

Repression in Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day* and David Auburn's *Proof*. A Comparative Study

Sajjadul Karim

Associate Professor, Dept. of English Language and Literature

International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC), Chittagong, Bangladesh.

sajjadulk@iiuc.ac.bd

Aelly Sarkar

Secondary school teacher, William Carey Academy

aelly.sarker398@gmail.com

(Correspondent author)

Abstract: *Repression is a type of psychological suppression. It suppresses our thoughts and urges to speak up in a serious moment. Ignoring the repressive state complicates an understanding of the protagonists' struggles, as repression is the central issue underlying their distress. Before dealing with the manifestations of repression, it is essential to identify the factors that extend it. Both American fiction Seize the Day (1956) and the drama Proof (2000) discuss those points from the same and sometimes different strains. This essay maintains a critical opposition toward repression, recognizing its role in culminating trauma and inhibiting self-expression. Furthermore, it considers both external circumstances and the protagonists' internal attitudes and capabilities as contributing factors to repression. This study explains the main reason for the protagonists' suffering, which has not been addressed in previous research. Through a comparative analysis of the protagonists' experiences of repression in both works, this paper explores the different ways individuals endure suffering and how they deal with it in distinct ways.*

Keywords: Repression, psychoanalysis, comparative study, protagonists' suffering.

Both Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day* (1956) and David Auburn's *Proof* (2000) are psychological works that delve into themes of emotional repression, grief, and existential crisis. These examine how repression affects both emotional expression and intellectual recognition, particularly in relation to trauma, gender roles, and mental illness.

In *Seize the Day* by Saul Bellow, Tommy Wilhelm faces emotional and social repression. He suffers under the pressure of his failed career, a broken marriage, and his father's rejection. Society perceives him as a failure, and he represses his emotions, trying to maintain dignity despite his deep anxiety. His financial desperation and inability to express his true feelings leave him trapped, searching for validation and relief. Instead of supporting, his father Dr. Adler continuously insulted him which gradually led him in to depression. Similarly, in *Proof*, Catherine faces emotional, intellectual, and social repression. Her sister, Claire, dismisses her feelings and tries to control her future. When Catherine claims that she solved the incredible math problem or wrote the proof, no one believes her, showing how she is underestimated due to her gender and connection to her father's illness. Rather than establishing her own life, Catherine spent many years for taking care of her father which ultimately makes her socially isolated. Claire's disbelief and dominating nature ultimately cause her (Catherine's) repression.

Utilizing the method of comparison, this essay examines the reasons for the central topic, repression. This comparison focuses on two major characters of both works: Tommy Wilhelm from *Seize the Day* and Catherine from *Proof*. Their conversation, thoughts, and expectations are analyzed, helping to identify more similarities and differences in the ways they experience repression. Through analysis, the essay critically investigates the practices used to repress someone. This essay explores a range of perspectives: psychoanalysis, existentialism, and

materialist viewpoints. A close textual analysis of the two works, along with relevant articles, employing both thematic and descriptive approaches, proves effective to support this study.

In Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day*, the concepts of human behavior, materialistic themes, and the prioritization of money over people reflect prominent aspects of 20th-century society. This novella examines how the protagonist, Tommy Wilhelm, remains silent despite seeing many negligence and insults toward him. The relentless desire for material gain among those around him suppresses his voice in expressing his interests or in asserting his right to survive in society. The narrative also reveals what happens when an individual values relationships with others over money in a materialistic society. In my view, the author crafted this novel to explore the notion that while many individuals may prioritize wealth, there exists the possibility of someone who values human relationships above material gain. Unfortunately, the person who cares more about the relationship becomes more repressed and undervalued because of the community's prevailing material-driven mindset.

David Auburn's *Proof* (2000) is an emotionally powerful drama that explores themes of genius, mental illness, male-dominated views, and relationships centered on Catherine's (the protagonist's) family. Her father, Professor Robert, is a brilliant but mentally ill mathematician, which causes her to have this probable disease. Though many critics explicitly state that the central point of this drama is the psychological struggle of Catherine as she is uncertain about her own intellectual potential and mental stability, the specific reasons are the societal views and lack of care and trust that led her to intense emotional repression. In this drama, the most important speech—when Claire addresses Catherine—provides a noticeable example of repression: "If she's not going to speak, what else can I do?" (Auburn, 57). Auburn uses Catherine's repression to deepen the emotional tension in the play, expressing how unrevealed emotions and unresolved depression can reveal the real face of relationships. Based on this fact, *Proof* becomes not just a story about mathematical discovery, but also a powerful study of how repression can ultimately imprison humans.

In both works, Tommy (44) and Catherine (25) experience repression from their close relatives. At the end of both works, unlike Catherine, Tommy was not compelled by anyone to leave his place and follow someone's command. He really possesses the liberty to prioritize his own choice. But Catherine was dragged by her sister. She certainly found herself deprived of personal agency. While Tommy repeatedly came to his father despite being refused help and repressed by him, Catherine, once she noticed their denial and disbelief toward her, finally repressed her desire and surrendered to her sister's order. For a woman, if she obtains less importance from someone, she gradually and silently distances herself from that person.

Many scholars acknowledged Tommy Wilhelm as an "antihero" (Hoque, 249). Scholars called him the "living dead" (Karmakar, 9) because he made many mistakes. He was engulfed with frustration. But what is the root of his failure? According to the scholars, Tommy's depression stems from systems of capitalist society. For them, a capitalist society creates alienation and works "like a big factory which carries only the man's toils who sells his time and effort. When this product seems useless or defective, it is thrown into a bin" (Abedin). When Wilhelm felt useless to his father, he felt his existence was a burden.

Another Scholar, Den Xu, mentioned the problem Tommy faced because of society. He named this cause 'conflict' (Xu 234). "In *Seize the Day*, Bellow is concerned with the conflict between individuals and society. In a modern society that lacks love and understanding between people, and is full of chaos and confusion, urban life is a real burden of existence for such a person as the protagonist Tommy, who is passive, impotent, and indecisive" (Xu 234).

Abedin and Den Xu blamed capitalism and self-centered societal issues that forced Tommy to face the problem. But scholars did not clearly mention how these issues create the problem. These create conflict by repressing or suppressing Tommy. It is not that Tommy speaks up. However, he spoke up, but he didn't express his inner thoughtshe should have spoken. The question is –are these only societal issues repressing him? Other scholars also explain his

character qualities; for example, his passive role and indecisiveness are responsible for his experience of repression:

Darryl Hattenhauer notes that “Saul Bellow has created a passive-aggressive character with a repressed Oedipal conflict in his novel *Seize the Day*.” (Hattenhauer).

On the other hand, “Catherine’s character is often analyzed through the lens of Freudian repression, as she suppresses her emotions about her father’s death and her own hidden fears of inheriting his mental illness” (Schafer). Her avoidance of confronting her emotions leads to isolation and self-doubt. The play’s nonlinear structure, which shifts between past and present, reflects the deeply intertwined nature of grief and memory, making it difficult for Catherine to move forward.

Many scholars say “there is proof of a connection between Math and madness. They shed light on why this connection applied only to females, not to their male counterparts” (Henke et al. 322). Catherine, a math genius, was doubtful about the illness she was supposed to inherit (Auburn 70). The concern arose when we noticed her sister also contemplated the possibility of Catherine’s mental instability.

Another scholar, Kathryn Patterson, shared that “Catherine’s sister, Claire, is a controlling woman who is unable to manipulate others. That means she could not manipulate Catherine to stay in New York”. From this, it can be understood that, even though Claire could not manipulate her sister Catherine, she still have the possessive nature and desire to control Catherine. It is also true that, Claire completely unable in manipulating her sister to follow her decision.

Nevertheless, Clare’s dominating nature hampered Catherine’s ability to make her own decisions, causing her emotional stress. Scholars cited this as a cause of her problem: her elder sister, regarded as the play’s antagonist, wanted to take her to New York (Patterson). Catherine’s refusal of Claire’s suggestion to live with her, far from her city and memories, starts the struggle between them (Auburn 37-40)

. One observation about this play, To convey the main points of view, including Catherine’s good relationship with her father and her genius, playwright employs various techniques, such as flashbacks and dreams in *Proof*. Another technique the author used is

Claire's desire to move Catherine to New York which creates conflict between the two sisters . This brings up deep-rooted emotions, causing the play's protagonist to present her secrets and hidden talents (Auburn 38-41).

According to scholars, Catherine's mother's absence (Schafer) and Claire's insistence that she stay in New York (Patterson) created the intense conflict in Catherine's life. But it would be better if they examined how she felt inferior to them or what experience she had that created the conflict. Indeed, Hal's and Claire's misunderstanding and dominating nature toward Catherine drive her into depression, which is found in the play *Proof*.

However, after an analysis of both works, it is not that the situation directly led the protagonists to face depression, but there are some stages in which they suffered from it. This essay finds that the stage the protagonist experienced before the depression was a crucial stage of repression. Also, this essay employs a comparative approach to explore the factors underlying their repression.

Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day* David Auburn's *Proof* are based on different themes and . theories. These two American playwrights, of course, expressed distinct theories in their works, as they wrote in different time periods under many societal conditions. Various perspectives within the same society lead to a more in-depth analysis of a specific issue: repression. The writer constructed *Seize the Day* on many theoretical canvases. One distinguished theory is also identified as Marxist criticism. The protagonist's downfall mirrors the harsh realities of capitalist society. His father, Dr. Adler, incarnates the harsh capitalist spirit to drive him into depression—Wilhelm's failure in the material world. On the other hand, *Proof* is based mostly on feminism. Catherine struggled to get her own identity in this patriarchal society. The predominant belief is that only males can do math (Auburn 17). Catherine's math proof demonstrates she broke that belief with her genius work (Auburn 68). The writer's story highlighteshe theme of supporting women's empowerment in this play.

Both writings rest on different theories, but they share more similarities in some theoretical perspectives. Existentialism is the most crucial aspect that unifies these two works It aligns with the path of alienation, personal crisis, and the search for meaning. The protagonist,

Tommy Wilhelm, faced an existential crisis—he had lost his job, his marriage was in decline, and he struggled with self-worth. Wilhelm constantly blamed others but he refused to see his own role in his downfall. His emotional breakdown at the end suggests an existential confrontation with his own insignificance. Similarly, Catherine falls sick due to the dependence on others' recognition of her achievement. She lacked self-motivation, which could have helped her and prevented her sickness. She knew about her talents, but still, she was confused about her capabilities. Even after finishing the mathematical proof, her confidence fluctuated when her sister and friend denied her work; she let their disbelief and harsh behavior penetrate her heart and mind, since she denied her own existence and empowerment.

From Freudian psychoanalysis, both Wilhelm and Catherine experience mental trauma and repression. A troubled father—on relationship reflects Freudian themes of repression, because he could not share his inner conflicts with his father. His dependence on Dr. Tamkin can be seen as a search for a father figure or a projection of his own insecurities. Catherine also faces anxiety because of her father's mental health issues. She thought that she would inherit the mental disorder from her father. That fear is one of the major reasons why she faced repression in her life. Catherine's fear and anxiety about inheriting her father's mental disorder (Auburn 70) show she was facing trauma, according to Freudian analysis. This fear affects not only her mental condition but also creates many health issues (Starkstein), which could be working as obstacles preventing her from advancing in her math career. (Auburn 7-10).

Many articles and the book's introduction highlight that the protagonist, Wilhelm Tommy, experiences frustration stemming from bitterness toward the toxic relationships he had with both his father and his wife, which ultimately led him to a constant state of repression. Tommy's father, Dr. Adler, consistently presented an amiable demeanor, yet he lacked compassion towards his son. Despite possessing considerable wealth, Adler never offered his son support, who consistently endeavored to earn his father's approval but was ultimately unsuccessful. He observed that his father exhibited a sense of self-satisfaction and self-admiration, taking pride in his own achievements. This led Tommy to experience significant offense and resentment (Bellow 10-15).

Tommy experienced disrespect and neglect from his father, Through the capitalist lens,

Dr. Adler wanted his son to be rich, but he felt disappointed in him because he (Tommy) lacked jobs and educational qualifications. He was, in fact, the only member of his family who lacked formal education.

He got repression because he did not get any love and encouragement from his father. Their relationship was inwardly mutilated, which led him to experience repression and gradual trauma. For Tommy, his father was selfish and obsessed with his worldly status. There was no doubt that he loved his father in every sense of the word; however, his father never loved him. His father's view of his son was —

“What a dirty devil this son of mine is. Why can't he try to sweeten his appearance a little? Why does he want to drag himself like this?” (Below 42). Despite reaching out for assistance, his father chose to ignore him completely. It is likely that his father believed that providing financial support to his son would lead to Adler's downfall, ultimately depriving him of the means to uphold his pride. Because of his father's negligent behavior, Tommy had negative experiences, regrets, and perceived failures. This may exacerbate his feelings of hopelessness and despair, thereby elevating the possibility of repression.

Repression prevents openness even toward our close relatives. For many years, Tommy and his father lived in separate rooms at the hotel. Finally, when they were living under the same roof, Tommy was happy, but he could not be free to share his thoughts, even with his own father. “Wilhelm was glad for an instant. At last they would talk over times. But he was also on guard against insinuations” (Bellow 27). Tommy repressed his thoughts into the conversation, scarring or breaking the father-son relationship line.

Even though his father reminded him of his selfish wife, he remained quiet. Then, when his father asked a question about when his mother died, he calmly answered and decided that he should not make an issue of quarreling with his father. However, a question may be appeared that —why was there an issue of quarreling? This was because he knew his father's mind. It was not that his father cared about his mother's death, but the loneliness came after her death. In fact, his father wanted to get rid of having to take care of his wife and even his daughter, Catherine. Ostensibly, he had been trying to help the old man remember a date, but in reality, he meant to tell him, ‘You were set free when Ma died. You wanted to forget her. You would like to get rid of Catherine, too. Me, too. You're not kidding anyone (Below 29).

It is evident that Tommy's relationship with his father was not good, as his father wanted to stay away from his family for his own purposes. His father was careless about the relationships among his family members, prioritizing money instead. This neglect caused repression, but there was a chance that Tommy could break the repression limit if he just started to quarrel with his father. Though quarreling, which seems like a negative hint or conflict, Tommy could share his thought with his dad that he [Adler] must take care of his family. The logical argument would lead his father to recognize his own mistakes and reconcile with his son. This is because conflict is the beginning of a solution. Unfortunately however it did not happen in the novella *Seize the Day*. If he could not share anything with his father, with whom could he share it? That sadness in his mind imprisoned him and gradually led him to feel his own worthlessness.

On the other hand, in *Proof* by David Auburn, Catherine also loved her father. She dropped out of school and sacrificed her choices for the inevitable service toward her father. But the question is, did she lack her father's love? The answer is yes. Unlike Tommy, her father loved her, but the painful matter was that her father was no longer alive. After his death, she missed the warmth and presence of her father. Moreover, in the play, we see that her father was mentally ill, which prevented him from providing love and care to his daughter, Catherine.

Due to her father's absence, Catherine had to struggle with her sister to stay in their Chicago home. It is because of her father's absence that she received no strong support for staying in her own house. It is also because of her father's death that she does not have anyone to advocate for her genius in her math achievement.. She was deprived of any mental support from her family member, which ultimately repressed her from maintaining her choices.

But Catherine's father was different from Tommy's father. The former remembered Catherine's services for him and wrote this in his diary. He showed how he was proud of his daughter's work, even though Catherine's math ability or heroic achievement had not been revealed yet to her father.

Tommy felt a deep sense of emptiness and depression due to the absence of support from his relatives. He encountered numerous hardships due to his father's inadequate guidance and support. Rather than providing constructive feedback, his father reprimanded him, particularly during a pivotal moment when he threw harsh words which easily repressed Tommy: "You want to make yourself into my cross. But I am not going to pick up a cross. I'll see you dead, Wilky,...Go away from me now. It's torture for me to look at you, you slob!' cried Dr. Adler" (Bellow 110). Wilhelm Tommy was feeling so anxious that he felt suffocated. The person he loved most and expected at least support from him—he was actually deprived of that. Moreover, he heard that his father couldn't tolerate his existence, which led to a strong sense of repression in Tommy.

Catherine also had to hear words that repressed her. She was not only deprived of any mental support from her family member but also, she had to endure severe, demeaning words, which ultimately repressed her from maintaining her choices. Hal said she was "paranoid" (Auburn 16) and by saying this word Hal repressed her. Hal was anxious and suspicious. Catherine heard this—"You don't have the math" (Auburn 17)—from Hal when she said that she was supposed to work on her father's paper [reading or publishing]. Moreover, Claire and Hal reminded her of her inability to do Math (Auburn 52- 53). Claire subdued her as well as Hal suppressed her .

Claire wanted to sell the house for her own purpose, but she cited the cause of her decision was Catherine's mental illness, even though Catherine was actually fine. Many times, Catherine said she was fine; she didn't have to stay with Claire in New York. But Claire shared some unnecessary logic to manipulate her to stay with her. She suppressed her by reasoning that she is not mentally stable, as she mentioned that Catherine unnecessarily called the police and showed her abusive behavior. Claire called her "abusive, drunk, or disturbed" and "exhausted" (Auburn 26-28), and by that wording, she repressed Catherine against her wish to stay in Chicago.

The materialistic perspective holds that immobility renders one useless and separates

individuals from what is considered a well-established society. According to “Alienation and Endangered Relationship,” in Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day*, a capitalist society creates alienation and works “like a big factory which carries only the man’s toils who sells his time and effort.

When this product seems useless or defective, it is thrown into a bin” (Abedin). In the same way when Wilhelm felt useless to his father, he felt his existence was a burden.

He believed he could succeed as an actor in Hollywood and dedicated seven years to pursuing this goal; however, he ultimately did not achieve the success he envisioned (Bellow 7). He was rejected just because his face was not good on camera (Bellow 14). He was not valued for other qualities, such as acting and his speech. It is certain that, through the camera, it appeared as a false face (Noyes and Jenkins 97). But society looks for a handsome face, whether it is fake or real. This system repressed his wish to become an actor.

Wilhelm was terminated from his position due to nepotism. His father repressed him many times to continue the so-called father-son relationship with him, but he did not open his inner thoughts to his father. His wife's and his son's responsibilities prevented him from making the right decision and accepting Olive, who truly loved him, as his wife. All these are the consequences of spreading a materialistic view in society. He encountered numerous failures; however, rather than receiving encouragement or motivation, he faced discouragement from his relatives just because they adhered to societal perspectives

On the other hand, Catherine endures repression because of the male-dominated society.

She prevents Hal from coming to her house, but Hal did not listen to Catherine; for his own purpose, he repressed her by saying, “Someone should read his notebook” (Auburn 13).

Catherine is a genius. She made a math proof, but Claire's disbelief about her talent haunted her. Claire represses her by saying, “It's in Dad's notebook. “Catherine, I am sorry, but I just find this very hard to believe, this dad's handwriting” (Auburn 51-52). Hal said, “Your Dad might have written it and explained it to you later. I am not saying he did, I am just saying there's no proof that you wrote this” (Auburn 53). “It's your father's handwriting.” (Auburn 54). He even indicated he would consult with other people in the same department to get proof that it was her father's work (Auburn 53). When Catherine declared “I am a mathematician”, Hal said, “Not like

your

Dad” (Auburn 55). By stating those words, Hal and Claire explicitly mentioned that only males can be geniuses in one of the dominating fields, Math. It is not only their view but the total picture of a male-dominating society where it is impossible for a lady to solve a math proof.

In *Seize the Day*, Tommy receives no emotional, psychological, or practical support from his father or his wife during adversity. Isolated and overwhelmed, he is further destabilized after Dr. Tamkin, who seemed virtuous, deceives him. Because of Dr. Tamkin's persuasion, he granted Dr. Tamkin power of attorney over his last remaining asset, amounting to 700 dollars, with the intention of engaging in market speculation. Instead, Dr. Tamkin absconded with the funds, abandoning Tommy. Tommy became devastated when Dr. Tamkin disappeared with the funds. This pivotal crisis led him to a state of complete despair. He required mental support, yet he did not receive any assistance from his relatives. His frustration culminates in damaging a machine, demonstrating that he has reached his limit (Bellow 114).

However, on Catherine's side, during her pivotal moment, initially, Catherine did not receive any support from Claire and Hal. As for her father's absence [death], it seemed that everyone took the opportunity to criticize her, especially Claire.

Claire was kind of dragging Catherine to New York against her will. Catherine also agreed to suppress her own choices and follow her sister's order. But the real concern is that it is her life and her choice to stay wherever she wants. If she were mentally ill, that could be why she needed to go with Claire. But how can one ascertain that Claire would take her responsibility, because she ignored her father's responsibility and left it solely on Catherine when her father was in a pivotal moment of his illness? For Claire, Catherine's mental illness is a convenient narrative rather than a genuine matter. She avoided acknowledging Catherine's mental illness; otherwise, doing so would have obliged her to serve her mentally ill father. She delegated it on Catherine's shoulder so that she could escape from that service for her father.

Now, after their father's death, Claire reversed her pose and emphasized Catherine's mental sickness for the purpose of compelling her to stay with her, which shocked Catherine: her own sister's behavior repressed her choices. Claire was selfish; she only care about her demands and

repressed Catherine's wish to stay in her father's house (Auburn 57).

Modern psychology suggests that certain personality traits—like anxiety, low emotional tendencies, depression, or poor decision-making abilities—can have hereditary components. Based on that, genetic factors can influence behavior, decision-making, personality, and mental ability (Bouchard Jr). Even if Bellow refused to include this idea in his novel, it cannot be ignored, as modern science is allowing us to develop new interpretations of Tommy's repression. Similarly, though the play, *Proof* does not explicitly express that the reason for Catherine's repression is a genetic issue, her emotional struggles and acceptance of other choices over her freedom can be analyzed by genetic proneness.

As Catherine's father, Robert, struggled with mental illness, it is not unreasonable to argue that Catherine's repression could have genetic issues—she may have inherited traits of mental illness or emotional difficulties. Catherine's personality traits, such as anxiety or emotional withdrawal, could also have hereditary elements. Catherine is deeply afraid of becoming like her father and this fear is obvious in emotional repression—she may ignore showing her feelings, especially how she really feels, because she thinks that her expression of emotion could lead to her breakdown. Acceptance of Claire's choice to return to New York ushered how she repressed her feelings to stay in Chicago. This is the most crucial point and the central part of this play: her choice was not prioritized, particularly her decision to remain in her house. Even though she acknowledged her mental condition is stable, Claire's persuasion and false belief about her supposed mental sickness creates compliance in her—a surrender shaped by family pressures that led her to deny the legitimacy of her own will (Auburn 69).

Psychologically speaking, repression is a defense mechanism (Erdelyi). Individuals may exclude the distressing thoughts from conscious awareness. Catherine may repress her emotions because she is afraid of losing control or being overwhelmed by her own feelings. Her fear of mental instability (and the potential genetic risk of inheriting it) prompted her to bury her emotions, resulting in psychological repression expressed in the play. In Act 1, Scene 1, for an illustration, when her father wanted her to engage in math, she repressed her intellectual choices to advance in math, insisting that she is no longer interested in Math. This denial reveals her avoidance to continue working in Math—a defense against the fear that pursuing mathematical work led her into mental instability like her father. It was actually her thought, as her father came

into her imagination; after Robert's conversation with Catherine, we came to know that her father was dead (Auburn 11). In dream it is actually Catherine who talked with herself and encouraging herself not to waste time but to work in Math. When her imagined father called her lazy, she was discontent and reminded him of forsaking interest in Math and investing time in the treatment of Robert's mental health (Auburn 8). By rejecting mathematics, she attempted to shield herself from the

emotional restraint of inheriting her father's math strengths and madness; she repressed her choice not to get overwhelmed by her feelings.

Apart from genetic factors, several events in the play indicate how Catherine endured repression. One incident is noticed in Act 1, Scene 3, where Claire said that according to the police, she [Catherine] was "abusive," and she said, "They said you're lucky they didn't haul you in" (Auburn 26). Also, Claire continuously represses her by saying "Chicago is dead" (Auburn 27) and "you are upset and exhausted" (Auburn 28). Catherine could not tolerate any more repression; that's why, when Hal entered, Catherine stood up "triumphantly" (Auburn 28). Catherine stood up "triumphantly"—by using that word, the author highlighted how she had tolerated the prolonged repression before.

As a result, Tommy experienced a state of "learned helplessness," a psychological condition that arises when an individual endures a series of stressful events. The reason behind this is repression, as he could not share his thoughts and inner conflicts with his relatives. In this state,

individuals often fail to "exercise their control" or power when opportunities present themselves (Overmier and Molet). Learned helplessness manifests in various symptoms, including low self-esteem, negative attitudes, low motivation, lack of persistence, insufficient effort, and even ailure (Peterson et al.).

Tommy's experience with repression led him to suffer significant depression, which hindered his ability to take any initiatives that could enhance his career prospects. Tommy experienced post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) following an incident involving unexpected rude behavior. The way he destroyed a machine explicitly shows his frustration with his life

(Bellow 114). The article on post-traumatic stress disorder states:

PTSD is a mental disorder that may develop after exposure to exceptionally threatening or horrifying events.... PTSD can occur after a single traumatic event or from prolonged exposure to trauma. It is also associated with substantial psychiatric comorbidity, increased risk of suicide, and considerable economic burden (Bisson et al.).

In this instance, repression gradually operates a mechanism resulting in trauma in a person. It was noted only that Tommy was frustrated, but the underlying causes were not revealed. The reason behind this discussion, which cannot be overlooked, is repression.

Moreover, Catherine is not mentally ill. When Claire met Catherine, she sought to prove that Catherine was psychologically deteriorated and incapable of self-care. That is why she urged her to maintain her well-being by taking food and other essentials for good health, including a hair dryer, jojoba oil, and clothing. But it is observed that Catherine possessed superior knowledge to Claire. Claire continued to assert that Catherine was mentally unstable and she should settle in New York for her well-being. Her words are not reminding Catherine of the mental illness but rather humiliating her, which is the crucial reason for Catherine's repression, exposed in the main part of the play when she is about to leave her own house. Because of their continuous disregard and manipulation, she was repressed, and then she became sick (Auburn 56).

Repression is not limited to women; men, too, experience harsh realities of repression. Traditionally, women are perceived as emotionally sensitive, having a soft corner (Beresford). Both protagonists should have faith in themselves and their inner capabilities. Catherine should not be depressed without confirming that she will not be mentally ill like her father. She needs to proceed in her work, as she knows how to advance in math. Similarly Tommy should understand his self-power when he is depressed because of his father's behavior, which will not allow him to be more repressed. However, at the end of both works, some hints suggest how they overcome those complexities.

Both characters experience the same pain of repression, but in various ways. For Tommy,

it is mainly a materialistic view and an unsupportive father who forced him to repress his introspection and insinuation, which should be lucid to his father. It is better to have an absent father than an unhelpful father. On the other hand, because of her father's death Catherine was deprived of strong emotional support during her pivotal moment. The text suggests that her father's demise was due to possible mental illness, which was psychologically threatening to Catherine's mathematical achievements. Unlike Tommy, it was not her father but her sister's repressive influence that impeded her choices and freedom of decision. Had Claire really loved her, she would not have imposed her will against her choices. Claire did not wish to show up on Catherine's birthday., reflecting emotional detachment. Claire did indeed bring many gifts for her sister, but these are all meant to press her thoughts on Catherine's choices. She actually followed her own choices to limit Catherine's freedom. The probability of mental illness and the male-dominated view gradually repressed her choices and freedom in her mathematical pursuits. In the light of this comparative study, the only meaningful solution lies in one's ability to speak up—whether through words or actions. In fact, both works, we see the characters are refusing to accept more repression; Catherine resisted going with her sister to New York, and Tommy realized he needed to take further steps to overcome the repressive issues. Thus, it can be argued that self-expression—either through actions or speech—emancipates people from repression.

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