



Mohamed Khider University of Biskra

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Master Dissertation

The Complexion of Mind in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*

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Submitted and defended by:

Chemmar Meriem

Board of Examiners:

Dr. Abdelnacer Benabderezak	MCB	(Supervisor)
Mr. Smatti Said	MAA	(Chairperson)
Mme. Mimouna Haddad	MAA	(Examiner)
Ms. Selma Herzallah	MAA	(Examiner)

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Dedication

I dedicate this modest work to the ones who gave me life, love, and protection to be who I am right now, Indeed I am indebted to my dear father Chemmar Tayeb, and my mother Guehrar Ghania because without them I wouldn't have been able to be here, at this point I owe a great thanks to my entire family, friends and colleagues.

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This research would have been difficult without Mrs. Zeyneb Bougofa's close observation, corrective feedback, and motivation during the journey of dissertation writing. She was beyond what I asked, only because of her I have a strong belief that everything happens for a reason.

Declaration

This thesis is an original work; it is a result of my own way of focusing on my supervisor's remarks, sleepless nights, very well elaborate citations and hard work.

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'C' followed by a vertical line and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Chemmar Meriem

Abstract

This dissertation is a work that orbits on the area of feminine distress in an American 1950's work, a pure American work that tells a journey of an American intellectual. This dissertation explores social concepts in the novel, in the life of the book's heroine Esther Greenwood due to the era that witnessed the cold war. The 1950's period in America was an extremely controversial era due to the 'House Of Un-American Activities Committee' under the chairmanship Senator Joseph Raymond McCarthy who was an American politician. This organization had the power to investigate any movement or person who threatened the safety of the state. McCarthy first attracted national attention in February 1950 with the charge that Communists had infiltrated the Department of State. After Americans endured two decades of continuous depression, war and crisis through the 1930s and 40's, they sought a return to normality and longed to focus on the more private details of existence. Instead of national objectives, the public concentrated on family, home and career while becoming increasingly absorbed in religion Protestants and Catholics. This affected the protagonist negatively to trap her in a bell jar as she peruses her quest to know her real identity and her role as a woman in the society.

Keywords: 1950's America, Feminism, Identity, Madness, Patriarchy.

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Chemmar

General Introduction

General Introduction

Aesthetically, a well written book is a book of value, but in the case of *The Bell Jar* is in the genesis of it. Written by Sylvia Plath in a critical period in which she was an overwhelmed writer that passed away due to asphyxiation only one month after publishing it. The book was published under the pseudonym of "Victoria Lucas", because it contained real life figures and actions written about, by that she became the first writer to win a Pulitzer prize posthumously.

It is a highly feminist that talks from the depth of a raging woman who was rebellious enough to express her thoughts about conformity and social construction values, because in simple terms they do not give an individual a chance to fully capture what life is. However, resistance, alienation and rebellion were common recurring themes in the works of the 1950s era due to the hysterical conformism that blew the individuality away in the American mindset, regarding to the fact that being American gradually refers to freedom and individuality.

The book of Sylvia Plath was a survival testimony of the heroine Esther Greenwood, who is unfitting in her society and her own skin due to her psychological problems and her thoughts about her life, she was a middle class young woman with a scholarship she won to be a guest editor in *Mademoiselle Magazine* in New York city, which is her first time she lives her little country for an adventurous experience, but she seemed to not capture any of the excitement of it.

The concept of winning is a part of her psychological inner desires that later become her downfall, right after the period for the beginning of her journey, because she feels anxious everywhere she goes. Disconnected and overwhelmed by everything she puts her eyes on. The

very first problem which is the core of the story is patriotism, along with the incident of the Rosenbergs execution, that holds many meanings and thoughts for the main character, it is very important to highlight the fact that the electrocution of the Rosenbergs was ironical for Esther because she was always holding the idea of electrocution in her mind, till her psychiatrist Dr Gordon prescribes it to her in order to recover from the depression she is going through; but eventually, it makes her health condition even worse.

Institutionalization in the United States of America was the main problem that traps Esther into endless cycles of agony, the first institution is marriage, women at the age of 18 and 20 were only educated to become suburban happy housewives, in order to make a healthy family and a prosperous country, which was in fact a burden to women after WW2, because they served in war side to side by men and after the war ended they were sent to perform their biological job which is giving birth, being vulnerable, obedient and happy.

The social expectations of women did not suit Esther because she felt that her entity as an educated woman was intimidating to men especially when she faces situations she is not taken seriously in makes her question the premise of the feminine slice of the society, along with womanhood Esther finds a huge amount of hypocrisy in the system because the sexual freedom of woman does not even exist and her sexual activity outside marriage is not allowed, but it is the exact opposite for men because they can do whatever they want since it is directed to their biological needs, when science clearly states that sex drive is the same for males and females but the restrictions concerning this makes it a gap for the concept of chastity in the society, unchaste women and single mothers are marginalized in the society, but men perform supremacy in terms

of virginity, the author of the novel focused on this problem to highlight a frame of mind of the fifties in the American society, yet it remains a timeless and universal issue.

The novel of Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* strongly holds a concept of alienation drawn by a young woman who faces social construction problems, and an indecisive state of mind that makes her stand helpless for her future and stands still under a bell jar in her own sour air, which is a perfect description for a novel written in an era characterized by individuality and alienation. Her mental problems gradually intensify her issues and her struggles with life.

Although the heroine faces multiple situations that filled her with distress, eventually she manages to stick herself up and describe it later by a second birth after multiple suicide attempts and unstable mental situation which the word “mental decay” is the only accurate description for her complexion of mind.

In order to answer the main question of this work, there will be sub questions, in order to pursue the quest of this research it will be divided into two chapters to build a steady ground for the reader to understand the purpose of this research, and to be able to digest the significance for the objective of this thesis, The question of this study shall be investigated through the following sub-questions:

In what way did the sense of unreality and alienation make Esther both neurotic and inadequate?

How come that the conventional expectations of the suffocating isolation are a morbid connection that illustrates the terror of madness in America during the 50's for Esther?

What were the political complexities and contradictions Esther faced post the Second World War during the cold war to paralyze her in a bell jar?

Structurally speaking, The thesis is a study of the predicament of the Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath, this exploration consists of two chapters. The first chapter will be a theoretical framework and literature review in order to discover the topic and the steps to pursue the research, conjointly, the second chapter is devoted to the analysis of the novel's most important elements and key concepts, which were the main elements to construct such a novel, along with the main theme of the novel and its main characters.

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework

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1.0 Introduction

In this chapter, all the information are up to correspond with the theoretical framework of the thesis, in order to give a clear background of the book and the author, and also to give a faire space to elaborate significant knowledge about the methodology of the study in order to fulfill in the task of the theoretical framework. Plath's book, *The Bell Jar* is a splendid landscape for a feminist writer who died a month after publishing it; she was worried about how it was going to be perceived by the audience, yet it was a book that described how women were supposed to be, act, and think. It is indeed a book of the fifties period which is critical enough to be a feminist product in a time feminism was not in vogue, however this chapter will include a thorough theoretical space to give a faire background of the book and the author as well as the purposes of this conducted research.

1.1 The Biography of Sylvia Plath

Sylvia Plath was born in Boston, Massachusetts on October 27, 1932, to highly intelligent parents. Her father, Otto Plath (1885-1940) was a German immigrant and a professor of entomology at Boston University. Her mother, Aurelia Schober (1906-1994), was the daughter of Austrian immigrants. At the age of eight Sylvia wrote her first poem which was simply named "poem" .(Crash Course literature).

The same year, 1940, her father died of severe complications of leg amputation due to diabetes and his kids were not able to see him for the last time. His death had a profound impact on the young poet. After Otto's death, Aurelia returned to teaching in high school to support her children, with the help of her parents. Though she struggled to maintain the family's lifestyle, she always provided Sylvia and her younger brother, Warren, with various lessons and instilled in them a deep love of learning (Lanzendrofer).

Throughout her childhood and adolescence, Sylvia did not stop her eagerness to publish both poetry and fiction in regional newspapers or magazines. She published her first piece in the Christian Science Monitor in 1950 (Gillepsie).

However, Plath was an exceptionally bright and tenacious student, excelling in studies at Wellesley High School and afterward at Smith College, where she attended on a scholarship. While at Smith, she continued to publish poetry and short stories, which earned her a guest editorship for Mademoiselle Magazine in New York city (Crash Course literature).

This would become the basis for the *Bell Jar*. It was also during this time that Plath attempted suicide for the first time and was sent to a private psychiatric hospital for six months. She returned to Smith where she went on to write her honors thesis on Dostoevsky, graduate summa cum laude in 1955, and earn a Fulbright Scholarship to study at Cambridge University. Plath met Ted Hughes, a future British poet laureate, at a party in the spring of 1956. The pair of aspiring writers married shortly thereafter, on June 16, 1956 (Cliffs).

The following year, Plath and Hughes moved to the United States where she taught English Composition at Smith College for a year and enrolled in a writing class with Robert Lowell. It was here she met Anne Sexton. In 1960, Plath published her first volume of poetry, *Colossus and Other Poems*. Shortly after Plath and Hughes returned to the U.K., she gave birth to two children, Frieda in April 1960 and Nicholas in January 1962. Between their births she suffered a miscarriage, and by the summer of 1962, Plath had discovered her husband's affair with Assia Gutmann Wevill. The couple separated and Plath moved with her children to a flat in London's Primrose Hill, where she tried to build a new life for herself and her children. "My life, I feel, will not be lived until there are books and stories which relive it perpetually in time." Sylvia Plath (Ames).

The period following her separation from Hughes was a time of intense creativity and prolific writing during which she composed the "October poems," which secured her position as one of the most significant literary voices of the twentieth century. Within just five months, Plath wrote "Daddy," "Lady Lazarus," "Poppies in July," and "Ariel." Despite her productivity, she continued to sink further into depression (Ames).

Plath committed suicide two weeks after the publication of her novel, *The Bell Jar*, which was published under the pseudonym of Victoria Lucas, and just days before her divorce proceedings were set to begin. Sadly Sylvia ended her life on February 11, 1963, where she was found dead in her kitchen due to asphyxiation. Sylvia Plath published her first poem at the age of 8 and the last work was the bell jar, and she was the first author to win a Pulitzer Prize posthumously and it parallels the life of both Esther and the author Sylvia experiences, the conflict in the story of the bell jar is the alienation that Esther feels due to her bitter relationship with her mother and the dismissal from the summer writing program. ECT¹ that Sylvia Plath and the suicide attempts, the benefactor that put her into a private psychiatric are two relevant events of the real life of Sylvia like many other parallel events between the two characters (Ames).

Sylvia Plath was born twice, the second time when she was finally released from the psychiatric institution “I have been born twice-patched, retreated and approved for the road”(Plath 128), which is a ticket to come back to her society again. Both the character of Esther and her fictional counterpart share a lot of significant parallel outstanding events in their lives (Crash course literature).

¹ “Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) can provide rapid, significant improvements in severe symptoms of several mental health conditions. ECT is used to treat severe depression, particularly when accompanied by detachment from reality (psychosis), a desire to commit suicide or refusal to eat.” (Mayo Clinic).

Sylvia's real-life magazine was at Mademoiselle Magazine in the early 1950's and Philomena Guinea parallels Sylvia's patron, Olive Higgins Prouty, who funded her education when she was a student in Smith College (Crash Course Literature).

The story of the only novel of Plath is a protest at the expectations that women are obliged to comply with, as to be regarded as normal and victorious in the male-dominated society. The real hell for Sylvia Plath is the hell of her mind "whenever I sat on the deck of a ship or a street café in Paris or Bangkok I would be sitting under the same glass bell jar stewing, in my own sour air (Plath 98) introduces bell jar metaphor and the complexion of mind of Sylvia (Plath *The Colossus*).

Esther's cure as she retreats more within herself, the bell jar is covered tightly over her. "how did I know that someday at college, in Europe, somewhere, anywhere ,the bell jar, with its stifling distortions, wouldn't descend again?" (Plath 126).

1.1.1 The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath: An Overview

The bell jar is a semi-autobiographical novel that was first published in London in January 1963 by William Heinemann Limited, under the pseudonym of Victoria Lucas. The author adopted the pen name because she questioned the value of her literary work; she did not believe that it was a serious work, beside the fact of the disguised distorted personalities she used in the book for her close circle of people (Ames).

The central theme of the book is the life of Sylvia Plath is alienation and detachment, whereas she tells a story from a first person narrator point of view, in the life of a young woman

in her 20th about how she tried to die and how they stuck her back together with glue, it is a novel where the reader is afraid to turn the next page but still in a hurry to figure out what is next for the sake of the thrilling atmosphere the author creates through the cynical language Plath uses to captivate the reader's mind, the fact that Sylvia Plath is affected by Emily Dickenson the theme of death is related to the perspective of Emily , and the both write about the lack of opportunity that women find themselves trapped in (Danwhitebooks).

The Bell Jar functions on many literary levels, but it is perhaps most obviously about the limitations imposed on young, intelligent American women in the 1950s. A brilliant woman with literary aspirations, Esther peers into the future and does not like her choices (Cengage, Educational magazines, The Bell Jar).

She can learn shorthand as her mother strongly encourages and land some menial office job after college, or she can marry, live in suburbia, and nurture her husband. What she really wants to do to make a living as a writer seems unlikely, especially in a profession with so few feminine role models. One of the hallmarks of the great experiences about the reading of the book is that the reader can relate to it even though the reader never considered the particular subject in that particular way (Ames).

1.1.2 The Research Problem

The research problem is contextualized around the term used in a poem written by Sylvia Plath "The Colossus" as her first collection of poems, where she describes the

complexion of mind as the color “white” that gradually refers to the feeling of nothingness, “is there is no way out of the mind?” (Plath).

The author wrote about a feeling of nothingness that captures into the soul and mind and also the stupid pupil that has to take everything, she introduced estrangement and detachment that are recurrent themes in the novel as what she felt as an individual in 1950’s America (Gillespie).

She wrote about madness which is an important aspect in literature; especially madness of female writers respectively madness of female chief characters is an interesting concept to deal with concerning the social role of women in the cause of time (Azzopardi).

It [madness]² is that state of mind where a person’s feelings or beliefs about himself are completely disrupted, making him unable to function in whatever social role wife, husband, parent, friend, employee the individual might expect to enjoy. It is the state where the sufferer passes beyond the bounds of reality, intelligibility, and rationality as defined by the bulk of society. The psychotic is a stranger among his own people which is the main area to be tackled through the plot of the novel (Britannica Encyclopedia).

² madness /'mædnəs/ , according to the definition of the dictionary of Britannica, it is a noncount noun that means a state of severe mental illness, or behavior or thinking that is very foolish or dangerous. “Britannica Dictionary”.

1.1.3 The Aim of the Research

The research tends to gather enough information used to emphasize and describe facts about society, life, human feelings and emotions, reactions towards what's unknown and gender roles. The author manages to sum up the story of ages into one line, for one expression that could make the reader digest the entire idea about being an ambitious woman in a totalitarian society, in addition to that, although the book can be hard to digest because it is not fictional at its heart and remains a testimony of Plath's own experience told by Esther, many feminists tend to explain this relation in literary texts wrote by women, that Esther could be the person that Plath could not be or she is in the depth of her psych since she expressed what remained inexpressible, maybe for her, maybe for the world, or maybe for those who could not accept what she can express.

This research stands as an attempt to link between various works and readings in order to select enough knowledge about the main core of the research, to further explain the institutionalization in context of the bell jar metaphor using the feminist approach as a key concept to understand the interpretations of the author's psych under the umbrella of the psychoanalysis theory.

In short terms this research aims to shed light on the context of the book to cover the entire area of the novel without bias to understand how Sylvia Plath invokes mythologies of feminism within the atmosphere of her period of time, but she managed to express many concepts that are universal and timeless.

1.2.1 Methodology of Study

This research is an attempt to clarify the bounds that connect the book of Sylvia Plath with each other to create such a book that displays societal facts about the American society in the 1950's in precise and the representation of the entire world view for women in general; however, the case of study here is the complexion of mind for a feminist writer during an era that was marked by a total absence of feminism, who is indulged in writing about an experience in a double standard society.

In the account of feminine entity rights, the author explores the tremendous change of an era that witnessed hypocrisy towards females in precise.

The divine source of creation makes no distinction between man and woman, both are created in the divine image and both are subject to the same injunctions regarding their functions in life. However, women were associated with religious and societal taboos, and also were considered ceremonially unclean, and had no standing before the law. By the fact of her secondary creation, that is, of the merely derivative character of her existence described in the earlier Genesis account, woman could justifiably be considered naturally inferior and subordinate to man. Created out of man and for man, to relieve his loneliness and to help him, woman is shown to be responsible also for man's troubles, not the least of which is his loss of immortality. In the male-oriented religion of the Jews and later of the Christians, these concepts of women's inferiority and troublesomeness became entrenched in Western tradition, remaining virtually impregnable into the twentieth century.

The methodology of this study aims to focus on feminism psychoanalysis to understand the societal pressure on the main character of the book regarding her feminist frame of mind, by applying feminism theory to understand facts about the society, and to understand the impact of those facts on the psyche of the protagonist.

1.2.2 Feminism Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is concerned with analysis of the mind; the psyche's structure and its relation to the body, and uses that as the basis for treating certain kinds of sickness and distortions that can affect individuals. It is popularly known as "talking cure" and some of its central concepts are: penis envy, the Oedipus complex, the phallic symbol (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Psychoanalytic Feminism).

As these terms suggest, psychoanalysis is closely associated with gender, sex, familial relations and the fact that their expression and construction are not always available to the conscious mind which are also central interest to feminism. Psychoanalytic and gender feminists believe "women's way of acting is rooted deep in women's psyche" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Psychoanalytic Feminism).

Psychoanalytic feminism is a theory of oppression, which asserts that men have an inherent psychological need to subjugate women. The root of men's compulsion to dominate women and women's minimal resistance to subjugation lies deep within the human psyche. This branch of feminism seeks to gain insight into how our psychic lives develop in order to better understand and change women's oppression. The pattern of oppression is also integrated into

society, thus creating and sustaining patriarchy (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Psychoanalytic Feminism).

Through the application of psychoanalytic techniques to studying differences between women and men as well as the ways in which gender is constructed, it is possible to reorganize socialization patterns at the early stages of human life. Societal change, or a “cure,” can be developed through discovering the source of domination in men's psyche and subordination in women's, which largely resides unrecognized in individuals' unconscious (SEP).

Psychoanalysis is presented as a counter-depressant, as are art and writing, able to keep the drives or semiotic forces moving through language but also to foster their revolutionary potential to transgress symbolic limits and laws and to creatively rework self and society (SEP).

Accessing the drives and rhythms that symbolic law and order typically repress, psychoanalytic practice, like the poetic text, revitalizes or reactivates the semiotic chore, a connection to the maternal body or to femininity. Such practices let loose the disorganizing energies of the body, the pleasurable rupture of sense and nonsense. They take productive advantage of the dialectical discord between semiotic and symbolic and thus keep this discord oriented toward dissent and protest rather than inner collapse (SEP).

1.3 Key Terms

This passage explores the most important terminology concerning the framework of the book, in order to make the aim of this research effective concerning understanding the novel as a testimony of Sylvia Plath for her personal experiences told in the book. It is very important to

understand the thematic and structural construction of the ideas used in the novel; the key terms are 1950's America, madness, feminism, patriarchy, identity.

1.3.1 1950's America

This period followed a series of remaking America after the Second World War, during the cold war thereafter many institutional rules were established after both men and women returned from the mandatory service in the war.

It is impossible to fully understand *The Bell Jar* without a realization of the relative absence of feminism in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. Both decades were fairly prosperous ones in American history, and women's social and financial standing usually hung on their husbands' occupation and respective income. Although more than six million women went to work when America was engaged in World War II, after the war ended, many were encouraged to leave the workforce. Dr. Benjamin Spock, who published the book *Baby and Child Care*, once even proposed that the federal government subsidize housewives to discourage them from entering into the workforce (ThoughtCo. Jennifer Rosenberg).

In *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (1946), authors Marynia Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg argued that women who worked sacrificed their essential femininity while, of course, many single women worked out of economic necessity, they were not encouraged to show naked ambition or to stay in the workforce indefinitely. Of course, women who worked in menial or low-paying jobs were less of a threat to mainstream America. Hence, in *The Bell Jar*, Mrs.

Greenwood encourages her daughter, Esther, to learn shorthand, because that skill will at least guarantee her some kind of job after college (Rosenberg).

In 1963, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was published. At the time, as in the 1950s, there were many more men in the workforce and women earned far less money. However, this pivotal study of middle-class women's anger and some proposed solutions paved the way for a gradual redefinition of sex roles in America. In 1966, three years after Plath had taken her own life, Friedan and her colleagues established the National Organization for Women NOW³(Cliffs).

This also concerns gender roles in the 1950s. In that decade, women, generally speaking, did not attend college to ultimately support themselves; they were expected to marry eventually. In the novel, there are three women who have created real identities for themselves separate from the men in their life.

The unglamorous editor Jay Cee has succeeded in that, but she has also sacrificed a certain amount of femininity to get there; the writer Philomena Guinea has thrived creatively on her own terms; Esther's psychiatrist, Dr. Nolan, emerges as a caring, competent professional. However, they are exceptions in Esther's frame of reference, as well as in the male-dominated 1950s American society (Ruhil).

³ According to the Encyclopedia of Britannica, the editors of Encyclopedia of Britannica state that “ Is the largest [feminist](#) group in the [United States](#), with some 500,000 members in the early 21st century. The National Organization for Women was established by a small group of feminists who were dedicated to actively challenging [sex discrimination](#) in all areas of American society. [Betty Friedan](#), one of its founders, served as NOW’s first president. The organization is composed of both men and women.”

More typical are wisecracking Doreen who depends on men for sex if not necessarily for marriage; traditional Betsy who patiently waits for domesticity; Dodo Conway whom Esther perceives as kind of a baby machine; and Joan Gilling whose combination of ambition and lesbianism have not made her into a happy, functional person. Even widowed Mrs. Greenwood, who earns her own money as a typing teacher, does not encourage her smart daughter to flourish: she prefers that Esther learn shorthand and eventually marry well.

1.3.2 Madness

The start of the book as a monologue tells about the mental state of Esther where she says “ I know something was wrong with me that summer,” (Plath 3), Esther feels like a tornado that is chaotic, troubled, hard, spinning, destructive but at the same time is steady and standing at the same place, gobbles everything then throw it all away at once and fades once and for all the symbolic references that Plath uses such as tornado, bell jar, and potboiler (Mental Floss).

The Bell Jar is not simply about male oppression in the 1950s; it also tackles the topic of mental illness, although it does so in non-clinical terms. Specifically, it is about one depressed and confused woman's suicide attempt at a time when the medical profession often relied on such crude methods as electroconvulsive therapy ECT (Chung).

In ECT, a low electric charge is passed through a patient's brain to cure such illnesses as depression and schizophrenia. Like Esther in The Bell Jar, Sylvia Plath received ECT. While many factors contribute to a person's choice in taking his or her own life, researchers have found that age, sex, and marital status are all statistically significant. For example, men are more likely

to kill themselves than females today, although the opposite was true at the turn of the twentieth century (Britannica).

By the 1960s, there was some scientific evidence that married people were less suicide-prone than single people; in turn, married people with children were not as likely to commit suicide as married or single people without children. To some extent, these statistics reflected the researcher's and society's biases. For example, Louis Dublin wrote in *Suicide: A Sociological and Statistical Study* that "the presence of children has a much greater saving effect on women than on men because the parental instinct is stronger among them".

It is also important to remember that Sylvia Plath, a married (although also separated) woman with two young children, defied some of the statistical data. Finally, since there is a stigma about suicide, many families cover up the circumstances if a family member elects to take his or her own life. Hence, the official suicide statistics are not necessarily valid or reliable. (Ames).

All in all, the madness of Esther in the book is seemingly the same thing as the "housewives fatigue" syndrome, in which many women like Esther descend into depression and identity issues and subsequently suicide attempts (Fernández).

The oppressive cage of marriage as a trap and imprisonment for Esther ,because no matter what she can achieve she will end up as a domestic slave, the expectations about being a woman is a nightmare that traps Esther in terms of the violence towards women and the burden of expectations is indeed heavier than life itself (Chin-Yi).

The foregoing analysis suggests that Esther's experience and narration of mental illness is characterized by two main features. Firstly, a profound disconnection from others, manifested in a concern for superficial appearance and a diminished awareness of other people as complete human beings to whom she can relate. Second, she articulates persistent and sometimes inexplicable feelings of incapacity or impotence (SEP).

These experiences are conveyed not only through linguistic idiosyncrasies, such as her deathly metaphors and constant reference to faces, but also through repeated use of very ordinary language. This frequent or distinctive use of otherwise common phrases in Esther's narration verbally conveys an altered, traumatic experience of the normal and everyday as well as moments of more acute psychological distress (Hunter).

These findings both complement existing readings of the novel and offer new insights into the Plath's verbal representation of mental illness through narrative (Cliffs).

1.3.3 Feminism

Briefly, feminism as a social and literary movement attempts at breaking down the settled patterns of patriarchy in various ways in terms of ending the suffrage of women around the globe. This term was coined by Alexander Dumas in 1872, he used it to describe the emergence of women's movements for the sake of equal rights between both sexes and to redefine the politics of power based on gender, class, and race (SEP).

The marginalization of women is targeted by many feminist writers and activists; they still debate long and hard over what should constitute feminist sexual politics, feminism as an

ideology is a set of four extended movements from 1848 till the present day by women who refused to live in the same consequences forever. In other words, feminism is concerned with the marginalization of women in a patriarchal culture in which feminist critics tend to explain how the subordination of women is reflected or challenged in literary texts, in which they examine the experiences of women of all races, classes, sexual preferences and cultures (SEP).

The feminist critics goals are to expose patriarchal premises and resulting prejudices, to promote the discovery and the reevaluation of literature by women, to examine social, cultural, psychosexual contexts of literature and literary criticism. Feminism is divided up historically into first, second and third wave feminisms, roughly corresponding to the periods of the nineteenth century, the first here quarters of the twentieth century, and the late twentieth and early twenty-first century (SEP).

1.3.4 Patriarchy

Patriarchy was the first structure of domination, subordination and exclusion which is recognized as such by History, and still remains as a basic system of domination. Ironically, while being the most powerful and enduring system of inequality, it is hardly ever perceived as such even by women themselves. In fact, precisely because the concept of Patriarchy itself is not a contribution of feminist theories, many social scientists in the 19 century wrote about it as a more civilized or complex form of organization compared to the primitive matriarchies.

According to the problem that has no name, Friedan clearly elaborates her argument about this case:

Men, whose very masculine identity has been defined in terms of their score in the rat race, knocking the other guy down, can no longer count on that lifetime climb in job or profession. If they themselves are not yet downsized out, brothers, cousins, friends, co-workers have been. And they are more dependent now on wives' earnings. The real and growing discrepancy affecting both women and men is the sharply increased income inequality between the very rich—the top 10 percent, who now control two-thirds of America's wealth— and the rest of us, women and men (Friedan 19).

Patriarchy was a form of political organization that distributed power unequally between men and women to the detriment of women. In short terms Patriarchy is a sort of primitive social organization in which authority is exercised by a male head of the family, extending this power even to distant relatives of the same lineage. Feminist theories updated and expanded the understanding of Patriarchy in the second half of the twentieth century (Bhasin).

In fact, the social sciences had left it behind precisely because it was considered only to apply to and characterize ancient civilizations. But for many feminists, Patriarchy is much more than civilizations that existed in the ancient past and goes beyond “the unequal distribution of power between men and women in certain aspects of our societies”(Bhasin), most forms of feminist critics characterize Patriarchy as an unjust social system that subordinates, discriminates or is oppressive to women.

As Carole Pateman writes "The patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection.", the

concept of Patriarchy includes all the socio-political mechanisms, which in obvious terminology are Patriarchal Institutions, that reproduce and exert male dominance over women. Feminist theory typically characterizes Patriarchy as a social construction, which can be overcome by revealing and critically analyzing its manifestations and institutions. Fixating on real and perceived biological differences between the two recognized sexes, men justify their domination on the basis of an alleged biological inferiority of women.

Both feminist and non feminist thinkers recognize that Patriarchy has its historical origins in the family, the leadership (legal and practical) of which is exercised by the father and is projected to the entire social order, which is an order that is maintained and reinforced by different mechanisms/institutions, among them “the Institution of Male Solidarity.”

Through this institution, men as a social category, individually and collectively oppress all women as a social category, but also oppress women individually in different ways, appropriating women’s reproductive and productive force and controlling their bodies, minds, sexuality and spirituality mainly through “peaceful” means such as the law and religion. However, often these peaceful means are reinforced through the use of physical, sexual, and/or psychological violence.

Gender as a term came to the academic use in the late 20th century, due to a strong opposition of patriarchy by the part taken by feminism, gender is the fact of being feminine or masculine, and by that gender is constructed by institutions like: religion, society and education, it is something that humans perform, become

and not inherited. To further understand gender one needs to look further into social construction and per-formative approaches (Lecture).

In other hand sex is the biological fact about human beings, whether the person is born a male or a female so obviously sex is manifested to be either a male or a female, in addition, sex is something we inherently are, and as a matter of fact gender roles is a concept where both genders are already conformed to a an institution of religion, politics, society and basic norms in which the woman is a keeper and feminine and the man is provider and masculine, anything more than these two roles is rejected, marginalized and contaminated in order to avoid any culture clash that can create unbalance in any institution (Agonito).

1.3.5 Identity

In *The Bell Jar*, Esther searches consistently for some kind of identity but finds her options limited as a young woman with little money of her own. After a disappointing summer as a guest editor in New York City, she fails to be accepted into a prestigious writing course and gradually loses much of her sanity and ambition. She mentally explores many wild scenarios for happiness and fulfillment (e.g., apprenticing herself to a pottery maker, finding a European lover), tries to write a novel, does such bizarre things as wearing her mother's clothes and eating raw meat, and finally attempts suicide.

Obviously, she is not mentally well, but to some extent society's repressions for females and the lack of creative inspiration in her life have both contributed to her collapse. Since society does not encourage Esther to excel her excellent grades notwithstanding she sometimes

competes in bizarre ways. For example, at a banquet for the guest interns at Ladies' Day, she eats ravenously as if she must consume more than any of the other interns. She also feels inferior to Buddy Willard because he lost his virginity before she did. Esther recovers much of her mental and emotional stability by the end of the novel, but the reasons for her improvement are not entirely clear.

To some extent, Dr. Nolan has empowered Esther to understand her motivations, actions, and reactions, but some would argue Esther has at least partly responded to electroconvulsive shock. At least one critic, David Holbrook in *Sylvia Plath: Poetry and Existence*, even questions to what extent Esther has recovered, when he writes, "All that her therapy achieves is symbolized by *The Bell Jar*: Themes 6 the last chapter that blankets the asylum grounds ... Sylvia Plath's insight is not deceived. 'Treatment' merely freezes her." Linda Wagner-Martin disagrees:

Esther has indeed entered a new phase. She enters her new birth ritual, the process of leaving the asylum for the real world, with as much confidence as an intelligent person can muster ... There is no question that Plath intended to create a thoroughly positive ending for Esther's narrative." While the extent of Esther's recovery is debatable, the search for her identity will certainly continue after she is released from the asylum (Wagner).

To conclude the entire discourse, Esther's identity is related to her sense of understanding language, when she fails to write she loses control over her thoughts, her capacities and her creativity; the entrapment of Esther makes her alienated from herself, she is so disconnected from everything around her and constantly repeating the phrase " I can't write" (Plath 95), letters

were slipping from her hand like water like everything else in her life was, the heavy emotional weight she expresses through her journey using interior monologue elaborates the way it dives deep into the tide of human suffering, particularly one's own particular suffering.

1.4 Conclusion

The Bell Jar being in its structure and intent a highly conventional bildungsroman as a survival testimony that held all of her painfulness of growing up as a coming of age fiction, in which the witty and sarcastic way used in her book performs a particular strategy that was employed in context to cope with the unbearable reality in terms of not being able to fit it or to find an appropriate position during the 50's as an American woman for the protagonist, losing her identity created a potboiler of an existential crisis as she uses figurative language and imagery as an attempt to portray everything she felt, faced or had to deal with in her own life .

The subject of the book was manifested and used as profit as well as using the owner as a property, for that the irony of killing herself from the fear of being treated as an object, and simply because things were not in the right order for her and everything marginalized her as an ambitious woman and an intellectual with brains.

This book has a great deal to offer in terms of the uniqueness the author uses to undress the human burden and express what was inexpressible for many of her writer's counterparts. The novel is cold, morbid and ironic in what comes to the atmosphere described and the image conveyed about people, weather and ideologies. In conclusion, the American Dream intellectual indulgences that we cannot afford in the modern atomic world due to this, the forward movement for positive personal and social goals, women must play a key role. But it remains to be seen whether the creative works of women will be more nurturing and life-oriented as befits their biological role, and whether Plath will be remembered as a woman who was torn by

pessimistic, Nietzschean male philosophy, as a woman whose full female identity was never developed.

1.5 Literature Review

After being published under a pen name in huge fear and doubts about the accuracy and the literary values, the bell jar received many reviews and numerous interpretations on different aspects of it. The cult of Plath was praised and her book became the New York bestseller only after the publication of the book under the author's real name which means that the novel was only famous because of its author, seemingly due to the fact that the plot of the book is parallel to the heroine of the story, Esther is Sylvia and Sylvia is Esther.

Therefore, ignoring Sylvia Plath's life and other works can lead to a neutral non-biased interpretation for what is inside the book, rather than becoming trapped in troubled interpretations of the book and ignoring the aesthetics of the novel which was the first concern of the author, in which her book will only be read upon her controversial life and the way she was psychologically unstable; and would never pay attention to the real emotional weight expressed through unflinching language, symbolism and imagery to make the setting and the plot clear and to distinguish between the climax and the rebirth of the intellectual through what she imagined she is best at writing and death. In short terms, many studies have focused on the bell jar while there has been a lot of emphasis on the interpretations of it without taking the context of the novel in consideration.

As a start the book gained much popularity in the 1960's ,after its publication hundreds of reviews started to agglomerate around how fine the book was . Laurence Lerner in The Listener praised the book as "brilliant and moving," while Rupert Butler, in ``Time and Tide, found the book "terribly likable" and "astonishingly skillful." All three critiques were published in January 1963, less than a month before Plath's suicide.

C. B. Cox in a 1966 review for Critical Quarterly believed "the novel seems a first attempt to express mental states which eventually found a more appropriate form in poetry." Which is considered as a decontextualised reading, However, Robert Scholes, writing for The New York Times Book Review, called The Bell Jar "a fine novel, as bitter and remorseless as her last poems." Like many other critics, he compared The Bell Jar to some of J. D. Salinger's work when he called the former "the kind of book Salinger's Franny might have written about herself ten years later." (Franny is one of the fictional Glass children who appears in Salinger's Franny and Zooey as well as in some of his short stories.) M. L. Rosenthal wrote in the Spectator of the novel's "magnificent sections whose candor and revealed suffering will haunt anyone's memory" (Cox).

Symbolism in Themes Used in the Novel

The three remarkable images in the book are constant themes in her work the fig tree, larkspurs and roses, to convey enough feelings about her anxiety; the fig tree remains the most important one as the symbolism of the bell jar due to the fact that both of them express alienation, disconnection, anxiety ,fears, uncertainty and doubts about the future. John Crowe Ransom's definition of criticism in 'Criticism, inc.' says "these three metaphorical objects are

significant to indicate Esther, the protagonist's thoughts on her own situation throughout the plot, and thus worthwhile for our attention" in terms of the fact that all other authors and reviewers were doing a decontextualized readings and readings through the lenses of biography and other poems of Sylvia Plath except Lerner, who knew that Plath was the author (Clark 852).

I regard Lerner's review as taking the New Critical approach, as he omitted mentioning Plath's biographical details (for Ransom, it is a kind of "historical studies" that he regarded as "parallel citations" (598, not criticism) in his article; as well as the other reviewers that performed a neutral reading.

Ransom regarded these non institutionalized reviews as amateurs (586) as their comments are personal and focus on the plot of the novel.

Feminists on the Bell Jar

Since its publication in 1963, *The Bell Jar* has steadily acquired a reputation as a feminist classic. In 1972, Patricia Meyer Spacks, in her Hudson River review, listed the ways in which the novel concerns female sexuality, "babies in glass jars, women bleeding in childbirth, Esther herself was hemorrhaging after a single sexual experience with a Harvard professor. "To be a woman is to bleed and burn" (Spacks).

In retrospect, it must be stressed that Esther's problems in *The Bell Jar* aren't entirely typical of female teenagers' troubles today. As Susan Sniader Lanser and Teresa De Lauretis have written :

Plath's work is about one woman in a specific period of American history when exciting career opportunities for women were rare. Esther's dilemma—marriage and children versus successful career—cannot be so easily generalized today. Also, while many male and female teenagers today face the difficult decision of whether to lose their virginity before marriage, few obsess over it to the point that Esther does in *The Bell Jar* (De Lauretis).

To conclude and resume the discourse about the novel that was written by someone diagnosed with clinical depression and went through a lot of suicide attempts to finally settle down on asphyxiation at the age of 30, it is important to highlight that the works of Plath are not good because she died, and her life is not a scope to study her works because by that the person can fall into fallacies that harms the author and makes the context of the interpretations misleading, the novel itself is no firebrand. It's a slight, charming, sometimes funny and mildly witty, at moments tolerably harrowing "first" novel, just the sort of clever book a Smith summa cum laude degree (that Sylvia Plath had) would have been capable of writing, but it remains important to say that she was intelligent enough to write her first poem at the age of eight.

Chapter Two: The Bell Jar: A Journey Fulfilled

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2.0 Introduction

The *Bell Jar* functions on many literary levels, but it is perhaps most obviously about the limitations imposed on young, intelligent American women during the 1950s. A brilliant woman with literary aspirations, Esther peers into the future and seemingly does not like her choices since her social class in the society does not serve her ambitions and she cannot seem to be in the situation of affording losing time or money because she has none. She can learn shorthand as her mother strongly encourages and land some menial office job after college, or she can marry, live in suburbia, and nurture her husband which she strongly refused and that affected her mental health severely. What she really wants to do to make a living as a writer seems unlikely, especially in a profession with so few feminine role models “Jay Cee her boss and Philomena Guinea her benefactor”.

2.1 The Unreality Sense of Esther under the Scope of Feminism & Psychoanalysis

The very first thing to be focused on is the way Esther was wondering about was the fact of being burned alive all along your nerves like what happened with the Rosenbergs, the electrocution was a main event in the book that was thematised as torture in the book later on.

However, the fact that the torture she was burdened with turns to be her destiny, she is treated by her Doctor 'Dr Gordon' with electroconvulsive therapy that consequently worsens things up for her mental issues, the torture in this work as an element of emphasis an cultural aspect was never physical, it was the torture of being fragmented and held captive in a rollercoaster of helplessness as Esther goes along with her morbid sickening story (Crash course literature).

The pain in the novel is conveyed in a clear way as you feel every word she says either when she describes her pale body that shows her veins as she cuts them:

"I had locked myself in the bathroom, and run a tub full of warm water, and taken out a Gillette blade. When they asked some old Roman philosopher or other how he wanted to die, he said he would open his veins in a warm bath. I thought it would be easy, lying in the tub and seeing the redness flower from my wrists, flush after flush through the clear water, till I sank to sleep under a surf gaudy as poppies. But when it came right down to it, the skin of my wrist looked so white and defenseless that I couldn't do it. It was as if what I wanted to kill wasn't in that skin or the thin blue pulse that jumped under my thumb, but somewhere else, deeper, more secret, a whole lot harder to get at. It

would take two motions. One wrist, then the other wrist. Three motions, if you counted changing the razor from hand to hand. Then I would step into the tub and lie down” (Plath 78).

Or as she lays there after she ate her mother medicine pills to end her life in a tiny corner of their house where she can barely fit in, or in the way she is disgusted at the concept childbirth process, but still feels sorry for the woman in pain in-front of her as she feels men drug women to go on with having kids over and over again even if it hurts so much more than death (Crash course literature).

The fact of the torture being a human condition, the raising action about it is the circle that never breaks as in the existential conundrum described as the myth of Sisyphus by Albert Camus which is not far away from the conception Plath uses in her book when she says ‘no matter how much you knelt and prayed, you still have to eat three meals a day and have a job and live in the world’. The absurd questions that she faced, and the soul tormented case she was stuck in was never friendly for her as she slid into bigger questions and endless circles with no beginning and no map, “I wanted to do something once and for all and get through with it “ (Plath 87).

Her daily routine during 1950’s was dull, her creativity finds its way down to decrease gradually hand in hand with her sanity and happiness as she says I was happy until I was 9, As an American coming of age the adulthood hits hard on Esther as she experiences autonomy as a woman and no longer child, as she grows the stress is gradually growing also since she hated dictation from any other person she always wanted to dictate her own thrilling letters but that

was not the case because in America the 18,19,20, 22 years was the age of being married for women, in this sense Betty Friedan says in her book *The Feminine Mystique* “By the end of the nineteen-fifties, the average marriage age of women in America dropped to 20, and was still dropping, into the teens. Fourteen million girls were engaged by 17” (Friedan 44 45).

This kind of case made her sick, the general idea of gender role was a nightmare for her ,because she finds her-self obligated to give up her career to be a mother and a loyal housewife which was a dead end for her ,because as a matter of fact she can never balance being a full time mum and a poet she had be one of everything she wanted she cannot be everything as Sylvia Plath the author stated in her story of the fig tree that is mentioned above in the introduction for this chapter.

Gender- role in 1950’s America was about the perfect family with the perfect housewife with an equipped house to create a perfect image of a happy Christian family, the woman is a keeper and the man is a provider and anything is not among this list is to be questioned and highlighted social conformity was to be followed not to be discussed or challenged ;but that was not on the list of Esther too she only wanted to live with no strings attached no stigma no fear of being what she is or what she will be, she had fears of making the wrong decision because her life matters as much as her rules and the way she perceives life ;yet these cultural themes remain timeless and universal not only about Americans or the fifties (Chin-Yi).

The complexion of mind of Sylvia Plath drawn via her obsession over Ethel Rosenberg, the relationship between the two characters is not haphazard Ethel Rosenberg’s full name was Esther Ethel Greenglass Rosenberg, and the similarity of the names demonstrates a direct

parallel between Esther and a woman many Americans believed she had suffered a terrible injustice, rather than the fact that she is a mother for two children and was seemingly portrayed in the press as a bad mother (Cliffs).

Sylvia uses her as a way of invoking the extreme pressures motherhood placed on women at that time living in the 50s portraying an atmosphere in which being different or acting in a way that did not fit prescribed cultural norms was threatened with extreme judgments and punishment. Marginalization for being an intellectual was a huge dissatisfaction for Esther that her creator, Plath determined the situation as an airless enclosure operation in a wide open space.

The domestic ideology of the postwar America during the cold war had its barriers broken by Plath to not settle down for what she found as a humble role of the housewife very unproductive comparing to what women achieved during the WW2 because they had the chance to do so ;but in both senses the woman was obliged to be both and that was something to mourn over for Esther. In addition to such discourse every woman who would show any interest in anything else but being a keeper would be convicted of being unfeminine so by that less women are in the front and women were rarely seen in positions of power, through that the case of the bell jar was not a case of selfishness it was all patriot and about how deep the cut was in the balance between the two genders.

This constantly leads to sense the total absence of feminism at that time it was only the hysteria of psychology and the electroconvulsive treatment prescriptions for all the types of mental issues, rather than highlighting the source of distress that the person is going through especially woman patients. All in all the main distress of Esther was the defectiveness that was

stamped on women mainly due to the frame of time but the issue remains timeless and universal ,but the case drawn in the book is how the society looked and looks at women in which they were not taken seriously, as the same thing for Esther with her boyfriend Buddy Willard who studies medicine whenever she talks about her and her poetry he never takes her seriously, he keeps telling her about what she is supposed to be as a woman as he forces her to attend that woman giving birth to stifle her ;nevertheless, every time Esther sees something about gender roles she does not surrender she realizes what type of person she must not be so as she represses the keeper the society wants her to be the questions rise to tighten the enclosure.

The actions of Esther are seen as defense mechanisms in terms of psychology ,because most of the human actions are stimulated by repressed desires so the psychological forces over which humans have limited control so most of individuals mental processes are driven by sexuality which is also a question for Esther in terms of gender role because if a woman is sexually active before marriage is gradually seen as used, promiscuous .

Although the human body is constructed the same but still the social construction suffers an inequitable principles between both genders creating somehow biased gender roles without being aware of the conflicts that can occur or affect the stability of the society that all turns to be male chauvinistic compounds that are filled with insecurities .

2.2 The Problematic Relationship of Esther with Patriarchy

Patriarchy is the orbit of American society during the 1950's, as well as the main issue of the work of the bell jar as a representative metaphor of the entrapment, disassociation and

alienation. In short terms violence creates violence, how? The injustice that have been practiced upon women post World War 2 was the cause of the “housewives fatigue” syndrome that was created via gradual institutionalization which means that although men have power over women in all institutions considered important in each society, it does not mean that women do not have any power or rights, influence or resources, nor does it means that all women have or exert the same power.

The irony in what was mentioned above that during the war women were not treated equally with men, but they stood side to side to improve the quality of the war impulses in terms of patriotism, so patriotism did not stop as the war did, by that women were victimized via institutionalization in terms of the concept of the traditional roles when were reaffirmed. Men expected to be the breadwinners; women, even when they worked, assumed their proper place was at home. Sociologist David Riesman observed the importance of peer-group expectations in his influential book, *The Lonely Crowd*. He called this new society "other-directed," and maintained that such societies lead to stability as well as conformity.” (*The Culture of the 1950's*).

Television contributed to the homogenizing trend by providing young and old with a shared experience reflecting accepted social patterns via the image of the happy American suburban housewife and mother and the husband who provides for his family and knows what is best for his family, in *The feminine mystique*, The problem that has no name includes the very clear opinion of Betty concerning this, she claims:

In all the columns, books and articles by experts telling women their role was to seek fulfillment as wives and mothers. Over and over women heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity. Experts told them how to catch a man and keep him, how to breastfeed children and handle their toilet training, how to cope with sibling rivalry and adolescent rebellion; how to buy a dishwasher, bake bread, cook gourmet snails, and build a swimming pool with their own hands; how to dress, look, and act more feminine and make marriage more exciting; how to keep their husbands from dying young and their sons from growing into delinquents (Friedan 44).

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The image that Esther got from her society lacks integration in terms of the various restrictions women had to comply with, she bared in mind the woman's social, religious condition and rights were not taken seriously as well as women themselves, she considered society as hypocrite, totalitarian and a restrictive area that is only prosperous upon its cruelty. Esther had become acquainted at first hand with the domestic ideology of the postwar US that championed the humble role of the housewife, who could take part in the greater issues of our day by devoting herself to home, husband, and child rearing.

2.3 Chastity and virginity in the novel as a personal and universal issue

Esther is indulged in heterosexuality and her virginity burdens her ,but she fails to imagine people in bed as she stated in her discourse describing her boss Jay Cee saying that she had a hard time imagining people in bed together which clarify that she has no fantasies about the entire concept of sexual intercourse . Although, she was with buddy Willard but she could never step further into a intercourse with him especially after she knew he had a previous sexual experience at the time he was only saying that a woman must not immerse in any sexual activity before marriage and that is why Esther abandons him because he was a hypocrite and she did not want her kids to be the children of a hypocrite father that has no concepts and values but social

conformity and patriarchal set of disgusting rules that serve men “ I hate the idea of serving men in any way, I wanted to dictate my own thrilling letters” (Plath 40).

Esther feels burdened as she lives with her virginity, in which the ultimate experience she was looking for regarding her experiences with men is not being chaste anymore. and a remarkable thing to highlight is that Esther was never seeking love from any part nothing affected her feelings except for her father, Esther was only looking for thrills and to give away what the society states as a must for the feminine slice of the community as well as her feelings of unease around every person in her circle, the close one as Buddy Willard for example made her uncomfortable about her virginity in which he has always preaches about virginity and sexuality of women which is obvious in this passage of the novel: “Buddy was amazingly close to his mother. He was always quoting what she said about the relationship between a man and a woman, and I knew Mrs. Willard was a real fanatic about virginity for men and women both. When I first went to her house for supper she gave me a queer, shrewd, searching look, and I knew she was trying to tell whether I was a virgin or not” (Plath 38).

The Bell Jar examines sex as a restriction of women liberty in what comes own bodies and decisions about their lives, the sexuality in 1950's American society dictates that men are considered to have it naturally to be sexually active even before marriage but women are supposed to remain chaste until they marry (Azzopardi).

According to a massive cross - cultural survey conducted In 2005 by the BBC (over 200,000 participants across 53 countries) it shows what is below : Men across all cultures reported higher sex drives and less restricted sexual attitudes than women, but women were

consistently more variable than men in their sex drives. Another important, if not entirely surprising pattern, suggests that these differences are not entirely biological, and are due in some part to social and cultural ideologies (Gonzalez).

Sex remains only a tool to have babies and for the sake of offspring protection, the dark side of the double standard of sexual liberty is that sex is not about intimacy or love between the happy couple in the magazines and advertisements that the American society promoted for. Lesbianism in the book refers to the lack of intimacy in the heterosexual sex, since it only represents the dominance of men over women, and shows how violence is almost inevitable consequence of sexual relationships between men and women where females are inferior to males (Plath).

As a result to the dominance of heterosexuality the homosexuality is a threat to heteronormativity, and femininity as well as femaleness are endangered in terms of the clash of the norms in order for females to gain what they could not have in their patriarchal societies.

2.4 Gender Roles in 1950's American Society "Women Expectations"

The agenda of the cold war contained the culture war chapter, because seemingly the family is the smallest unit of the society, yet the first base for a steady society. The US embraced this concept to recreate America via the new order after the war ended. American society in the 1950s was geared toward the family. Marriage and children were part of the national agenda. And the Cold War was in part a culture war, with the American family at the center of the

struggle. As Plath depicts all the series of the process, other works such as the feminine mystique also talk about the entire brainwash hysteria the society created (The Pill).

Embedded in the propaganda of the time was the idea that the nuclear family made Americans superior to the Communists. American propaganda showed the horrors of Communism in the lives of Russian women. They were shown dressed in gunnysacks, as they toiled in drab factories while their children were placed in cold, anonymous day care centers (Friedan).

In contrast to the "evils" of Communism, an image was promoted of American women, with their feminine hairdos and delicate dresses and their shining smiles as well as their pearls, tending to the hearth and home as they enjoyed the fruits of capitalism, democracy, and freedom. In the 1950s, women felt tremendous societal pressure to focus their aspirations on a wedding ring. The U.S. marriage rate was at an all-time high and couples were tying the knot, on average, younger than ever before. Getting married right out of high school or while in college was considered the norm. A common stereotype was that women went to college to get a "Mrs." (pronounced M.R.S.) degree, meaning a husband. Although women had other aspirations in life, the dominant theme promoted in the culture and media at the time was that a husband was far more important for a young woman than a college degree (Friedan).

Despite the fact that employment rates also rose for women during this period, the media tended to focus on a woman's role in the home. If a woman wasn't engaged or married by her early twenties, she was in danger of becoming an old maid. If remaining single in American society was considered undesirable, being single and pregnant was totally unacceptable,

especially for white women. Girls who got in trouble were forced to drop out of school, and often sent away to distant relatives or homes for wayward girls. Shunned by society for the duration of their pregnancy, unwed mothers paid a huge price for premarital sex. In reality young women were engaging in premarital sex in spite of the societal pressure to remain virgins (The Pill).

There was a growing need for easy, safe, effective, reliable and female-controlled contraceptives. Not only did most married women walk down the aisle by age 19; they also tended to start families right away. A majority of brides were pregnant within seven months of their wedding, and they didn't just stop at one child. Large families were typical. From 1940 to 1960, the number of families with three children doubled and the number of families having a fourth child quadrupled (The Pill). This was also the era of the "happy homemaker." For young mothers in the 1950s, domesticity was idealized in the media, and women were encouraged to stay at home if the family could afford it (Friedan).

Women who chose to work when they didn't need the paycheck were often considered selfish, putting themselves before the needs of their family. But even for happy homemakers, pressures were mounting. In a departure from previous generations, it was no longer acceptable for a wife to shut her husband out of the bedroom. Starting in the 1950s sex was viewed as a key component of a healthy and loving marriage. Without an effective female-controlled contraceptive, young wives faced three decades of childbearing before they reached menopause (The Pill).

2.5 Resistance and Rebellion in the 1950's Literature "The Bell Jar"

The list of the American books that one seeks to understand a significant era is long and interesting, because a given work of art cannot be understood without a significant relevance; as an example for this, waiting for Godot would not be understood with no background, and that amount of absurdity required a bulk of clarification for the sake of understanding the reason behind such absurdity because Becket's play deals with the life of a modern man and it discusses the condition of a human life (Cliffs).

For the case needed to shed light on, the bell jar is a pure American work of art by an American poet and writer Sylvia Plath that narrates and tells about an experience during the fifties. With no claim about its exhaustiveness this book simply deals with facts and gives a fair picture of landscape of literary culture for that decade, however; the idea of the existential angst somehow draws a great emphasis on a huge slice of society, and that is women and as much as the novel reflects the existential angst and deep fears about identity as well as the entrapment in the social norms and religious conceptions (Danwhitebooks).

The era of the 1950's was defined by its books, in simple terms the books published at that time had something common between them, they were like connected dots because all the greatest books of the 50's highlighted societal problems like injustice, censorship and commercialization, the recurrent themes in the books published at that time were in the context of alienation, inequality and rebellion for the superficiality of the modern American society, those themes saw the light due to the overconsumption and the loss of individuality with a huge pressure to conform which was a typical thing during that time.

The era that the book of Plath was published witnessed an emergence of doubts expressed through books that questioned the status quo and the midcentury preoccupation with conformity, that the creation of literature mired the dark reality of the era and recent History, but still looked forward to seismic social shifts to come. In short terms the 50's was an era characterized by the dawn of the cold war, as well as the civil rights movement and a national exhaustion that drained intellectuals and was expressed in many of the books that were published that time.

2.6 Death Instinct and Self-Destruction through the Novel

The Bell Jar is a novel that follows the life of an American young girl's experience of psychological disorder in which the protagonist of the novel Esther Greenwood experiences a psychological disorder which was the major cause of her feelings that are alienation and detachment; that gradually paved the way to a straight destination of madness through the depressive episodes she witnessed and the psychological care she got at first by Dr. Gordon that made her case much worse with electroconvulsive therapy.

The psychological coming of age experience created an atmosphere of eagerness and anxiety in the extreme inward of Esther "The silence depressed me. It wasn't the silence of silence. It was my own silence. I knew perfectly well the cars were making noise, and the people in them and behind the lit windows of the buildings were making a noise, and the river was making a noise, but I couldn't hear a thing" (Plath 11)

Angela Billman writes: “perhaps the most distinctive thing about Plath's novel is its ability to make the readers feel as if at the same stage in their own lives, they had felt the same things that the main protagonist, Esther Greenwood feels”; in short terms, the work here creates a space where the reader can relate to a particular thing without being into it in any means but due to the enormous human feelings everything about the situations lived by Esther are thoroughly felt by the readers. According to Angela Billeman, depression is not caused by her personal problems, she argues that Esther is a perfect girl of her time :“I was supposed to be the envy of thousands of other college girls just like me all over America who wanted nothing more than to be tripping about in those same sizes even patent leather shoes I'd bought in Bloomingdale's one lunch hour with a black patent leather belt and black patent leather pocketbook to match” (Plath 3).

She also argues: " Esther seemingly has everything, beauty, brain, a college scholarship at prestigious university, a handsome boyfriend studying to be a doctor"; this is what an American girl of the 1950s wishes to have. So she argues that the tension of Esther Greenwood is a patriarchal society which becomes an obstacle for women. Through this novel, she adds, " Plath gives feminism a voice". Her search for self is disturbed by American culture and patriarchal society.

Camus' elaboration in The Myth of Sisyphus of the status quo of life, how absurd it is to live, and most significantly how to thrive or survive during everything a person stands up for in life. This case was the ultimate subject to tackle by numerous writers due to the fatigue, and the energy that life takes to do it (Cliffs).

“Camus tells us, in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, that the single most important philosophical dilemma that human beings must face is the issue of whether to choose to end it all. Shakespeare, too, had posed the question in Hamlet’s “To be, or not to be” soliloquy. Plath, perhaps the product of an era more inclined toward the “not,” died by her own act” (Cliffs).

Indeed the most important philosophical dilemma is surviving, for human beings it is more than a must to face, it is the issue of whether to choose to end it all or to stay in the same routine that Esther considered killing “I wanted to do something once and for all.” (Plath).

Esther Greenwood is a product of an era that is much more predisposed towards the “not,” got sick by her own act. In some ways, we, the readers, are left to judge not only Esther's action, but to evaluate the whole literary and cultural tradition that only gives rise to restrictions on the freedom of women leaving them on the verge of madness and depression,

“This led to a great surge of literary writing by women, a fact that should lead us to a serious contemplation of the major ideas of the era that preceded the new “freedoms” for women because only in a clearer understanding of that recent history will we avoid another time of tragedies for the Sylvia Plath’s of the future” (Cliff 42).

2.7 The Bell Jar as a Scientific Experiment

In this passage from the novel, a clear representation of the metaphor used as an accurately significant term that covered many things and resumes a huge amount of information the author wanted to submit “Because wherever I sat, on the deck of a ship or at a street café in

Paris or Bangkok I would be sitting under the same glass bell jar, stewing in my own sour air.” (Plath 98); the fact that Esther was living in the fifties, the loss of language, the use of language to express the loss of language and also the amount of dissatisfaction and detachment conveyed through the protagonist from the inside out.

From an individual to the society to the entire universe, the heroine had something to say about female entrapment in the society, by that she draw the image of the bell jar in order to not to be judgmental or biased to her own feelings and emotions, the author used the bell jar to convey a clear thought about the effect of the society. The bell jar is a glass jar, similar in shape to a bell and can be manufactured from a variety of materials, ranging from glass to different types of metals in which the bell jar is an inverted glass jar, generally used to display an object of scientific curiosity, contain a certain kind of gas, or maintain a vacuum.

2.8 The Bell Jar as a Feminist Identification

Plath expresses her desire to counter historical conditions that subject women to male domination, discrimination and violence through her book the bell jar. The first woman that broke the roles of the society, but was also hated by Esther’s friends was Jay Cee in terms of being the exact opposite of women portrait during the fifties, the editor of Ladies' Day magazine; she is her boss in New York City. Jay Cee is somewhat dowdy, but a competent professional woman, “She looked terrible, but very wise” (Plath 21).

Back at the time Esther was living in, women were regarded as pretty objects only that had nothing to offer but love and care for their men and children, which was very elaborate in *The Feminine Mystique*:

“Experts told them how to catch a man and keep him, how to breastfeed children and handle their toilet training, how to cope with sibling rivalry and adolescent rebellion; how to buy a dishwasher, bake bread, cook gourmet snails, and build a swimming pool with their own hands; how to dress, look, and act more feminine and make marriage more exciting; how to keep their husbands from dying young and their sons from growing into delinquents. They were taught to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or physicists or presidents. They learned that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights—the independence and the opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for” (Friedan 44).

But Jay Cee was a smart woman who did not care about how she looked as much as she cared about her career and her professional life; therefore, she was Esther’s idol “Jay Cee wanted to teach me something” (Plath 5), this was a clear awareness from Esther that even if all women gave up on their dreams, and devoted their lives for what they were told to do, being like Jay Cee is not as horrible as it seems. “Jay Cee was my boss, and I liked her a lot, in spite of what Doreen said. She wasn't one of the fashion magazine gushers with fake eyelashes and giddy jewelry. Jay Cee had brains, so her plug-ugly looks didn't seem to matter. She read a couple of languages and knew all the quality writers in the business” (Plath 5).

Through this novel, Plath gives feminism a voice her search for self is disturbed by American culture and patriarchal society and how women are in the spotlight of the societal constrictions and are condemned if not conformed or if they do not perform what they are subjected to (Crash course literature).

2.9 The Analysis of the Bell Jar

2.9.1 The Motif of the Fig-Tree

The fig-tree is a symbol of Esther Greenwood's mental illness. Being torn between different options for a fulfilling life, she has to decide which one to pick. She cannot come to a decision because if she does so in favor of one "fig", she will lose all the others. Her problem is that she has not one aim she wants to achieve. She wants to do and have everything: "On another level, the image of the fig tree offers the reader an insight into Sylvia Plath's obsessive desire to succeed in everything. Fragmented though life may be, Esther Greenwood, like Sylvia Plath, wants the best fig on every bough" (Bassnett 50) Esther hesitates and meanwhile the options for her life pass away.

"I saw my life branching out before me like the green fig-tree in the story. From the tip of every branch, like a fat purple fig, a wonderful future beckoned and winked. One fig was a husband and a happy home and children, and another fig was a famous poet and another fig was a brilliant professor, and another fig was Ee Gee, the amazing editor, and another fig was Europe and Africa and South America, and another fig was Constantine and Socrates and Attila and a pack of other lovers with queer names and offbeat professions,

and another fig was an Olympic lady crew champion, and beyond and above these figs were many more figs I couldn't quite make out. I saw myself sitting in the crotch of this fig-tree, starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my mind which of the figs I would choose. I wanted each and every one of them, but choosing one meant losing all the rest, and, as I sat there, unable to decide, the figs began to wrinkle and go black, and, one by one, they plopped to the ground at my feet" (Plath 40).

Esther's inability to come to a decision is representative of her disease. An example of her inconclusiveness in picking a fig is that Esther Greenwood, like many other women in the 1950s, has to determine either for starting a family or starting a career. For women, it is rather unlikely to be able to have both. Men instead have the opportunity to gain everything which is a great problem for Esther. She does not want to devote her life exclusively to a family and concludes that women living a life like this are "brainwashed" (Plath 81) and "numb as a slave in some private, totalitarian state" (Plath 45).

On the one hand, Esther hates "the idea of serving men in any way" (Plath, 40), and wants to be independent: "The last thing I wanted was infinite security and to be the place an arrow shoots off from. I wanted to change and excitement and to shoot off in all directions myself" (Plath 44). On the other hand, she wants to have a family or at least a loving husband.

A hint to this is Esther's reaction after her fitting: "I was my own woman. The next step was to find the proper sort of man" (Plath 117), her inability to decide in favor of or against a family, respectively a career, is only one of her troubles. As a result, Esther builds up personalities that do not have these problems.

2.9.2 Characters Analysis

The novel stands for the main character's life Esther Greenwood, but the minor characters seem to leave a mark on her personality, each character has a relation to Esther some way or another, Plath made that seem crucial and significant throughout building her character in a way made it easier to look inside her (Esther) so obvious and easy to understand, most of all, to understand how human she was.

2.9.2.1 Esther Greenwood, Elaine and Ely Higginbottom

The protagonist of *The Bell Jar*, Esther Greenwood the 'I' of the story is a young, highly intelligent college student who goes through a series of mental breakdowns. A woman from a modestly middle-class background, but surrounded by many relatively upscale people, Esther, on the most obvious level, is an individual unsure of what she wants, her indecisiveness is a natural thing because she lacks choices.

The central conflict concerns marriage and motherhood versus personal and literary ambitions of hers, because she wanted to see herself as her boss Jay Cee, Dr Nolan or her benefactor Philomena Guinea, so by that her choices or her limited financial reserves, makes her choice extremely important, and she seems to be stuck by her lack of choices.

Her attitude toward the other major female characters in the novel is usually fluctuate. At various points in the novel, she sees Doreen, Betsy, Jay Cee, Joan Gilling, and many others as role models, but they all fail her expectations in different ways. Her feelings toward women shift

quite abruptly. For example, soon after she wishes she "had a mother like Jay Cee," the ruthless editor has hurt her by criticizing her lack of ambition.

Esther's attitude towards the male characters in the novel seems narrowed toward their status in the social hierarchy. She sees Buddy Willard, Constantine, Cal, Irwin, Eric, Marco, and others in mostly sexual terms, candidates to lose her virginity to or potential husbands.

As it is very ubiquitous to social patriarchal traits, Esther describes the varying degrees of subjugating women by the unsympathetic men in her life starting from the women hater Marco to Buddy the hypocrite, according to History of Ideas on Woman "As a social contract theorist, Locke too rejected the patriarchal concept of civil authority that had historically been used to support the rights of kings. In particular he rejected the idea advanced by some that Adam was granted a divine right to rule and argued that even if God had conferred such authority, it was not necessarily passed down to his male heirs" (Agonito 143).

Soon after her date with Cal, Esther seemingly loses all interest in men as potential husbands, although she still aspires to lose her virginity. Despite her intelligence Esther is an extremely influence able person. In the novel, she lies about her own name to a virtual stranger which was extremely indicating what little identity she really has. Even her surname, Greenwood, as Linda Wagner-Martin suggests, "was satisfying for reasons both personal and symbolic, and because the novel moves toward Esther's rebirth, the image of green wood is comforting" (Wagner).

By the denouement of *The Bell Jar*, Esther is a survivor. Although the extent of her mental and emotional recovery is debatably oscillating, she is more confident and able to make some of her own decisions, as evidenced by her instructing Irwin to pay her emergency room bill after she lost her virginity with him, "I wondered, briefly, if Irwin would send his check to the hospital after that, and then I thought, "Of course he will, he's a mathematics professor -- he won't want to leave any loose ends" (Plath 127).

Her feelings toward individuals and events are less confused, more rational: she grieves at Joan's funeral, realizes Buddy Willard is "nothing, but a great amiable boredom" (Plath, 125) to her, and is understandably apprehensive about her interview with the board of physicians. Contrast this to the earlier Esther who once threw her clothes out of a New York hotel window, ate raw meat, made an unsuccessful suicide attempt, and often stared wedged into space.

Elaine and Ely are the personifications of the psychological disorder of Esther, or at least they visualize Esther's internal, mental, and identity conflict which was already mentioned in the fig-tree story, she uses those surnames to hide her real identity, and to become what she could not be in the flesh of Esther.

2.9.2.2 Buddy Willard

This character is Esther's boyfriend and a medical student. Originally, Esther enjoyed what she perceived as Buddy's lack of sexual experience "he made me feel I was much more sexy" (Plath 37) , when she figures out he was having an affair with a waitress while he was seeing her, she feels disillusioned.

For Esther, it is not so much the double standard it is okay for a man to have a fling but scandalous for a woman to do so that upsets her; she now feels inferior to Buddy because she is a virgin and he is not. Esther is competitive with Buddy in other ways. That he, as a doctor, can give pregnant women a drug to minimize their pain during childbirth upsets Esther.

To her, the doctors, all male are depriving the expectant women of both the trauma and beauty of the birth experience simply to achieve the ends. Hence, she imagines Buddy robbing herself of all bodily forms of pleasure. Esther's fears aside, Buddy is a rather odious character, because he seems far more interested in instructing her on such matters as medicine, science, and skiing than in learning anything from her.

Joan Gilling's off-hand comments about Buddy "He thought he knew everything. He thought he knew everything about women." captures his feelings of superiority very well. When Esther figures out that Buddy has contracted tuberculosis and will need to spend a year in a sanatorium, her reaction is mostly relief that he will be gone for a long time. After Buddy knows that Esther has been in a mental hospital, his only reaction is "I wonder who you'll marry now, Esther," (Plath 126) his hypocrisy and insensitivity were very clear about his concern for marriage.

2.9.2.3 Marco, Irwin

Accurately described by Esther as a woman-hater "I began to see why woman-haters could make such fools of women. Woman haters were like gods: invulnerable and chock-full of power. They descended, and then they disappeared. You could never catch one"(Plath 56).

Marco sees women in one of two categories: well behaved women like nuns and promiscuous women, In this passage of the novel everything told about Marco is well established:

“Then he threw himself face down as if he would grind his body through me and into the mud. "It's happening," I thought. "It's happening. If I just lie here and do nothing it will happen." Marco set his teeth to the strap at my shoulder and tore my sheath to the waist. I saw the glimmer of bare skin, like a pale veil separating two bloody-minded adversaries. "Slut!". The words hissed by my ear” (Plath 57).

She seems to be settling for this moment to lose her virginity but she escapes to later on meet Irwin who was a very well-paid professor of mathematics to lose her virginity with, described by Esther as "rather ugly and bespectacled," she does not have romantic feelings for him and is simply tired of being a virgin (Cliffs).

Irwin is a highly educated intellectual, he is a mathematics professor at the university whom she wants to lose her virginity with which was very clear in the following discourse, “I felt the first man I slept with must be intelligent, so I would respect him. Irwin was a full professor at twenty-six and had the pale, hairless skin of a boy genius. I also needed somebody quite experienced to make up for my lack of it” (Plath 119).

After seeing Irwin for the first time she knew she is going to maintain what she wanted, unlike her previous attempts, for example with Buddy and Marco, she was reluctant and totally

away from being certain and bold with Irwin, she made it bona fide clear when she said : “It was only after seeing Irwin's study that I decided to seduce him” (Plath 119).

Esther finally loses her virginity with Irwin, the matter was not about being virgin it was about rebelling over social construction norms and the conundrum of the female burden, that was extremely exhausting for Esther, She feels relieved after she gets over with it, while she got her miraculous change to occur,“Then the stories of blood-stained bridal sheets and capsules of red ink bestowed already deflowered brides floated back to me. I wondered how much I would bleed, and lay down, nursing the towel. It occurred to me that the blood was my answer. I couldn't possibly be a virgin any more. I smiled into the dark. I felt part of a great tradition” (Plath 120).

2.10 Conclusion

To conclude the second chapter into main points that would accurately resume the analysis of the controlling elements that shaped the idea of the plot for the novel as a product of the 1950s with an entirely a fragmented predicament due to the ideology that shaped that era, the work of Plath presented the case of many works at that time that clearly elaborate the case of the individual versus the society because the historical context was not in favor for intellectuals who wanted to think outside the box and to be outside the herd.

As a work with a feminist voice during an era that was marked by an entire absence of feminism at the time of the cold war, because the country issues were way more important than individuals but still, the case was not the same for women who are marginalized from the dawn

of the universe. The book that created the fictional character Esther paints a picture of young girls who wanted to be capable within everything.

They wanted success in their careers, but the successful women were not regarded as women and diagnosed by lack of femininity and on the other hand women who found it hard to fit in the society wholeheartedly were neurotic and delusional like Esther and Joan. This inability to be really connected to outside roles, or groups, is clearly seen in her relationship with her family and friends, and also in the scenes set in the mental institution in *The Bell Jar*, this kind of neurosis that afflicts especially the young (male and female) has been described by many writers.

Some authors view it as immaturity and allow their characters to at last grow up; some see it as a budding rebellion against an unjust society, but even then the characters must eventually take the world into account. Some see it as the sickness of youth, and the outcome of the individual's life depends on the individual's character (plus fate and/or history). In *The Bell Jar*, we never see Esther getting beyond this intense preoccupation with herself.

General

Conclusion

General Conclusion

Interestingly, Plath's last word to us through the novel was very dark and optimistic at the same time, but remains hard to understand in terms of being brought to life again; since that time women have gone on to say much more positive things.

We can only wish that Plath herself might be here to comment on the really fine works of fiction from such writers as Oates, Mary Gordon, Gail Godwin, Joanne Greenberg, Alice Walker, and now a whole generation of women. Perhaps Plath's *The Bell Jar*, however slight a novel as it might be in the future and as judged against those works that grew out of it and away from it, was really the watershed. And Plath's tragic suicide was the waste land from which contemporary women have, and will, free themselves.

The non-motivated destructiveness of Plath, turned by illness on herself that developed to a complexion of mind created by the overconsumption of individualism during the 1950's, this is a great emphasis on the pressure practiced upon women because the case that Plath established is timeless and universal. Sylvia Plath was the mirror of all the women in this globe, her complexion of mind is a permanent frame of mind for all the women in the universe who are living in fear, pain, helplessness, misogyny and all the means of defectiveness attributed to females.

It is true that the story is sickening and morbid, but remains true about what all women are living in from the very first moment the foetal sex is determined, the absence of feminism during the 1950's made the work of Plath controversial, by the novel's conclusion, remains uncertain, Sylvia Plath's recovery only lasted a decade: On February 11, 1963, she selected to

end her own life. In 1966, three years after Plath had taken her own life, Friedan and her colleagues established the National Organization for Women (NOW). And even though Esther survives, as did Plath in her first suicide attempt, Esther is still lost and indecisive at the end of the novel as she was in the first term of the novel, by that the fair analysis of her case is she will never fit in anything since she can never fit in her own skin, with that the real complexion of mind in Esther's narcissism and being caught up in "I deserve better" shapes her destiny.

Away from the fears and concerns of the young intellectual Esther, the bell jar is direct history of electroshock therapy, and a manuscript for the distress in the American atmosphere during the fifties, however the psychological and sociological problems of Esther can be extremely relatable to the image the governmental portrait of women and families at the period of the nineteen fifties, Betty Friedan denotes to the fact that there was actually what is more like an instruction manual for women by government, either via commercials, magazines or through pack mentality that seemed to have no escape from it except for seeking help and being regarded as frustrated, incompetent, and hideous.

In conclusion , The Bell Jar is a wasteland description of women's lives during the nineteen fifties which was clearly definite in it, the portrait of women being beautiful, caring , and devoting their lives to serve their along with a full clear image to understand the amount of burden that was drowning all women in overwhelming states of mind.

The word complexion of mind was first introduced by Sylvia Plath in her poem "The Colossus", that is a feeling of nothingness, which was a very clever way of Plath to describe the complexion of mind for the main character Esther, whose surrounded by issues of trauma,

frustration, and sexuality. It is true that Esther's words can be shocking in their rage and bitterness, the astounding ability of expressing what often remains inexpressible makes "The Bell Jar" a purely universal and timeless feminine exhausting entanglement.

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ملخص

هذه المذكرة هي عمل يدور حول القلق الأنتوي متجلى في عمل من حقبة الخمسينات، عمل أمريكي بحث يتحدث عن مشوار أمريكية مثقفة. هذه المذكرة تستكشف تصورات المجتمع في الرواية في حياة ايستر غرينوود في الفترة التي شهدت الحرب الباردة. فترة الخمسينات في أمريكا كانت حقبة مثيرة للجدل نظرا للجنة الأنشطة غير الأمريكية بمجلس النواب تحت رئاسة السيناتور و السياسي جوزيف رايموند مكارثي. تلك الهيئة امتلكت النفوذ فيما يخص التحقيق في خصوص اي تحركات مشبوهة أو اي شخص يهدد أمن الدولة، مكارثي حظي بالاهتمام الوطني في فبراير عام ١٩٥٠ تزامنا مع الاختراق الشيوعي لوزارة الدولة، على مدار عقدين من الزمن تحمل الأميركيون حقبة من الاكتناب في أزمة الحرب من الثلاثينات إلى الأربعينات، حيث جاهدوا لإعادة الأمور إلى طبيعتها و أملوا التركيز على تفاصيل خصوصية تخص الوجود عوضا عن أهداف وطنية، حيث ركز الشعب على العائلة، المنزل و الحياة المهنية مع ازدياد الاستيعاب الديني للبروتستانت و الكاثوليكية. وقد أثر ذلك سلبا على بطلة الرواية ليحبسها في جرة جرس وهي تتابع سعيها لمعرفة هويتها الحقيقية ودورها كامرأة في المجتمع .

الكلمات المفتاحية: أمريكا في ١٩٥٠، الجنون، الحركة النسوية، النظام الأبوي، الهوية.