarding the preferential treatment of male children (Andrade, 2009). Although the grandmother's affection for Nonso is unquestionably important to the plot, the narrator's emotional path is ultimately determined by her suppressed sorrow over her imagined involvement in his murder. Despite her efforts to suppress or rationalise it, the narrator's buried guilt recurs sometimes throughout the narrative in her thoughts and actions, demonstrating Freud's idea of the "return of the repressed" (1915). Her path to self-acceptance and recognition is like the psychoanalytic process of facing and reintegrating suppressed experiences. The study aims to investigate the effect of repressed feelings of the narrator, which are the results of loss, jealousy, and guilt, on her adult psyche. It also explores the long-lasting impacts of childhood trauma on the behaviour and identity of the narrator. The psychoanalysis of Cathy Caruth's concept will investigate the underlying narrator's internal struggle to manage the unresolved trauma of her brother's death, and Freud's concept will analyse the effects of the psychological struggle of the narrator on her identity and how it shapes her identity as an adult. The research opens a gateway for further psychoanalytical exploration of

Adichie's works. It also furthers knowledge about "Tomorrow is Too Far," which examines the complexities of human psychology and how they react to guilt and sorrow, in addition to criticising the cultural norms.

### **Problem statement**

Adichie's "Tomorrow Is Too Far" portrays the psychological effects of childhood trauma on the personality of an individual. The story depicts the psychological effects of trauma on the protagonist, who accidentally became the reason for her brother's death. Several research studies are available, critically analysing Adichie's "Tomorrow Is Too Far," but inadequate research is available highlighting the narrator's psychological trauma and its implications. The research intends to investigate the psychological complexities of the narrator through a psychoanalytic exploration of guilt and repression. It examines the effect of childhood trauma, internalised guilt, and repressed emotions on the identity and behaviour of the narrator, exposing the long-term effects of unconscious psychological conflict. The study finds that the guilt of narrator is a kind of self-punishment brought on by herself. The unresolved inner conflict of the narrator, because of her suppressed feelings and longings for blood relations, shapes her identity and isolates her from society.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To examine the role of the superego in shaping the narrator's feelings of guilt and remorse, and to investigate how these feelings impact her mental health and well-being.
2. To investigate the impact of repression on the narrator's psychological state and to explore how repressed memories and emotions surface in her consciousness.
3. To understand how the narrator's guilt and trauma shape her relationships with her family, especially with her grandmother and Nonso, and contribute to her sense of alienation and isolation.

### **Research Questions**

1. How does the narrator's superego contribute to her feelings of guilt and remorse about her childhood trauma?
2. How does the narrator's attempt to repress the traumatic event affect her mental health and well-being?
3. To what extent does the narrator's childhood trauma, particularly the death of her brother, affect her emotional regulation and attachment to her caregivers, as explained by attachment theory?

### **Literature Review**

The narrator's repressed trauma and persistent guilt in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "Tomorrow Is Too Far" can be better understood via the perspective of psychoanalytic theory. Freud's fundamental ideas of guilt and repression provide a deep framework for analysing the protagonist's psychological battle as she grapples with her part in her brother Nonso's untimely death. The link between the id, ego, and superego is fundamental to Freud's theory of guilt, which holds that guilt results from a conflict between a person's wants and the moral rules

enforced by the superego (Freud, 1923). This internal conflict is best illustrated by the narrator in Adichie's novel. The narrator's suppressed needs for affection and attention, as well as her jealousy of her brother, clash with the moral principles that her family and society have taught her. Freud's theory of neurotic guilt (when someone feels guilty for actions that may not be objectively incorrect but are strongly perceived as such) is analysed by the narrator's mature assessment of her childhood behaviours. Her unconscious guilt is a result of her envy and resentment. She represses her guilt as a coping mechanism for the emotional upheaval, even if she did not directly cause Nonso's death. The psychoanalytic knowledge of the narrator's psychology is further enhanced by Freud's concepts of repression.

Freud describes how repression works as a defence mechanism in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). "The memories that are too painful to endure are pushed into the unconscious mind without ever being completely processed or acknowledged in waking consciousness" (Freud, 1900). However, these suppressed memories still have an impact on the person, influencing their thoughts, actions, and dreams. The narrator of "Tomorrow Is Too Far" demonstrates the typical symptoms of repression as she ignores her sense of responsibility and sorrow for her brother's passing. Here, Freud's claim is relevant that suppressed memories do not vanish but rather manifest in other ways. As the narrator tries to get past the calamities, she experiences psychological pain and emotional fragmentation, which are the signs of her buried guilt that still haunts her. Cathy Caruth's research on trauma supports this idea, which contends that trauma is an "unassimilated experience" that breaks the continuity of a person's life (Caruth, 1996). As the narrator reflects on her early years, the horrific incident of Nonso's death resurfaces, sometimes hidden in her unconscious.

Melanie Klein further developed Freud's idea of repression and provides a more comprehensive view of guilt and repression, especially when viewed through the prism of early events and how they affect internalised relationships (Klein, 1948). The development of guilt and suppression is significantly influenced by the child's early dreams, particularly those involving carers (Klein, 1948). This applies to the narrator's experience in Adichie's novel, where her repressed emotions are exacerbated by her brother's rivalry and her belief that her grandma is biasedly favouring her brother. Nonso's preferential treatment by her grandmother caused feelings of hatred and jealousy, which the narrator represses in her unconscious. The narrator's act of repressing both her conflicting sentiments over her family's treatment of her and the tragic memory of Nonso's death is analysed by Klein. Klein's emphasis on the internalisation of these early social dynamics helps to explain her suppressed guilt.

The significance of attachment in the formation of repressed memories has been further examined by more contemporary psychoanalytic theorists, including Peter Fonagy (2001) and John Bowlby (1980), in addition to Freud and Klein. Bowlby's attachment theory demonstrates the importance of the emotional ties that develop between babies and their caregivers. The emotional neglect or favouritism can cause the ties between a person and his caregivers to break down, which can result in the repression of unpleasant feelings. The narrator suppresses her

emotions of shame and jealousy in large part because of the grandmother's preferential treatment of Nonso and the emotional neglect she endures because of this favouritism. The narrator suppresses the feelings that would otherwise sever the connection to preserve some sort of attachment to her family, especially her grandma. This supports Freud's theory that suppression serves as a protective mechanism, even if it eventually impairs the person's capacity to process trauma and recover (Freud, 1923). This theory is further developed in Fonagy's work on mentalisation, which contends that "suppression aids in the regulation of intense emotions at the expense of psychological integration and emotional authenticity" (Fonagy, 2001). In "Tomorrow Is Too Far," the narrator's inability to properly mentalize or integrate the competing sentiments of love and remorse is reflected in her difficulties in facing her involvement in her brother's death.

Psychoanalytic theory is further supported by the literature on trauma and repression in the literary study of "Tomorrow Is Too Far." According to academics like Michael Rothberg, "trauma forces a fragmentation of memory and identity and, by its very nature, breaks the continuity of a person's existence" (Rothberg, 1997). Rothberg's study demonstrates how literary characters frequently suppress painful experiences, only for these memories to reappear in indirect ways, for example, through emotional behaviours or symbolic representations. The fragmentary recollections and emotional dissonance of Adichie's narrator are manifestations of her buried pain and guilt. Because the narrator's recounting of her childhood experience is characterised by a persistent effort to make sense of the past. Trauma disrupts an individual's capacity to narrate their life history is especially pertinent in this instance (Rothberg, 1997).

The return of the repressed in literary characters is also covered by psychoanalytic literary critic Merav Rothman (1987), who highlights how unconscious emotions and impulses reappear in disguised forms. The repressed frequently resurfaces in symbolic or indirect ways, such as recurrent dreams, actions, or thinking patterns (Rothman, 1987). In "Tomorrow Is Too Far," the narrator's sorrow over her brother's passing resurfaces in the shape of her suppressed memories rather than in the form of confrontation. Freud's idea of the "return of the repressed" postulates that memories and emotions that are forced from conscious awareness will eventually reemerge, although in distorted forms (Freud, 1915). To sum up, the psychoanalytic ideas of repression and guilt offer crucial resources for comprehending the profound emotional and psychological complexity of "Tomorrow Is Too Far." Freud's ideas of guilt and repression, together with the work of other psychoanalytic theorists like Klein, Bowlby, and Fonagy, may be used to understand the narrator's continual struggle with guilt and her suppressed memories of her brother's murder. The suppressed feelings that arise in adulthood, frequently in complicated ways, can be shaped by early relationship dynamics and emotional conflicts, as their study demonstrates. This re-examination highlights the importance of unresolved childhood trauma and the ways that repressed guilt may continue to impact a person's sense of self and identity throughout their life by applying these psychoanalytic ideas to Adichie's experience.



### Research Methodology

A psychoanalytic framework is employed in this research article to examine the psychological complexity of the narrator in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "Tomorrow Is Too Far." The current research uses a qualitative approach to analyse the text of this story by using Alan McKee's textual analysis taken from her book "Textual Analysis: A Beginner's Guide" (2003). McKee's approach is rooted in cultural studies, which helps to focus on the meaning of the text and interpret it with respect to the psychoanalytical elements of trauma, guilt, and repression. McKee emphasizes how text aims to identify the meanings that are communicated through language, structure, and narrative strategies. The textual analysis focuses on how text constructs the guilt and repression of the narrator through different storytelling techniques like symbolism, delayed revelation, and retrospective narration. The focus of this study is on the themes of guilt and repression examined through the prism of Freudian psychoanalysis, along with the trauma theory of Cathy Caruth and object-relation theory of Melanie Klein. This approach sheds light on the internal conflict of the narrator and its effect on her behaviour. This approach highlights the significance of the unconscious and suppressed memories through Freud and other psychoanalysts' works.

According to Freud's theories of the unconscious and repression, "Traumatic events that are too painful to confront are frequently repressed into the unconscious mind, influencing a person's ideas, feelings, and behaviour without their conscious knowledge" (Freud, 1900; Freud, 1915). Although Freudian ideas offer a solid basis, other psychoanalytic theories are also considered. For example, Melanie Klein's (1948) theories on internalised guilt and early emotional development in children provide a complex understanding of how the narrator's relationship with her family, specifically her grandmother's favouritism, may have influenced her suppression and feelings of guilt. The narrator's shattered sense of self and her conflicted feelings towards her brother and family may be understood by using Klein's focus on the paranoid schizoid stance and the division of the self in reaction to internalised rage and envy.

The narrator's internal problems require a grasp of Freud's (1923) notion of guilt as the outcome of conflicts between the id and superego. According to Freud, guilt arises when a person's actions or wants go against their internalised moral principles, resulting in unintentional self-punishment. The narrator's regret over her act in her brother Nonso's murder is rooted in her suppressed feelings, like jealousy and anger, rather than being directly connected to any deliberate action. Freud called this type of psychological state neurotic guilt. The research will examine the sentiments of jealousy leading to the wrapping sense of self-blame of the narrator, even if she is not aware of the source of her guilt. Accordingly, Cathy Caruth's (1996) work on trauma theory, which centres on the notion that trauma is an unassimilated experience, a psychological event that alters a person's sense of time and identity, is cited in the study. Trauma is not instantly processed but rather resurfaces, frequently in symbolic or fragmented forms (Caruth, 1996). This hypothesis will investigate the narrator's difficulty in recalling and expressing the horrific event of her brother's death. The study will look at how her repressed

guilt shows up as emotional disarray, erroneous impressions of her familial ties, and fragmented memories, all of which point to the repressed potential to resurface (Freud, 1915).

The study only focuses on what is present in the text by applying McKee's practical framework. This methodology allows for a detailed analysis of Adichie's story, focusing on complex and emotional thematic dimensions, avoiding other thematic issues, such as political or societal critiques in the narrative. The paper's focus is on psychological dynamics and how the narrator's internalised guilt expresses them, though postcolonial theory is acknowledged as being relevant for this analysis. The study's sole emphasis is on psychoanalytic viewpoints, which would be a shortcoming. The feminist or postcolonial theoretical frameworks remained unexplored. These alternate readings might be used in future research to expand the reach of the study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The research paper's theoretical framework is based on psychoanalytic theory with the key elements of guilt and suppression. The ideas are mostly examined through the lens of Sigmund Freud, along with other important psychoanalytic theorists like Melanie Klein and Cathy Caruth. The unconscious factors of the narrator's mind and emotional experience will be examined through this multi-theoretical approach, which also offers a solid foundation for interpreting her suppression and guilt as key components of her character development.

### **Sigmund Freud: Repression and Guilt**

Freud's psychoanalytic theory, particularly his views on repression and guilt, serves as the main theoretical foundation for the investigation of the narrator's psychological state in "Tomorrow Is Too Far". Freud's theory provides a crucial examination into how suppressed memories and hidden desires may affect behaviour, and his work is fundamental to psychoanalytic literary criticism. According to Freud, guilt develops when a person's behaviour or wants deviate from the moral principles enforced by the superego, which are the internalised social and psychological norms (Freud, 1923). Even in cases when the person has not committed an overt crime, this internalised guilt may show up as neurotic behaviour or self-punishment. The neurotic guilt is the reason for the narrator's sorrow over her brother's death, which is fuelled by the sentiments of abandonment and envy. The feeling of guilt in the narrator's mind caused by an unconscious struggle between her id (her unacknowledged desires) and superego (the internalised moral voice), which she is unable to face or resolve completely, is examined through Freud's theory. This unresolved guilt shapes her view of herself and other people, especially with her family. "According to Freud's model of the psyche, the id is the primitive and instinctual part of the mind that contains sexual and aggressive drives and hidden memories, the super-ego operates as a moral conscience, and the ego is the realistic part that mediates between the desires of the id and the super ego" (McLeod, 2017).

According to Freud's repression hypothesis, traumatic events are repressed into the unconscious when they are too challenging to absorb (Freud, 1900). This keeps the person functioning, but it comes at the expense of emotional disarray and psychological stress. The narrator uses Freud's theory to cope with her guilt; she suppressed her memories of Nonso's death because that was



challenging for her to absorb them. Despite her conscious efforts to hide those memories, the narrator's unconscious mind expresses her sadness and guilt through symbolic expressions and repressed memories. Her conscious mind, that is ego, suppresses her memories of her brother's death because, technically, that was accidental, but her superego, being a moral primitive force, causes her to blame herself and takes the burden of her brother's death. "Behavior which falls short of the ideal self may be punished by the superego through guilt. The superego can also reward us through the ideal self when we behave 'properly' by making us feel proud" (McLeod, 2017).

### **Trauma Theory: The Return of the Repressed and Cathy Caruth**

The study looks at how unresolved trauma affects a person's sense of self and narrative coherence by using Cathy Caruth's trauma theory. Cathy Caruth has defined her trauma theory in her book "Unclaimed experiences" (1996). "Trauma is a psychological disturbance that destroys a person's capacity to incorporate the incident into their life narrative rather than only being an occurrence" (Caruth, 1996). According to Caruth, "trauma resurfaces in bits and pieces, frequently as flashbacks, nightmares, or symbolic resentments". The narrator's trauma of her brother's death remains unresolved, which shapes her moral identity. She tries to block all her memories, but the horrible incidents occur, and her trauma becomes a nightmare for her. The research investigates how the narrator's trauma re-occurs in her unconscious mind through Caruth's trauma theory of recurring memories, consistent with Freud's theory of repressed memories. Caruth explores how the texts of psychoanalysis, literature, and literary theory both speak about and speak through the profound story of traumatic experience (Caruth, 2022). The narrator didn't mourn over her brother's death. Her childhood was filled with jealousy and rivalry with her brother, so his death satisfies her for the time being. She thought she would now get more attention from her family, especially from her grandmother. She acts like she didn't care for her brother's death, as though he were the biggest reason for the narrator's lack of attention and love from her family. Later, her memory of Nonso's death chased her like a death angel, and she never got rid of that. As her moral sense developed, she started blaming herself for Nonso's death. After all, she lost her brother, despite the rivalry between them; he was the only one on whom she could rely. The death of her brother and her act of not mourning his death became a trauma for her. She blames herself for his death. She deals with guilt, self-blaming, and self-punishment. They are all ways to cope with the trauma. Caruth echoes Sigmund Freud in pointing out that trauma should not be understood as bodily injury but as an injury to the consciousness (Ahmad et al., 2023).

### **Melanie Klein: Object Relations Theory**

The psychological and emotional dynamics in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "Tomorrow Is Too Far" have been analysed by Melanie Klein's Object relations theory. The theory centres on the investigation of a person's relationships with the caregivers, like parents and siblings, and how

these relations shape the individual's emotional life, identity, and interpersonal functioning (Klein, 1952). According to Klein's theory, the infants internalize their early experiences with their caregivers as "objects" that become part of their unconscious mind. These internalized objects, such as the "good mother" or "bad sibling," form the basis for how individuals relate to others throughout their lives (Klein, 1946). The narrator's emotional development, shaped by maternal favouritism and unresolved sibling rivalry in this story, can be analysed through Klein's lens. Klein divided the early relations into two positions, "paranoid" and "schizoid". A child splits objects into two categories, "all-good" and "all-bad," to manage anxiety. In a state of depression, a child starts to integrate those feelings of good and bad, resulting in guilt and concern for loved ones. This splitting was illustrated by the narrator's complex relationships with her mother, grandmother, and brother in "Tomorrow Is Too Far". "Nonso was always the one allowed to climb the tree first," and the narrator internalizes this dynamic as rejection (Adichie, 2009, p. 197). The narrator's desire for maternal love is entangled with envy and aggression toward her brother, reflecting what Klein calls "the destructive impulses aimed at rival objects" (Klein, 1957). The story suggests that the narrator's move of misleading her brother about the presence of a snake on the tree. That moment becomes the turning point of the story. According to Klein, such hostile fantasies and unconscious desires are rooted in the child's inability to reconcile love and hate toward the same person or object (Klein, 1946). The narrator's guilt of her deliberate involvement in her brother's death is repressed for years, it resurfaces when she returns home, highlighting Klein's claim that "unresolved early conflicts reemerge in adulthood as emotional disturbances" (Klein, 1952).

Moreover, Klein argues that guilt and reparation are central to psychological development. In the depressive position, individuals begin to feel remorse for the harm they have (consciously or unconsciously) inflicted on their internal objects and seek to make reparation (Klein, 1935). The narrator's return to Nigeria, her acknowledgment of her memories, and her act of rivalry are evidence of her reparation. She acknowledged that it is too late to repair the past. As Klein notes, "only the acceptance of guilt makes reparation possible" (Klein, 1935, p. 312). The story also reveals how the injustice behavior of maternal figures impacts the inner conflict and the identity of the narrator. The mother's preference towards Nonso causes the narrator to construct a psychic identity that is rooted in inferiority, aligning with Klein's observation that "the child's relation to the mother is the prototype of all future object relations" (Klein, 1946, p. 198). This dynamic concept further becomes complicated by the grandmother's unbreakable silence, which alters the narrator's alienation and emotional detachment. Melanie Klein's object relations theory is a powerful framework for analysing the psychological conflict, repressed guilt, and siblings' rivalry in the short story "Tomorrow is Too Far".

### Analysis

Using psychoanalytic frameworks such as Freudian theory, trauma theory, and object relations theory, this analysis looks at themes of trauma, guilt, repression, and family

dynamics. The novel revolves around a pivotal point in a shattered family history: Nonso's death as a small child and the narrator's long-term effects. The poem portrays a profound entanglement of unsolved emotional issues and cultural tensions through the symbolic use of memory, environment, and recurrent motifs.

### **Second-Person Perspective**

The use of second-person narrative in "Tomorrow Is Too Far" enhances the story's emotional richness and psychological depth. It is essential to establish a feeling of emotional distance by addressing the protagonist as "you" to comprehend the narrator's relationship with the horrific event of Nonso's death. The separation of the narrator and her brother is explained by Freud's mechanism of repression. According to Freud's concept of repression, people put down the unpleasant or guilt-inducing memories into their unconscious mind to repress them. The narrator dissociates herself both in the narrative and in her mind from the upsetting recollection of Nonso's death by using the second-person point of view. The narrator maintains an emotional distance by referring to herself as "you" rather than directly, which makes it simpler to avoid facing the full weight of her guilt. But the reader is also drawn into the narrator's inner anguish using the second-person narrative. The reader shares the narrator's feelings of shame, wrath, and unresolved trauma as they are directly addressed and immersed in the protagonist's internal struggle. Because readers are compelled to face the narrator's feelings as if they were their own, this direct interaction encourages discomfort and contemplation. Because of the sense of shared responsibility created by the usage of "you," the reader is actively involved in the moral and emotional quandaries that are being presented. The reader and narrator's boundaries are blurred, highlighting the complexity of familial ties and the universality of guilt.

From a psychological point of view, this storytelling decision enables the reader to feel firsthand how the narrator's mind is broken. While the second-person narrative implicates the reader and makes them deal with the story's emotional weight, the protagonist's emotional detachment from her previous deeds reflects the narrator's dissociation from the pain. As a result, one has a better comprehension of the narrator's psychological suppression and an appreciation of how shame and moral uncertainty are universal. As a result, the second-person viewpoint is proven as an effective storytelling technique that highlights the themes of repression, emotional displacement, and the conflict between self-awareness and denial.

### **Fragmentation and temporal shifts**

The story of 'Tomorrow Is Too Far' jumps between past and present in a non-linear structure. The narrator's psychological trauma is reflected by the story's disjointed framework. According to Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, "survivors of traumatic experiences frequently have fragmented memories and are unable to recollect events in a logical order" (Caruth, 1996). Caruth's theory that trauma interferes with the normal encoding of memory is supported by the narrator's incapacity to provide a coherent chronology of her past events. The story's disjointed narrative explains the interpretation of chaotic memories, childhood recollections, and self-punishment. It highlights the enduring effect of trauma on the narrator's adult observations and

childhood recollections on her relationships and identity. Thanks to the chronological changes, the reader gradually grasps the extent of her mental confusion. Through the portrayal of the narrator's present self and the tragic events of her youth, the reader has been given a disjointed picture of the narrator's emotional state. This slow revelation of the truth presents how trauma is frequently processed non-linearly, with repressed memories gradually coming to the surface. "We are what we are because we have been what we have been" (Freud, 1957). The narrator's sense of emotional stability mirrors her psychological battle to face her memories and the horrific incident of her brother's death.

The story also shows the effect of the narrator's past on her adult identity and how it was shaped by the unresolved childhood tragedy by alternating between the past and present. The temporal fragmentation deals with the narrator's psychological ability to force her unpleasant memories into the subconscious, only to reappear in fragmented forms. The reader must piece together the narrator's fragmented parts of her history to understand her complicated feelings and the weight of her guilt. The chronological changes, such as memory, trauma, and self-perception, progressively uncover the narrator's psychological environment in the story.

#### **Avocado tree**

The Avocado tree is analysed by the textual analysis of Alan McKee as a symbol representing the distorted familial relations in the story. The deeply ingrained patriarchal attitudes of the narrator's family, where the male heir, Nonso, is respected and the narrator, a girl, is marginalised, are symbolised by the avocado tree at the centre of the novel. These social conventions and the unequal distribution of affection and care within the family are symbolised by the tree in the middle of the family yard. Because of his ability to scale the tree, Nonso is seen as important and deserving by the family, particularly Grandmama, who believes he will continue the family tradition. In addition to being a physical rite of passage, climbing serves as a representation of his social and familial worth. The narrator's incapacity to ascend the tree reflects her inferiority in her family. Her family's hierarchical system places men at the top and is unjust to women. The Narrator's sense of being neglected and incompetent came from her family's unjust behaviour. She recalls how their grandmother told her that Nonso "was the one who mattered" and that "boys are better, anyway" (Adichie, 2009, p. 192). The fruit-bearing tree also represents fertility, continuity, and expectations for the family. In keeping with the family's wish that Nonso will carry on their tradition, the fruit represents life and the possibility of future expansion. As a result, the tree serves as a focal point for the family's emotional dynamics, other to being a tangible item. The narrator also internalizes her mother's affection for Nonso, and she always wants her mother's affection, so she does everything to gain it. "It was only when Nonso fell out of the tree that she called you, sweetie" (Adichie, 2009, p. 197). The narrator's internal conflict turns the tree into a battlefield. Her actions, especially when she sees Nonso, climbing the tree, reflect her sentiments of being eclipsed by his privileged status. As a result, the narrator expressed her jealousy, rage, and repressed feelings by using the tree as a tool. The tree becomes a representation of the narrator's destructive tendencies because of this

manipulation, which ultimately results in Nonso's terrible demise. The narrator remembers her act of jealousy: "You said you'd seen something move, a snake maybe, and so Nonso shouldn't climb. But when Dozie asked, you said you saw nothing" (Adichie, 2009, p. 196). This deadly deed expresses her suppressed feelings, especially jealousy and resentment. Originally representing growth and energy, the tree is now connected to loss and death. The avocado tree becomes a source of grief and shame for the narrator following Nonso's passing. Using anthropomorphism, the narrator refers to the tree as "shrugging". Nonso off-reflects her unintentional guilt deflection. She distances herself from the primary cause of the disaster by externalising her responsibility and transferring it onto the tree. Thus, the tree serves as a memorial to the pivotal event in her early years, serving as a grounding for her unresolved anguish and suppressed guilt. It serves as a mute witness to the terrible incident and compels the narrator to face the history she has long attempted to ignore when she returns as an adult. The dichotomy created by the tree's dual representation of life and death reflects the narrator's inner turmoil.

Its fruit and lushness represent the life and future that Nonso was supposed to continue. But the tree also represents mortality and the frailty of existence following Nonso's passing. It turns into a reminder of the narrator's actions' repercussions, highlighting how damaging her repressed emotions and jealousy are. Additionally, the avocado tree represents oppression. By shifting the blame onto the tree and Grandmama, the narrator avoids acknowledging her part in Nonso's demise, which highlights her denial and incapacity to face her guilt head-on. Since the tree is still there and serves as a quiet reminder of her unresolved trauma, returning to the family home as an adult pushes her to face the past.

The narrator is forced to confront her long-suppressed guilt by the tree, providing her with the chance to address her previous behaviour in a difficult but necessary way. Psychoanalytically speaking, Melanie Klein's idea of jealousy and destructive impulses is consistent with the narrator's suppressed guilt. According to Klein, jealousy results from seeing another person's wealth, which might cause annihilation fantasies. Because of Nonso's advantage, the narrator's envy of him turns into a destructive desire to cut him out of her life. Her mature relationships are likewise tainted by her suppressed guilt, especially those with Dozie and her mother. Her complicated feelings for Dozie reveal her internal battle with guilt and culpability, while her separation from her mother suggests unresolved resentment resulting from neglect. Her conflicted feelings towards Dozie, who is docile and appears to have participated in her emotional maltreatment, reflect the narrator's reluctance to come to terms with her behaviour.

### **Snake (Mamba)**

The family fears the green mamba, a terrible animal that serves mostly as a metaphor for peril and death. Mamba is another crucial symbol to highlight the death and terror of life in this short story. Its actual existence symbolises an impending danger, reflecting the terrible incident that results in Nonso's demise. Despite not being the direct cause of his death, the narrator's

symbolic invocation of the snake aids during events. "You said you'd seen something move, a snake maybe, and so Nonso shouldn't climb. But when Dozie asked, you said you saw nothing" (Adichie, 2009, p. 196). The family's taut and delicate dynamic, where danger and anxiety are omnipresent factors, is likened to the snake's terror. This link to mortality emphasises how inevitable loss is and how unstable the emotional foundation of the family is. The snake is a manipulative instrument on a psychological level. The snake is fabricated as a tool of control during a play session, and the narrator utilises Nonso's dread of it to exert control over her. This manipulation stems from the narrator's repressed jealousy and anger at Nonso's privileged position, especially his preferred standing in Grandmama's eyes. As a result, the narrator uses the snake as a tool to try to counteract the power dynamic that marginalises her, but this manipulation also makes her personally responsible for the catastrophe that transpires. The snake represents the deceit and responsibility she is unable to avoid, and her deeds, motivated by jealousy and hatred, ultimately lead to guilt.

Additionally, the snake has more general symbolic implications, conjuring up images of moral transgression and forbidden knowledge. The narrator figuratively commits an "original sin" by employing the snake as a manipulative tool, stepping over a line that has irrevocable repercussions. In this way, the snake assumes a biblical significance, like the serpent that causes the loss of innocence in the Garden of Eden. The catastrophe compels Nonso to face her responsibility, and her death after the narrator's manipulation signifies a lasting change in her life. The narrator's internal conflict about the repercussions of her actions is therefore symbolised by the snake, which turns into a symbol of moral ambiguity.

On a more profound psychological level, the snake is linked to the narrator's unresolved pain and suppressed guilt. The snake resurfaces in Nonso's memory after she passes away, serving as a chilling reminder of her part in the catastrophe. Its symbolic presence is like the narrator's concealed guilt, which she suppresses as she ages and avoids admitting. The snake's resurgence in maturity indicates how enduring the trauma is, continuing to influence her identity and emotional terrain. Therefore, the snake serves as a metaphor for the narrator's incapacity to face her past head-on, and its existence symbolises the lingering effects of suppressed guilt. Furthermore, the snake has two meanings: it represents both the possibility of change and destruction. It signifies the potential for self-awareness and transformation, as well as the destructive elements of fear, anger, and envy that lead to Nonso's demise. A difficult but essential reckoning with her history begins as the narrator reflects on the snake and the events of that summer. By pushing the narrator to face the intricacy of her feelings and her part in the catastrophe, the snake serves as a psychological development accelerator in this way. She could discover a way to examine herself and find healing via this process.

### Conclusion

The study highlights the psychoanalytic perspective in "Tomorrow Is Too Far" with an emphasis on the elements of guilt, suppression, and childhood trauma. The study also highlights the significant effects of unresolved trauma and repressed emotions on the narrator's



psychological health and familial relationships by combining ideas from trauma and attachment theories with Freudian psychoanalysis. The study first looked at how the superego shaped the narrator's guilt and regret. The narrator's innate moral compass, impacted by social conventions and familial expectations, is the result of her superego. Her regret, that is the result of her unintentional responsibility for her brother's death, intensifies her emotions of shame in response to this moral authority. Despite her neurotic character, the study found that this guilt is a kind of self-punishment brought on by repressed feelings of jealousy and attention-seeking that were aimed at her brother.

The study also examines the impact of repression on the narrator to hide the traumatic incident that harmed her mental health. Freud's theory of repression is crucial to comprehend how the narrator buried the memory of Nonso's death deep inside her unconscious mind, leading it to reappear in fragmented and symbolic forms. Because of these suppressed feelings, she is unable to construct a cohesive self-narrative, which leads to unresolved internal conflict. This study is limited to the psychoanalytical perspective of Adichie's works. The future studies could highlight the ways in which culture and gender dynamics interact with psychological trauma in Adichie's writings by embracing feminist and postcolonial perspectives. However, this analysis highlights the value of psychoanalytic theory in comprehending the trauma, repression, and guilt in "Tomorrow Is Too Far."

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