Introducing a New Literary Theory: Reactive Defensive Oppression through the Lens of Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

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Abstract

Literature is a quiet representation of artistic work, and literary theory works as the regulator that handles the way of the text. This paper introduces Reactive Defensive Oppression (RDO) as an original literary theory that redefines oppression as an emotional defence mechanism, rather than a stable exercise of hegemonic power. Where classical frameworks often read oppression through systems of patriarchy, race, and colonialism, RDO shifts its focus towards the psychological necessity behind those oppressive acts, especially those triggered by emotional instability, fear of dethronement, or emotional fragility. The theory argues that many oppressive characters do not act out of dominance, but from a deep internal panic, a desperate effort to protect perceived authority, relevance, or identity. RDO is organized into a triadic model: Passive RDO (emotional paralysis), Self-RDO (internalized oppression), and Ideological RDO (performative aggression rooted in insecurity). To demonstrate this framework across cross-cultural and gendered causes, this study conducts a comparative analysis of Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, two texts that, despite geographical and cultural differences, reveal strikingly similar emotional

patterns of oppression. The paper engages with Freud's defence mechanisms, Foucault's theory of power, and Spivak's subaltern critique, but proposes RDO as a filling concept, bridging a gap where traditional theories often overlook emotionally unstable oppressors. By repositioning oppression as a reactive emotional praxis, RDO offers a new interpretive lens for studying trauma, gender, and power across diverse literary landscapes.

Keywords: Reactive Defensive Oppression, Emotional Power, Symbolic Instability, Gender and Trauma, Comparative Literature, Postcolonial Theory, Feminist Criticism, Psychoanalytic Approach, Mahesh Dattani, Alice Walker, Self-Oppression, Fear-Induced Dominance.

Introduction

Literature has always returned to the question of power, how it moves, how it breaks, and how it often hurts. In most critical discussions, oppression is explained through large structures: patriarchy, colonialism, class hierarchies, or racial power. These frameworks, shaped by thinkers like Foucault, Spivak, and Fanon, teach us to see oppression as a system, calculated, strategic, and ideological. But what if some forms of oppression are not planned at all? What if they are reactions, born not from strength but from fear, quick, emotional, and defensive?

This paper introduces a new way of reading such moments, through a theory I call Reactive Defensive Oppression (RDO). RDO looks at oppression as an emotional reflex, something that emerges when people feel symbolically threatened or emotionally unbalanced. It's not always about dominating others to gain power; it can also be about not knowing how to cope with losing it. Someone who lashes out to protect their identity, status, or belief system may not be acting from authority, but from the fear of losing authority. The theory began to take shape while reading two very different but strangely parallel texts: Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. Though these works come from distinct cultural landscapes, one rooted in Indian urban patriarchy, the other in African

American rural trauma- both are filled with characters who don't simply oppress to rule, but who hurt others because they themselves are emotionally unravelling. These are not just power figures; they are insecure, anxious, and often desperate. Their actions seem less like plans and more like emotional explosions. To explore this more closely, I take a comparative literary approach, reading both texts side by side while drawing from psychoanalysis, postcolonial theory, and trauma studies. Freud's ideas about internal conflict, Foucault's insights on power and surveillance, Spivak's subaltern theory, all of these serve as touchstones. But this paper also moves beyond them. Where those theories focus on systems, RDO focuses on states of mind, on the emotional panic that sets oppression in motion.

The theory breaks down into three modes: Passive RDO, where the person collapses inward rather than fight; Self-RDO, where oppression turns against oneself in silence or guilt; and Ideological RDO, where inherited ideas of power are performed aggressively because the person no longer believes in them deep down. These forms are not fixed categories but emotional patterns, visible in how characters speak, withdraw, lash out, or fall apart. In placing these two texts in conversation, this paper hopes to show that oppression can be more than just a tool of the strong. Sometimes, it is the weapon of the terrified; the scream of someone who fears they are slipping from the centre. RDO gives us the vocabulary to understand that scream.

Theorising Reactive Defensive Oppression

Reactive Defensive Oppression (RDO) emerges from a simple but unsettling observation: people do not always oppress because they feel powerful, but sometimes because they feel threatened. This theory does not reject classical models of oppression, but it does attempt to widen the lens. Where traditional approaches often understand oppression through systemic dominance, institutional force, or ideological permanence, RDO offers a more intimate entry point. It asks us to notice the emotional charge, the internal panic, the symbolic imbalance that sometimes drives someone to hurt or control another person. In many literary

and real-world instances, the oppressor is not a confident authority figure. Instead, they may be emotionally unstable, insecure, or afraid of losing relevance. RDO argues that oppression can operate as a psychological reflex, especially when the individual senses a symbolic dethronement or the collapse of their perceived identity.

While this idea may feel intuitive, it is often underexplored in dominant critical frameworks. Freud's theory of Reaction Formation explains how people may behave in exaggerated opposition to their repressed desires. This gives us a partial insight into how emotional conflict shapes action. But Freud's focus remains inward, on the self's struggle with its own unconscious drives. RDO, in contrast, is outward-facing: it explores how those internal instabilities lead to external acts of domination, not necessarily to disguise desire, but to secure emotional safety.

Michel Foucault's theory of power, particularly in *Discipline and Punish*, emphasizes how institutions discipline the body and mind through surveillance and control. He argues that power is not simply held but exercised through structures that make individuals internalize authority. While this analysis helps us understand systemic control, it does not fully explain what happens when those very systems begin to wobble, or when individuals within the system feel emotionally exposed. RDO steps into this space. It asks, what happens when someone raised within a patriarchal or colonial logic no longer feels in control? How do they react, not structurally, but emotionally?

Similarly, Gayatri Spivak's famous essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* challenges who gets to speak, who is heard, and how hegemonic narratives silence marginal voices. Spivak focuses on the epistemic violence of power, how knowledge systems erase agency. But RDO is less concerned with the voice of the oppressed than with the cracks in the psychology of the oppressor. Spivak shows us how subalternity is enforced; RDO shows us that sometimes it is enforced not through design, but through desperation.

Edward Said's Orientalism explains how the West constructed the East as the "Other" to maintain a sense of superiority. His critique exposes the narrative power of colonial discourse. But RDO is interested in what happens when that narrative starts to slip, when the colonizer fears they are losing grip, and oppression becomes a panicked ritual, not a confident narrative. Said's colonizer controls through representation; RDO's subject controls through emotional reaction.

Theodor Adorno, in *The Authoritarian Personality*, sought to trace the roots of fascist and anti-democratic attitudes through psychological patterns. He insisted that certain personality types are more prone to oppressive thinking. However, RDO avoids categorizing people based on personality. Instead, it focuses on situational triggers, moments of crisis that cause individuals, even those not inherently authoritarian, to act defensively and harmfully out of fear. Adorno looked for structural predispositions; RDO looks at emotional tipping points.

What distinguishes RDO is its focus on symbolic instability, a term used here to describe moments when an individual feels that their identity, authority, or social value is slipping. This loss may be imagined, exaggerated, or real. But the emotional response is similar: to reclaim control, often through oppressive or silencing behaviour. Symbolic instability becomes the psychological pivot around which oppression spins, not out of conscious ambition, but from an unconscious need to feel intact.

This symbolic instability can take many forms. A man whose masculinity is subtly questioned, a woman who senses her caregiving role is no longer needed, or a leader who fears irrelevance in a modernizing society, all may respond with forms of control that exceed logic. RDO helps us name those reactions and trace how fear, not ideology, shapes them.

The theory identifies three recurring affective strategies that underpin different expressions of RDO: Fear of being displaced or dethroned: Characters who sense that someone else is rising, often women or younger figures, react prematurely to suppress them. Fear of

symbolic irrelevance: When a person believes their worth, role, or legacy is being diminished, they may turn to force, ridicule, or silence to protect that identity. Fear of the unfamiliar or the Other: When confronted with new ideas, people, or realities that challenge their inner structure, individuals may react not with rational rejection, but with emotional backlash. These fears rarely appear directly. They are often masked beneath ideology, culture, or familial duty, which makes RDO harder to detect unless we know what we are looking for. What makes literature particularly powerful in this regard is that it often shows us these moments in slow motion. The reader is allowed to see the buildup, the collapse, the confusion, and the resulting violence or silence that emerges.

Case Study and Genesis of RDO in *Bravely Fought the Queen*

Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen* intricately stages a claustrophobic domestic space where the architecture of power is sustained not through open domination but through deeply internalized, psychologically reactive patterns of oppression. Every character seems to live in a carefully curated illusion, of love, duty, masculinity, or tradition, while beneath the surface, what remains is unresolved trauma, silence, and a desperate need to preserve control over collapsing identities.

Dolly, perhaps the most emotionally layered character, performs a forgetfulness that is itself a kind of shield. "Look, I know we have met but I have an awful memory" (Dattani 5). She says, but this self-deprecating excuse contrasts sharply with her detailed recollections elsewhere. She remembers clearly, too clearly, perhaps, but her trauma has made memory an unbearable territory. By pretending to forget, she avoids confronting what remembering might do to her. Her statement, "I'm afraid I don't know much about my husband's work" (Dattani 5), similarly reflects more than just social distance. Jiten does not treat her as a partner in life or intellect; she is excluded from both his private world and public self. Her ignorance is not a flaw, it is enforced. Even the house they live in, "Twin houses. Right in the middle of nowhere"

(Dattani 9), feels more like a metaphor than a setting. These are not homes, they are polished cages, placed side by side so that both Dolly and Alka can witness each other's emotional isolation.

When Dolly says, with a laugh that quickly stops, "Oh! I've cracked my (Pats her mask.) Isolated. Yes. But they were adamant. They wanted their huge beautiful houses" (Dattani 9), the image of the mask becomes central. That mask is not just metaphorical; it's her only protection, the emotional camouflage she uses to survive. Her mask hides the truth about Daksha too, as she fumbles through an awkward sentence, "She goes to let me see—Ooty. Yes. She goes to a school in Ooty" (Dattani 10). She knows the truth, but saying it out loud makes it real, and that realness exposes her to judgment. Her internalized sense of failure as a mother of a differently abled child forces her into a small, suffocating silence. Inward RDO here functions as emotional defence; she hides to protect herself from being emotionally dismantled.

In contrast, Jiten's violence stems from his anxiety over losing patriarchal control. His masculinity depends on performance of power, rage, and denial. Yet when Daksha's condition challenges his idea of a "normal" family, his facade crumbles. "It was Baa! Blame her not me! She is my daughter! Get her back!" he cries, collapsing into a mix of guilt, panic, and helplessness (Dattani 97). Instead of owning his cruelty, he passes the blame onto Baa. In that moment, he isn't just a violent man—he is a frightened one, terrified of being dethroned by a daughter who doesn't meet his standards and a wife who no longer fears him. Dolly's line, "She knows about Kanhaiya. That's all. So, let's keep it that way" (Dattani 74), reveals how her fantasy about intimacy, her imagined Kanhaiya, becomes a replacement for real affection. The emotional void in her marriage leads her to a romantic hallucination, another form of inner rebellion that refuses to speak its name.

Nitin, unlike his brother, uses silence as his primary weapon. When Alka pleads, "Let us go somewhere… There are so many things I want to discuss…" (Dattani 12), it is not just a

wife asking for a drive; it is a woman trying to enter the emotional world of a man who has shut every door. Nitin's refusal is not direct, but absolute. He evades, controls, and punishes with his absence. His sexual identity, kept hidden, becomes a source of guilt and emotional fragmentation. "I loved him (Praful) too. He is… was attractive…" (Dattani 100), he finally admits, but only to himself. To Alka, he offers no such confession. Instead, he attacks her indirectly, saying, "He tricked you too, didn't he? How can you still love your brother after what he did to you?" (Dattani 100). This isn't just blame, it is displaced frustration, the kind that festers into resentment. When he recalls the autorickshaw driver, "I can still remember that strong black arm" (Dattani 60), there is an undercurrent of desire masked as fear. That sensual memory, presented as danger, is a way of voicing forbidden attraction without ever naming it. The arm's grip becomes a metaphor for his own entrapment.

Alka's frustration spills out in jagged bursts, often blending sarcasm with pain. "You know why I cannot have children. You will not let me. That is why!" she accuses, collapsing the political and personal into one anguished moment (Dattani 64). She is not infertile by nature but by circumstance, denied affection, autonomy, and truth. Her memory of the hospital burns with bitterness, "You told them I fell down the stairs!... Your mother loved her more than was natural!" (Dattani 97). She sees clearly the double standards in her household and how guilt, not love, governs the bonds between Nitin, Dolly, and Baa. Even in small moments, her frustration shows. When she says to Lalitha, "How nice to plan your life like that" (Dattani 15), it's not admiration—it's a thinly veiled expression of envy. Lalitha, with her bonsai plants, represents control over one's growth, a control Alka has never had. "You stunt their growth… bind their branches…" (Dattani 16), Lalitha explains, and unknowingly describes the lives of the women around her—root-trimmed, beauty-preserved, freedom-denied. The competitive bitterness between Dolly and Alka is not natural—it is engineered by the structure they inhabit. "You're always implying that you have a better deal than me!" Dolly snaps (Dattani 20). They

have been taught to compare their pain, not share it. Both are reduced to their roles as wives, and the only power left to them is to hurt each other. Their oppression, instead of uniting them, has turned them against each other.

The origins of this system lie with Baa, who herself was a victim once. “Go on. Hit me again. The children should see what a demon you are… Not on the face! What will the neighbours say?” (Dattani 57). Her pain is real, but her fear is not of violence; it is of visibility. She learned long ago that survival depends on reputation. That lesson has become her law, passed down to her sons. She warns Nitin, “His sister! Don’t marry her sister” (Dattani 84), and condemns him, “It is in your blood to do bad” (Dattani 63), echoing a worldview in which blame is hereditary, and punishment is cyclical.

Baa's emotional cruelty toward Dolly and Alka, often disguised as tradition, extends even to her granddaughter. When she calls Daksha’s disability “karma” (Dattani 64), Alka retorts, “Karma, my foot!”, breaking the cycle for just a moment with raw disbelief. The child is not cursed. She is the product of generations of emotional silence and inherited violence, and perhaps the only one who doesn’t yet wear a mask. Even the act of lying becomes layered. “That Lally has always been a liar. Lying Lally!” Baa sneers (Dattani 55), but the truth she suppresses is far more damning. Their father did not die. He left. And yet, the lie that protects family dignity continues to be told. Lying here is not immoral; it is a method of survival.

Praful, too, participates in this cycle. “He burnt my hair. I can still smell my hair on fire,” Dolly recalls, describing how he punished her for riding pillion on a classmate’s bike (Dattani 32). It wasn’t just anger, it was a correction. He was preparing her for submission, to hand her over to Nitin, to control one woman by erasing her independence. In that moment, her brother became an extension of the very system that had wounded them both.

In the end, Dattani gives us no heroes, only haunted people. Each character is shaped by what they could not say, could not feel, or could not resist. In this, the play offers not just a

story of abuse, but a map of Reactive Defensive Oppression—where silence becomes speech, violence becomes love, memory becomes danger, and survival demands a mask.

Case Study of RDO in *The Color Purple*

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* tells not just a story of abuse and survival but also of how people quietly react to pain, fear, and the loss of control. Each major character deals with emotional pressure in their own way, and these reactions often come from a place of defense rather than power. The theory of Reactive Defensive Oppression, or RDO, helps us understand how people may act out, shut down, or imitate what they have seen, not because they are strong, but because they are afraid. In this novel, RDO takes shape through five different people, each coping with trauma, shame, or the fear of becoming invisible.

Mister, also known as Albert, begins as someone who appears to be in charge. He beats Celie, controls the house, and hides Nettie's letters. But as the story moves on, it becomes clear that his cruelty is not a sign of strength, but of weakness. He has failed to win the love of Shug Avery, and he has grown up under the harsh control of his own father. These disappointments leave him bitter and afraid. When Celie finally stands up to him and refuses to be afraid anymore, he breaks down. He stops talking, stops working, and spends most of his days staring into space. His need to dominate was never about power, it was about fear. What he loses is not just control, but his emotional identity. His version of manhood collapses because it was never real to begin with. This is a clear case of Ideological RDO, where a person defends an idea of authority even when they no longer believe in it.

Celie's early life is full of violence. She is raped, married off without choice, separated from her children, and silenced in every possible way. But she does not scream or fight. She goes quiet. She accepts her fate, not because she agrees with it, but because she wants to survive. She tells herself to be still, to stay where she is told, and to keep breathing. Her silence is not weakness, it is a defense. Over time, this silence becomes a habit. She forgets what it

feels like to be angry or joyful. Even her body feels like it does not belong to her. This kind of reaction is what we can call Self-RDO. It is the turning inward of pain, the shrinking of the self so that the world cannot touch it. Celie begins to change only when she discovers Nettie's letters and finds comfort in Shug's presence. Slowly, she starts to speak, and then to write. Her self does not return through force, but through care.

Sofia is one of the strongest women in the story. She talks back, stands her ground, and refuses to be anyone's servant. When the mayor's wife insults her and tries to offer her a job as a maid, Sofia fights back. But the punishment is brutal. She is beaten badly, sent to prison, and kept in chains of silence and labor for years. When she comes back, she is not the same. Her eyes look tired, her body feels broken, and her voice is quiet. She says she tries to survive by pretending to be someone like Celie, someone who just does what she's told. This moment shows what Passive RDO looks like. Sofia's resistance has not vanished, but it has been buried. She is not weak, she is exhausted. Her silence now comes not from choice, but from fear that one more act of defiance might destroy her completely.

Harpo grows up watching his father treat women with violence and distance. When he falls in love with Sofia, he is confused. He wants to be close to her, but he also thinks he needs to control her. He tries to tell her what to do, and when that doesn't work, he turns to his father for advice. Mister tells him to beat her. Harpo listens, but it doesn't come naturally. His attempts to control Sofia leave him more confused than before. He starts eating too much, crying, and feeling unsure of who he is. Harpo's reaction is not about being powerful. It is about not knowing what else to do. This is Mimetic RDO, where someone copies the behavior of those around them because they don't know how to be themselves. Harpo is not a violent man, but he becomes one for a while because he thinks that's the only way to be a man.

Nettie, Celie's sister, is away from the main events of violence, but she still suffers deeply. When Mister sends her away and hides her letters, she becomes invisible in Celie's life.

But she does not disappear. She keeps writing. Her letters become a steady reminder that love, memory, and care can survive distance. Through these letters, she also gives Celie the strength to imagine a different life. Nettie's way of surviving is different. She does not raise her voice or fight anyone directly, but she resists by refusing to forget. This is Resistant RDO, where a person protects their sense of self by holding on to memory and by expressing care, even when the world has made them silent. Nettie's letters are not just a message to her sister. They are a form of emotional defiance.

Through these five people, *The Color Purple* shows how oppression changes the way people feel, think, and act. Some respond by lashing out. Some retreat. Some imitate what they've seen, while others find quiet ways to hold on to love. What connects them all is the presence of fear, not always visible but always felt. Walker does not give us perfect heroes or clear answers. Instead, she gives us people who struggle to find peace inside a world that keeps trying to break them. RDO helps us understand that struggle, not as weakness, but as the body and mind trying to defend something precious: the self.

Triadic Structure of RDO and Its Validation in *Bravely Fought the Queen* and *The Color Purple*

Reactive Defensive Oppression rarely looks the same in every person. It bends and shifts depending on who's carrying it. Sometimes it hides in silence, sometimes it wears the face of anger, or even confusion. At times, it shows up as distance, or clinging to roles that feel safer than the truth. To make sense of these shifts, we can place RDO into three forms: Self RDO, Passive RDO, and Ideological RDO. These aren't fixed categories, but ways to notice what fear does when it stays too long. Both *Bravely Fought the Queen* and *The Color Purple* carry these patterns within their characters, not always loudly, but clearly if one looks closely enough.

There are some wounds that don't bleed on the outside, and that's where Self RDO begins. It works by folding in on itself. A person, unable to speak or push back, starts believing silence might save them. It's not that they've stopped feeling; it's more like they've buried those feelings so deep even they forget where they put them. Celie, in *The Color Purple*, shows this early. She doesn't fight, doesn't scream, doesn't even ask why. She lets things happen, rape, forced marriage, separation from her sister, and she survives by going quiet. It's not consent, and it's not weakness either. It's survival, thin as a thread. For a long time, she did not even think she was allowed to feel anger. Only when she stumbles upon Nettie's letters and spends time with Shug does something inside her begin to stir. That silence starts to lift, but it has already shaped who she is. Her pain had turned inward so deeply that it stripped her voice before she could learn how to use it.

Alka in *Bravely Fought the Queen* finds a different route inward. Her marriage to Nitin is emotionally blank. There's no warmth, no desire, no honesty. But she doesn't question it aloud. She doesn't walk out. Instead, she imagines Kanhaiya, the man with the strong body, the one who never judges. He isn't real, but he becomes her only source of comfort. Her fantasy is not just a distraction; it's a strategy. She needs somewhere to feel wanted, even if it's only in her own mind. This is how Self RDO often hides, beneath a daydream or a sigh, beneath something dismissed as irrational, when really, it's just the self-trying to breathe.

Then there's Passive RDO, the kind that shows up when someone who once resisted has finally grown too tired. It doesn't come from weakness; it comes from having fought and lost. Sofia, in *The Color Purple*, begins with fire in her voice. She challenges Harpo, refuses to be ordered around, and even stands up to the mayor's wife. But after being beaten and locked away, something changes. When she returns, she moves like someone else, someone slower, someone dimmed. She says she pretends to be like Celie just to get by. That isn't a change of

heart, it's damage. She retreats, not because she wants to, but because resistance has cost her too much. Her silence now is the silence of exhaustion, not agreement.

Sridhar in *Bravely Fought the Queen* lives a quieter version of this. He doesn't yell, doesn't argue, doesn't leave. He watches his wife being insulted, watches Jiten's abuse, and says nothing. Not because he approves, but because he believes nothing will change. His silence is a decision made slowly, over time. He learns to avoid conflict, to adapt. Passive RDO, in him, becomes a habit, something that keeps him afloat in a house that never feels safe.

Finally, there is Ideological RDO, the kind that hides behind rules and roles. It looks like power from the outside, but inside, it's fear pretending to be authority. Mister in *The Color Purple* runs his household like a ruler. He demands obedience, enforces gender roles, keeps Nettie's letters hidden, and punishes Celie. But when she finally stands up to him, everything he built begins to fall apart. He becomes still, withdrawn, and eventually admits that he was always afraid. His dominance was a mask, and once it cracked, so did he. His whole identity had been built on not being seen for who he truly was. That is where Ideological RDO lives, inside the fear of being unmasked. Nitin in *Bravely Fought the Queen* mirrors this in his own way. Publicly, he is a husband, a manager, a man who fits every box. Privately, he hides his sexuality, avoids intimacy, and lashes out when his control is threatened. When Baa tells him to hit Alka, he does. Not because of rage, but because he's trying to play a role. When he nearly slips and reveals the truth to Sridhar, he pulls back quickly. He's terrified of exposure. His entire public identity is built on silence and performance. That's how Ideological RDO functions; it keeps people frozen in roles they never chose, just to avoid being seen.

These three types, Self, Passive, and Ideological, don't compete with each other. They often overlap. One person can carry more than one form. But they show us something important. They remind us that oppression isn't always an action done to someone. It can also live quietly inside, shaping how people respond, how they hide, and how they survive. In both

The Color Purple and *Bravely Fought the Queen*, we see how fear reshapes the emotional world. Some turn inward, some give up, and some wear masks that never really fit. What RDO uncovers is not just the act of being hurt, but the silent ways people carry that hurt, sometimes for years, sometimes forever.

Conclusion

The framework of Reactive Defensive Oppression offers a flexible and emotionally grounded way to study how fear, rather than power hunger, shapes patterns of control. At its core, RDO traces the deep psychological need to protect symbolic identity, whether through silence, performance, or withdrawal. The triadic structure—Passive, Self, and Ideological RDO- not only helps explain the emotional layers within *Bravely Fought the Queen* and *The Color Purple*, but also opens doors to broader literary landscapes. In *Tughlaq* by Girish Karnad, the ruler's paranoia and obsession with order reflect Ideological RDO, where authority becomes a shield for inner collapse. The narrator of *The Yellow Wallpaper* retreats into psychosis under patriarchal control, revealing a Self-RDO shaped by emotional suffocation. In *The Bell Jar*, Esther Greenwood's withdrawal from the world that denies her agency reflects Passive RDO in a cold cultural landscape. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's rigid masculinity, his buried fear of softness, and his final breakdown embody all three forms of RDO- Ideological, Self, and Passive, woven into one fractured life. What ties these texts together is the idea that oppression is often not about dominance alone but about defending the self from perceived collapse. The reach of RDO extends across gender, geography, and genre, making it a useful tool for reading emotional power as both a personal and political force. In its intersections with psychoanalysis, trauma studies, and postcolonial theory, RDO provides a new language for understanding how people break, resist, or survive when identity feels most at risk.

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