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**Depression and Suicide in Sylvia Plath's the Bell Jar: A study in  
self reflection.**

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## **Dedication**

This decent work is warmly dedicated to:

I express my gratitude and thanks to **Allah** for fulfilling my prayer and reinforcing me when I feel despair and giving me the ability with power to finish this dissertation

And to the reason for my existence

My beloved mother **Hayat Tayeb** who taught me trust in Allah and for believing in me and make me believing in myself

And to my beloved father **Messouad Haider** for his supporting and encouragement

To all my dear brothers **Fouad, Mohammed and Abd Elatif**

For helping me unconditionally

To all my dear sisters

**Mona, Donia, Rayan, Rania**

For been the best sisters I have always wished to have

To my beautiful **lojayne** for bringing the happiness to our family

And all **my family**

To my long list of friends for been beside me all this time and brought me the most beautiful memories

**Achouak, Abir. Rayan. Maryem. Sara...**

And to everyone had participated in my progress and success

With special thanks to my **fighting and lovely self** for remain standing and hopeful despite all the obstacles I have been faced

**Thank you from the bottom of my heart**

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## **Abstract**

the female mental disorder is a common and attractive topic in the English literature, especially during the period of 1950 and 1960 in America in particular, when women were suffering from the harsh and oppressive social norms and perspectives that dominating the female life and freedom. Therefore, women were generally led to decline in mental health or to mental illness. As a reaction, there was the emergence of the feminist writing (movement), in order to improve the female situation. In this dissertation the light will be shed on the impact of the social female oppression in the bell jar, through studying the reflection of the author's life on her fiction using the psychoanalytical critical approach. Furthermore, we emphasized on the reflection of author's own deep depression and living constraints on the crafting of the character Esther Greenwood. Through studying this novel, we tried to examine the idea that implies experiencing and committing suicide is thus a kind of female liberation from the part of both the author Sylvia Plath and the character Esther Greenwood. As a result, we realized that the existence of the influences of the social constraints and expectation on Plath's own life on writing the novel is traceable.

**Key words:** Sylvia Plath. The Bell jar. Esther Greenwood. Autobiographical novel. Depression. Suicide. Mental health. Psychoanalysis.

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# **General introduction**



## General Introduction

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### General Introduction

Writing has always been a fascinating tool to describe and portray the individual feelings and thoughts, as manifested in the literary works, through its several genres: fiction, nonfiction, poetry and prose. Meanwhile, the most appropriate and associated type with the author's real life and experiences is the autobiographical novel. The latter can be varied in to clear one by using the author's real name, or by using a pen name to hide the writer's identity. Women in particular make use of the latter option as a result of social perspectives which prevent women from expressing their emotions and thoughts openly and freely, as a result of gender discrimination and women's marginalization. The autobiographical novel revolves around the author's previous experiences, trauma, and events. As seen in *one day in my life* by Bobby Sands, *the autobiography of Malcolm x* by Alex Haley, *John Barleycorn* by Jack London, and a numerous number of other novels. The American Sylvia Plath is a female writer who often considered writing a literary work affected by her own life experiences and memories.

As "*lady Lazarus*" and "*Daddy*", Plath won the Pulitzer prize posthumously as an honor and gratitude for her creativity in the only novel she has written *the Bell Jar* in 1963. It has been published under the name of Victoria Lucas. It has been viewed as a positive reaction against the patriarchal community, including several themes as the emptiness of conventional expectation. The central focus of this paper is to study the female mental disorder in this novel which presented in its main character Esther Greenwood, which was the image of the author own self. The character is crafted to experience all what Plath has really faced, with the same thoughts and views propagation to the rejection of some social norms such as the female and male virginity and women's expected role. Though the novel contains fictional characters and events, it reflects Plath's own struggles socially and mentally. Same as Plath, the novel depicts Esther's chronicle of mental illness, her inner and outer struggles to achieve her identity, as well as, her wishes to be a famous poet with perfect career. Indeed, she faced a social refusal

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according to restrict perspectives that she has never accepted that drive her to distaste life then lead her to mental breakdown, she ends up with attempting suicide. *The Bell Jar* is considered perhaps the most controlled and absorbing account of mental disorder in American literature. For that reason, the analysis of the work will be achieved through Sigmund Freud psychoanalysis because it is seemingly the most appropriate method used in analysis the literary works.

The novel was written in the first person point of view. It is an autobiographical novel, which implies the author's actual experiences, and her conflicts and issues she faced in order to shape her identity. the author intrigued the reader by emphasizing on the chronicle of an intelligent women on a deep mental disorder, and her journey of treatment and rebirth, describing the decline of the protagonist into depression and her physical and moral suffering, her depressed times during her stay in the psychiatric institution. Besides, the issue of the societal expectation of females during the 1950 was tackled in addition to their rebellion against this marginalization from which Plath herself has suffered eventually, she unlike Greenwood, ended up in suicide a month after her book publication, Plath's well comprehending and deep sense helped her to write about depression in accurate and strong way, then after her suicide her novel published with her real name by her daughter Frieda Hughes in 1971.

As a research on the field of literature, this study targets to describe the situation of women and her proposed role during the 1950 on the American society, through the analysis of the work of Sylvia Plath's *the Bell Jar*, the study will focus mainly on the mental level and unconscious of the protagonist and the writer, by noticing the wide similar features of the author's real life and fictional work. Using the psychoanalysis approach and especially the theories on personality and defense mechanism will be adequate in this case.

As much as its wide spread, many critics tackled this novel, thus, they referred it to various basis. It was analyzed by *Dewi Ningsih* where she emphasized on *A character study*

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*of Esther Greenwood in Sylvia Plath's The Bell Jar*" by employing the psychoanalysis. Likely Zhung's work *L. Zhang. An analysis of Esther's anxiety of writing The Bell Jar*, was tackling the same debate. *Smith Caroline "The Feeding of Young Women: Sylvia Plath's The Bell Jar, Mademoiselle Magazine and Domestic Ideal*.

The problem we are debating in this research revolves around to *which extent do Plath's struggles with constraints of the society and her experiences with depression have an impact on Esther's character and the writing of The Bell Jar?*

*Furthermore,*

To which extent does Esther suffer from mental disorder?

How does the social constraint reflect on both Esther's and Plath's mental case?

How does the bell jar as a metaphor expressed through the novel?

In which extent does the bell jar novel mirror Plath's real life?

This research aims to highlight the main causes of depression, its development and symptoms, also its effects on the protagonist as well as the author, and seeking for the internal and external factors contributed to their case, in order to offer a better understanding of the characters and the work itself.

This study will be managed in particular steps through its chapters: The first chapter is a theoretical section, which investigates the novel in context, it contains the overview of the novel, and study the author mental health, and eventually explaining the psychoanalysis theory by Freud. The Second chapter represents the application of Freudian's theory through analyzing the novel metaphor, then Esther's mental illness, and her fate. In the last chapter the light will be shed on Plath's reflection on fiction through emphasizing in her reflect on the novel as well as the main character and her style of writing the novel.

# **Chapter one:**

**Theoretical framework**

**The Bell Jar in content**

**1.1 Introduction**

In broad sense, the literary works, which are produced by the imagination and creativity of the writers, and formed by their excellent execution, are considered as a mirror reflection of their knowledge and nature, their real personality, furthermore their life experiences and inner desires, as mental health issues and female madness in specific, thus it is highly associated with the cultural beliefs and values, the American literature iconic Sylvia Plath who is the only American novelist whose gained Pulitzer prize posthumously. Her works depicts several themes such as socially acceptable identity and the oppressive patriarchal society in mid 20th century America. consequently this chapter will study her literaterary masterpiece the Bell Jar which belongs to female madness field, by exploring and discovering how it is consider as a semiautobiographical novel, we also shed light on her mental health issue with bearing in mind the 1950 period which is an intrinsic element on the rising of the novel with using the psychoanalysis approach that it is the most appropriate method has explored by Sigmund Freud for analyze the art of literature in general and English literature in particular.

## 1.2 Autobiographical novels:

In 1809 Robert Southey coined the term autobiography and it was employed by Carlyle on 1828 and used metaphorically in 1859. (Bhattacharya 2), the autobiographical writings is considered as a kind of written manuscript by authors who are telling true events involving actual persons using false names and places so as to keep the identity of the characters in the novel ambiguous and protect the authors self's from slander .(Bhattacharya 1). Besides, "the autobiographical works can take many forms, from the intimate writings made during life that were not necessarily intended for publication (including diaries .letters .journals. Memories and reminiscences) to a formal book length autobiography ". (Encyclopedia Britannica). It considered as life reformulation remember thus, the novelist graham Green indicates: "an autobiography is only sort of life"; when he used it as his own life autobiography title.(Britannica) ,in the same token Jane Reece noticed that:" the autobiographical novels is practice of writing an individual's unique and felt experiences as written by that person " (3). From her part Nora Amine assumed that: "one can make his life in to a book a sort of self documentation"; put differently, she admits that "writing [her] feelings in a book became [her] life. Since [she] couldn't be [her] self "(Autobiographical novel mode and genre) so as a result from all the above perceptions it is conclude that the autobiographical novel is a kind of writing linked the author's life to his writing, The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath is an example in question in this dissertation.

## 1.3 An overview of the Bell Jar novel:

The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath was first published in 1963, it was her only novel under a pen name Victoria Lucas and released under her real name in the posthumous version, which almost classified as an autobiographical work. The novel revealed the levels of a young women's mental breakdown and her recuperation, in an aura of the American society during the period of 1950s, Plath committed suicide immediately after only one month from the publication of her only novel (Nicky march Britannica), while it published again after her death by the early of 1970 under her real name Sylvia Plath (encyclopedia). Diane middle brook suggests that the pseudonym name that Plath chosen is according to the emergence of autobiographical nature in the book that makes her use it to offer a some kind of protection (Qtd in Jill 73) The Bell Jar included several perspectives many critics classified it in a sever particular preference. in the same concern *dyer Darby* indicate that: " the themes of

Sylvia Plath's early life are the basis for the bell jar ,the entire novel is as sense of memoire, Plath is living her life again through her main character Esther" (17), when Elizabeth Wurtzel describe it as :“ a remarkable achievements” ,despite of that she explain it as funny work with some kindliness manner ,moreover Robin Peel notes: it is a “wonderfully moderate human" ( Qtd in Jill 73).

Robert Scholes observes: “it is about the events of Sylvia Plath's twentieth year about how she tried to die and how they stuck her with glue, it is a fine novel as a bitter and remorseless as her last poems” (Scholes. the new York times. April.11.1971). He goes on to add: “it is about the way this country was in the fifties and about the way it is to lose one's grip sanity and recover it again” (scholes. the New York Times. A pril.11.1971),in the same direction Elein Showalter states “ the bell jar is very much a novel about fifties” , also Harold bloom argue it is "a period piece ".a portrait of a poet as a very young women in the long vanish united states of the 1950”( Qtd in McCann 64).

From his part, Saul Maloff proposes that "The novel itself in no firebrand, it's a slight, charming, sometimes funny and mildly witty at moments tolerably harrowing"(Saul Maloff .the new republic .may 8.1971).while Howard Moss states: “our approach to the novel is impure, The Bell Jar is fiction that cannot escape being read in part as autobiogray...”. (Howard moss .the New Yorker .july.10.1971). Elizabeth Hardwick hold a different view; she assumed that it refers to a mental health issue, when she uttered: “there is a taint of paranoia in the novel, the person who comes through as merciless and threatening locked in violent image”, since she declared “the novel is about madness as well” (Elizabeth Hardwick .the new York review of books .august 12.1971). As a result of gathering the above different perspectives .the Bell Jar counts many important and several issues. Even the novel founded in a distinct time period its cultural themes remain timeless and universal as perloof indicated “Plath's novel timeless and universal” (Dunkle 64), that its studies still studying until today.

#### 1.4 Mental Health in Literature:

Mental health capacity is defined as “the ability to make one's own decision” (Jenkins 3), in contrasts the luck of mental capacity is the mental health illness that is strongly linked with cultural norms and values(Jenkins 3) .mental health illness defines in several ways. Elizabeth Donaldson assumed that it is “ a designation of psychiatric pain” (Donaldson 55)," she goes to add it is “a condition involving pain” ( Donaldson 55), while she does a far from

the feminist perspective of female disorder as “a rebellion” ( Donaldson 55), while others argue that it is considered in literature as “a stigma”. As Heather Bullis demonstrates “There always been as a stigma attached to people with mental illness” (4) however it was an attractive matter was tackled from the Victorian era (1837-1901) and open to exploration. As in Alfred lord Tennyson’s poem “Maud” which it "investigate the morbid, poetic soul, under the blighting influence of recklessly speculative age” when Tennyson his self described the poem (Thomas254).

Furthermore many authors dealt with such matter as airless spaces and psychiatric disability in Louisa may .Alcott’s fiction and Alicia Elliott’s “ a mind spread out on the ground”...etc

In addition many studies tackled this issue ( Andreasen 1987. Jamison 1989.ludwig 1995) which they have illustrate that numerous number of brilliant writers were suffered from mental illness disease by the same token they conducted that the female poets were more likely to suffer than female and male of other types (Kaufman 37) in fact such result was observed before from the earlier by kolly when he said that “those whom imaginative faculty is unordinary developed .the poets in particular. are particularly liable to morbid affections of the mind” (Thomas 254), instead of that the previous studies that mentioned before demonstrated that mental illness existing in the writer group than in the control group specifically by bipolar disorder also has higher rates on those in artistic professions than in non-artistic ones.(Kaufman37 ).

## **1.5 Female madness**

Around all the world from the Victorian era and earlier .women play a silent role .their feelings and emotions or even thoughts are not taken in to consideration however some transformation shed the light particularly in western society after the rise of feminist movements in order to demanding their rights .as a result of this actions the female position started to up rising and get some lights although it is to this day unacceptable and refused in some regions specifically the Arabic and African ones.

In Emily Bronte’s case she chooses to publish her novel Wuthering heights under a pen name Ellis Bell. Another one is the influential author Sylvia Plath who also published



her only novel the bell jar under a false name Victoria Lucas as a result to the denying of written freedom of writing in the society.

women deprivation from their rights together with the rejection, oppression from the society that they faced among their lives resulted in psychological problems which stimulate them to write and create feminist writing to express their emotion and seeking their identities and right.

In "women madness", Phyllis Chesler goes on to consider the madness in all its forms performs the breakdown away from traditional role when she said " what we consider madness whether it appears in women or men .is either the acting out of the devalued female role or the total or partial rejection of one's sex-role stereotype" (chesler 93).

As a result, mental health cannot be comprehended without considering cultural norms thus, the social cultural constructions have shaped our view of madness in gender.

## **1.6 Sylvia Plath's Mental Health**

Sylvia Plath character was so controversial and ambiguous with unclear symptoms that's what makes authors and investigators diagnose her case in to different point of views:

### **1.6.1 Bipolar disorder:**

It "is one of the most distinct syndromes in psychiatry and has been described in numerous cultures over the course of history" (Belmaker 476), its known trait is mania; the counter of depression. It is characterized by various symptoms (Euphoria and high mood, over activity, scarcity of sleep also high rate of optimism. (Belmaker 476), The Bipolar Disorder known before as manic depression or manic depressive illness and varied in to distinct types as bipolar spectrum whose contains: bipolar (one) 1, bipolar (two) 2 or mixed bipolar and cyclothymia. (Encyclopedia Britannica).

### **1.6.2 Depression:**

It is "in psychology, a mood of emotional state that is marked by feeling of low self –or guilt and reduced ability to enjoy life"(Britannica),further more it is

understood by its paradoxes dealing with the relation between the depressed individual's image and the objective fact ( Aaron 3), plus of that it is differentiated in classification by several investigators some of them consider it as psychogenic disorder, others argue that it is caused by organic factors, while the third group preferred to combine the two previous suggestions (Aaron 4).

### **1.6.3 Schizophrenia:**

It is a mental health disorder which has common symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions and blunted emotions, disordered thinking then people suffered by it seems lost from reality. (Britannica).

### **1.7 Sylvia Plath psychiatric case:**

Plath was a genius and clever student, consistently high achiever in her university and college then she becomes a gifted and creative poet and prize winner. Her previous artistic works shed the lights to her confused and ambiguous personality that's she combined in her works between the bright ,high achievement persona ,success together with a sense of isolation and high rate of pessimism like when she say "nothing is real past or future, when you are alone in your room" (Cooper 298) .

Her family history was positive and her premorbid personality was vulnerable to depression. Plath diagnosed with depression at the age twenty, when she attempted to commit suicide in the first time by taking many sleeping pills causing her to vomit them up. She had hidden under a crawl space under her family home enter her coma two days later. (cooper296).

Plath got depressed at twenty years old, and it increased time by time even from small failures although she had never had a manic episode before .She suffered from recurred depression several times with unclear causes. (cooper 296), some critics believed it was the events in her life ranging from her father's death to her marriage with ted Hughes whom she loved and whose betrayal with another women destroyed her, in the same basis the events in her life and her creative works have lead many critics to characterize false diagnoses of her disorder such as post –partum depression and schizophrenia.

There are many mentioned attitudes that contribute to her rejection and depression; she has been disappointed when she failed to get into Harvard writing class. Also, she looked obstinate, angry, dissatisfied when her father passed away and, she thought that the universe is opposite her, when it destroyed her wishes. (Cooper 296).

Consequently, she committed suicide by gassing herself in her kitchen, but her novel still alive till nowadays.

### **1.8 Psychological approach**

So as to be closed or nearly closed from conducting this type of research we use psychoanalysis. This defines as:

“a system of psychological theory and therapy which aims to treat mental disorders by investigating the interactions of conscious and unconscious elements in the mind and bringing repressed fears and conflicts in to the conscious mind by techniques such as by dream as interpretation and free association”, when also it is described as “depth psychology” (Britannica).

According to MD. Mahroof Hussein the flourishing of modern psychology was during the beginning of twentieth century .Its speed led to using it as a method of the development of analyzing the literary text. Its wide spread through the civilization toward many fields as (warfare, mythology, religions) enable it to reach the literary studies. The psychological criticism dealt with the literary work as an expression in the relational forms of the states of mind and structure of the personality of the author .in the same concern mahroof goes to describe the psychoanalytic therapy as the re-narratization of a person’s life. he focused on the interaction between the unconscious and thought together with motives specially motives that classify literature on two levels witting and character action .as well as emphasizing on the subject and relation between meaning and identity as stated in the psychic and cultural forces.

The psychoanalysis is a form of therapy targeted to treat mental disorder by fullifement the correspondence of conscious and unconscious elements of minds (Mahroof 42).

## 1.9 The basis of Freudian psychoanalysis:

This literary modern theory has two accepted significance, firstly the method of treating mentally disordered people and the other is for explaining human mind and complexities. (Mahroof 43).

In 1910 the Viennese physician Sigmund Freud propounded psychoanalysis theory (Fancher 3), however he composed many impressive books such as : studies on hysteria 1895, the interpretation of dreams 1899, the project, the psychopathology of everyday life, Jokes and their relationship to the unconscious. Three essays on the theory of sexuality. All the above works paved the way to the emergence of psychoanalysis as a movement (Fancher 11).

Freud indicates we have three distinct regions on our brain, he deduces it from his first findings: the science of psychoneurosis. Hallucinations. Illusion and what he called the psychopathology of daily existence, the second preconscious and the last unconscious. His ideas were offered in "the interpretation of dreams" that demonstrated the basis of those theories is the dreams (Ritamain 13-18).

### 1.9.1 The unconscious:

Is stated outside the boundaries of the conscious because considered so painful to stay within it .It contains laws of transformation that control the oppression and sublimation .Generally it serves theoretical functions of introducing the link between childhood experiences and adult behaviors comprehensible.(Mahroof 42).

### 1.9.2 Ego /id /super ego

Freud determines three structures of the personality (ego id superego)

**Id:** known as "the animal part of the personality, an unconscious drive to have a lot of sex, survive, and thrive". (Britannica).

**Ego:** the conscious space is responsible for embodying the id's desires in an acceptable way. (Britannica)

**Superego:** the punishment tool of the ego that's makes it feel guilty and shame.  
(Britannica)

## **1.10 The psychoanalytic literary criticism**

Freud extended the relation between literature and psychoanalysis inn order to understand creativity of art work beside that the literary criticism theory can focus on:

### **1.10.1 The author:**

To analyze the author's life and his literary work.

### **1.10.2 The characters:**

To explain the character's motivation and behavior of one character.

### **1.10.3 The audience:**

It is to explain the reaction of those who read it.

### **1.10.4 The text:**

It is for study the language and its symbolism (Mahroof 43).

Relying on fact that we live after the Freudian period we obviously then undoubtedly visualize in a different way the human life rather than the previous people were thought and believes. This approach used for studying literature may be not sufficient enough rather although it had a great importance. (Mahroof 42)

In the end, Freud goes back and retreat about his theory whose consider the human beings as rational machines and our behaviors predicted according to cold hard data ((Britannica)

**1.11 CONCLUSION**

The Bell Jar is a very creative and influential piece of work by Sylvia Plath, one of the first who write against the social constraints and arbitrary norms and laws that's supposed and forced on women in a particular. The novel shows the conflicts of depressed women on her true life during 1950 in America, since it is an autobiographical novel when Sylvia Plath involve her own true life and her family members and any specific person she met in her life using incorrect names and places, as we mentioned above the clear voice of Sylvia Plath and her precise description of feelings and events furthermore expressed a sense of alienation and self destruction created in the novel make a sense of high emotions that's make any reader involve in the events. Finally, the psychoanalysis theory is one of the most suitable method used in English literature noticeable it is known to be a theory of personality.

**Chapter Two:**

**The Bell Jar:**

**Psychoanalytical study**

**2.1 Introduction**

In order to understand any work of art, literature in particular, it is necessary to use a method. Any literary work needs analytical reading to offer a deep understanding of the given work. the psychoanalytical approach is the most appropriate way for the analysis of this dissertation. The latter theory serves ameliorating the analysis of the writer besides the work itself. The psychoanalytical analysis deals with the mental level and the mind of the characters, as well as the events in the story. In our study of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, we intend to apply the psychoanalytical theory, for better understanding of every word and denotation that has been used, secondly to be more closed to the mind since we are assuming the work as autobiographical. This study will shed the light on the psychoanalytical analysis of the main character Esther Greenwood, furthermore, the reasons of her insanity. The traumatic events, pressure, impersonal sources, and other factors contributed in the compartment of her mental disorder. Plath has used in her novel important motifs; the novel name the Bell Jar, the fig tree, and the Rosenberg death, in order to describe her mental issues. In the end, we will discuss Esther's fate and the way the story has been finished.



## 2.2 The Bell Jar: A Study of Mental and Psychic Health

### 2.2.1 The Bell Jar as a symbol

In order to understand any literary work, we should know what its title means and what it refers to. In this novel, the Bell Jar, in its linguistic sense is “A bell shaped glass cover used in a laboratory, typically for enclosing samples.”(Oxford dictionary). While it has a several perceptions according to its field, as mentioned below:

According to Navya Chandran, the Bell Jar is a jar made of glass which is put in an inverted way, it contains gas or keeps a vacuum used in the scientific field to discover and study something curiously. In its literary usage, it expresses the state of being confined. Here in the novel, the Bell Jar refers to the insane state of mind. For instance, in Esther's case, the Bell Jar symbolizes madness. Esther feels that she is amidst an airless glass jug, when she comes into a lunacy state, Esther thought that it corrupts her looking to the world as well as disturbs her relation with others. Though the Bell Jar finally disappeared, she feels that it remains threatening her to drape again. From another perspective, the Bell Jar could refer to the social constraints and the unclear messages that disturb her; metaphorically her moral and bodily stifling case resulting from the bell jar express her previous inescapable depression (2).

In Carmen Birkle's book, *Women Stories in the Looking Glass*, she stated: “The Bell Jar is a metaphor for her own psychological prison” (82). She goes on to add that it “is a metaphor which she (Plath) used to convey the ideas of imprisonment, limitation, and control exerted over her by others” (82). In addition, she insists that this metaphor serves two fundamental tasks: primarily it is the exemplary picture that visualizes the psychological constraints the author suffered from. Expressed in her protagonist Esther, the society forced her to live as the way inside the bell jar, just breath to live but without any power. It isolated her from the world as living alone. Secondly, it has a positive view in the end when the bell jar has disappeared. Writing the novel was her way to keep the Bell Jar hang in the balance and write about despair

and the following comfort. (82). Put differently, the positive side was that she tries to learn how she can deal with it when it comes again. In the same concern, Linda Wagner in her book *Sylvia Plath –A literary life* describes the Bell Jar as a concept referring to women's health (46). So she related it only to the feminine gender in particular. In other words she considered the Bell Jar to be associated only with women, because they are subject to the social constraints while men are free from this arbitrary domination.

### 2.3 The Oedipus complex:

According to Boeree George, Freud derived the name from the famous ancient Greek novel the king Oedipus; the latter is the child in a story who accidentally has killed his father then he married his mother. The children in their childhood need all their mother's attention, care, and love, while they are aware that they have a person whom they should share with the care of mother. The fathers, for instance, now are seen an enemy who should be neglected and get rid of. Lately, experts noticed that human behaviour depends on the sexual desire and instincts from the need for food till need of sex. That it referred to the neurological depiction of physical needs. (13)

The Oedipus complex emphasized the idea that the girl has sexual emotions and needs toward her father which lately transferred it to other males, instead of that the boy has a need and sexual desires towards his mother whereas he replaced it in his adulthood to other females. (Boeree 13). In Esther's case, her relation with her father affects her future relation with men and her sexual relations. Chandran Navya assumed: "she is attracted to Constantin because she felt that as he held her hands, it was as if she was happier than she was since she was nine and ran on the beach with her father in the summer before his death" (413). Because she felt with him the same way she felt when she was with her father.

### 2.4 Inferiority complex:

The inferiority complex is regarded as an unconscious and conscious emotion for someone that he/ she is not sufficient or enough, it is related to concepts such as unconscious, traits, and self-actualization. It is coined by Alfred Alder in 1920, it is used in psychology to interpret one's personality. Adler assumed that anyone has the desire to achievement and supremacy. Meanwhile, the child thought he is inferior to the adult but he didn't recognize this

fact nevertheless he tries to resist it, also the inferiority found for the adults whose fear from being succumbing into failure. (Qtd in Adeka 1). Carmen Birkle described Esther's inferiority to the less of self confident. As she puts it, "Esther attributes the fact that she is not able to write anything to her lack of originality and experience" (81). Freud believed that the human mind has inner strength, it conflicts with each other to find solutions for the complex problems; he stressed as stated below:

### **2.5 Defence Mechanism By Freud:**

The term was coined by Sigmund Freud the first time in 1894 in his book "the neuro-psychoses of defence". It is located in the unconscious level of mind, which is considered as any kind of operations lead to a mediate solution to treat matters which the mind disabled to fix it, it comes from the idea that there is a hidden power in the mind struggle with each other. (Britannica).

### **2.6 The Defense Mechanism Types:**

#### **2.6.1 Repression:**

Used by a person to cover his rejection of a certain situation; "is the withdrawal from consciousness of an unwanted idea, affect, or desire by pushing it down or repressing it into the unconscious part of the mind". (Britannica).

#### **2.6.2 Reaction formation:**

It is an act against the impulse, "is the fixation in consciousness of an idea, affect, or desire that is opposite to a feared unconscious impulse". (Britannica).

#### **2.6.3 Projection:**

"Is a return to earlier stages of development and abandoned forms of gratification belonging to them, prompted by dangers or conflicts arising at one of the later stages". (Britannica).

**2.6.4 Sublimation:**

“Is the diversion or deflection of instinctual drives, usually sexual ones, into no instinctual channels, psychoanalytic theory holds that the energy invested in sexual impulses can be shifted to the pursuit of more acceptable socially valuable achievements”. (Britannica).

**2.6.5 Denial:**

It is used to transfer the unacceptable fact; “is the conscious refusal to perceive that painful facts exist, in denying latent feelings of homosexuality or hostility, or mental defects in one’s child, an individual can escape intolerable thoughts, feelings, or events”. (Britannica).

**2.6.6 Rationalization:**

It is used to relate a certain behavior for a logical reason; it “is the substitution of a safe and reasonable explanation for the true cause of behavior”. (Britannica).

**2.6.7 Displacement:**

It is used to take out the emotions and impulses towards another way; it “is the redirection of an impulse onto a substitute target”, when the impulse and desire are not okay, they can be transferred to another person or something. (Boeree 9).

**2.6.8 Undoing:**

It is used by a person to delete his previous thoughts about something; it “involves “magical” gestures or rituals that are meant to cancel out unpleasant thoughts or feelings after they’ve already occurred”. (Boeree 10).

**2.7 Analysis of Esther’s Greenwood Mental Health**

Despite the fact that Sylvia Plath associated Esther with certain characteristics and psychological makeup, many critics view the same character differently. Critics’ analysis differs from one to another. Esther is an unbalanced character. Esther is the consequence of all the circumstances of the era she lived in. The mental illness that Esther suffers from is the

outcome of her own depression and committing suicide. This case is explained by Freud in his theory of psychoanalysis. According to Freud's Oedipus Complex theory, the absence of the father plays a role in the mental development and process of the child. This case is evident in Esther because when she loses her father, she loses trust, confidence and faith in all men. Esther's father, to Freud, is deemed to be a past experience that has a future outcome. The absence of Esther's father does not only affect her psychological health, but also her psychosexual development. Because of the death of Esther's father at a very young age and his absence, Esther's attitude was abnormal and odd. Her relations with men were poisoned and never understood. Even her relation with her father is based on hatred and submission at the same time (Chandra 412).

With a careful scrutinizing of Esther's mental illness development, the one can deduce that Esther has a mutual reflect on her mind and body. The thing that is so obvious in her loss of control over her body. From her early life, Esther's progress of her mental disease, she feels uncomfortable and that is apparent in her attitudes, for instance, the lack of sleeping, reading, eating, even the need of writing, the loss of interest in enjoyed things, also ideas of harming herself, and the feeling of worthlessness " I felt very still and empty, the way the eye of a tornado must feel, moving dully along in the middle of surrounding hullabaloo" (Plath CH 1). Esther Greenwood simply hates her life with all its aspects; she hated her mother, her relations with men and friends even the pattern that her society follows. Due to her past experiences that are stored in Esther's unconscious, she unintentionally chooses defence mechanisms to cope with her instant internal conflicts and the outer world. In other words, Esther chooses to find a balance between internal life and the outer environment.

According to Freudian composed theory of psychoanalysis, Esther's loss of her father and her disturbing relation with her mother could be included in the oedipal theory. When her relationship with her parents wasn't enough and uncompleted, she tries to succeed in her studies. Although the poisoned relationship between Esther and her own mother, Esther chooses to be educated in order to get her mother's recognition and estimation, which is totally the opposite of the theory of the Oedipus Complex. There is a conflict between the Id and the ego. The id refers to the relationship of Esther to her mother, while the ego refers to what Ester wants. In order to cope with this struggle, Esther's Superego interferes by giving a solution as

an mediator. In other words, the superego helps her to love her mother despite her bad feeling toward her.

When Esther has lost her father, her unconscious was stuck to that experience, thus she looks for an alternative to her father that possesses the same characteristics as her father. Fortunately, she finds Constantin. The latter, for Esther, represents the attributes and even her treatment is like her father. In fact, Constantine's treatment is the thing that attracts her both sexually and mentally. In other words, Constantine is considered as the model of Esther's father. Chandran Navya assumed that "she is attracted to Constantin because she felt that as he held her hands, it was as if she was happier than she was since she was nine and ran on the beach with her father in the summer before his death." (413).

Esther's lack of identity and her will to fit in the American society in the unconscious mind forced her to create another persona and pen name to express her desire to be another girl. At this point, the ego of Esther manifests itself when she creates Betsy 'The alter ego'. Betsy is the model of a kind and innocent girl. The creation of Betsy is Esther's reaction to her dissatisfaction with her society. Also, The Id of Esther manifested in Doreen character, because she represent Esther's inner thought and sexual desires, thus, Doreen is free from any constraints. While Esther's superego manifested when Doreen was in vomit and Esther was confused between giving her help or let her "I decided the only thing to do was a dump her on the carpet and shut and lock the door and go back to bed..." (Plath CH 2). But Esther's superego led her to do the correct choice, to help Doreen "I started to lower Doreen gently onto the green hall carpet, but she gave a low moan and pitched forward out of my arms ..." (Plath CH 2).

### **Reaction Formation**

The hatred of Esther toward her mother is because her mother does not believe Esther's mental health problems and because the mother obliged her daughter to do electric shocks. Esther's mother said that "I knew my baby wasn't like that...like those awful people, those awful dead people at that hospital..., I knew you'd decide to be all right again"( Plath CH 12). However, these reasons were not enough for Esther to treat her mother horribly. In fact, the superego of Esther finds that is more relieving for Esther to treat her mother well. This defence mechanism helps Esther to be socially accepted because she is following the social norms.

**Displacement**: when Esther turns her angry and annoyance from the men who visited her in the hospital toward the hospital nurse.

**Denial:** when she tried to reject the fact that Buddy Willard betrayed her with the waitress girls. That incident affected and disappointed her; therefore, she attempted to convince her inner doubt that it should be denied and not to believe that he is not who initiated the situation as she declared: “of course, somebody had seduce Buddy, Buddy hadn’t started it and it wasn’t really his fault. It was the waitress at the hotel he worked at as a busboy the last summer Cape Cod...” (Plath Ch 6).

**Acting out:** Esther thought ending her life because of the failure to cope with her distaste of life. Thus, she attempted to commit suicide as she puts it: “I thought drowning must be the kindest way to die, and burning the worst... that morning I had tried to hang myself...(Plath Ch 13).

**The Rationalization:** when she tries to rationalize her point of view about the virginity of men and women in that patriarchal society that obliged the female to remain pure until she gets married, instead of that , the male can have the opportunity to choose, or it is acceptable for him to be not virgin when he gets married, for that she decided to lose her purity, so she reject the notion of obliging women to be pure for a male’s satisfaction as she declared: “I couldn’t stand the idea of a woman having to have a single pure life and a man being able to have a double life, one pure and one not ...”(Plath CH 7), even though she was obsessed by the sexual purity that destroyed after Buddy Willard sin.

**The Undoing:** it emerges when Esther discovers that she is like Betsy more than Doreen. Although she used to hate Betsy, she chooses to be loyal to her because she is disappointed in Doreen she puts “deep down, I would be loyal to Betsy and her innocent friends, it was Betsy I resembled at heart...”(Plath CH 2), and as result for her fearing to do not get friends anymore.

**The sublimation:** When Buddy breaks Esther's heart she turns this sad emotion into doing positive things as working hard and replenish her time to hide her injured feelings, by employing the *sublimation* guarding way. She declared: “When I stayed in to study on Saturday nights they were extremely kind to me because they thought I was so brave, working the way I did just to hide a broken heart...” (Plath CH 6).

## 2.8 Causes and Effects of Esther's Mental Illness:

Esther Greenwood was surrounded by her fears and inner unconscious problems, which isolated her from the outside, then pushed her to think of suicide:

- 1- From the primary cause of Esther's depression is her feeling of disappointment when she failed to belong to the Harvard summer school writing class (Moraski 90).
- 2- The Rosenberg's execution, affects her daily thinking and make her feel sad ; Plath puts it as it "is a queer sultry summer that the Rosenbergs were executed" (Plath CH 1). then lately she compared with her shock treatment. (Moraski 89).
- 3- Her fears of losing her inspiration and desire to be a famous poet, when she gets married and brings children, as Buddy Willard told her in a "sinister knowing way", she said, "maybe it was true that when you were married and had children, it was like being brain whished, and afterward you went about numb as a slave in some private totalitarian state" (Plath CH 7).
- 4- Heartbroken and feeling despair, when her expected husband Buddy Willard betrayed her. He had an affair with another woman, though, she viewed him as innocent. She asked him " have you ever had an affair with anyone, buddy?"(Plath CH 6), and she has surprised by his unexpected answer " well, yes, I have", then she disappointed " I expected him to say, No, I have been saving myself for when I get married to somebody pure and a virgin like you". (Plath CH 6).
- 5- The disturbing relationship with her mother, who refused to understand Esther's mental illness and because she insisted on her to treated by shock treatment. Aurelia did not understand what Esther needed while pretending as being a perfect mother that was a silly thing for her to do" I said to doctor Nolan nodded. She seemed to know what I meant, I hate her, I said, and waited for the blow to fall. But Doctor Nolan only smiled at me as if something had pleased her very, very much, and said, "I supposed you do". (Plath CH 16).
- 6- Esther rejects the general social principles, that the women are supposed to subject to the men's superiority, and stands in front of achieving her dreams. Also it is perspective about female and male virginity. She rejects the injustice beliefs which give males the freedom to choose to be pure or not on the same time oblige the woman to remain virgin until she gets married. It is stated in the novel as follows: " it might be nice to be pure and then to marry a pure man, but what if he suddenly confessed he wasn't pure after we were married, the way buddy Willard had ..." (Plath CH 7).
- 7- The loss of her father during her childhood, at the age of eight years only, has a deep effect in her mental case such as she stopped feeling happiness from her father death " only



purely happy until was nine years old... After that [she] had never been really happy again ...” (Plath CH 7).

## 2.9 Esther ways of suicide:

- 1) Esther wasn't very attracted to religion as a result of losing her faith when her father gets away. Moreover, her failure to deal with her mental disorder .So she decided to choose suicide to free herself from oppression, thus she tries to commit suicide several times. Her first attempt to suicide was when she took her mother's sleeping pills, as Brian cooper illustrated “ she swallowed all her sleeping pills and lay in a coma for two days” (297).
- 2) Another attempt was when she drove her car to the bridge. She narrates the incident as: “without thinking, open the door and plunge out through the stream of traffic to the rail of the bride. one jump, and the water would be over me...” (Plath CH 15).
- 3) The third suicide attempt was by trying to drown herself during swimming: “the only thing to do was to drown myself then and there...” (Plath CH 13).
- 4) Then her fourth way was by hanging herself “I thought drowning must be the kindest way to die, and burning the worst...that morning I had tried to hang myself...” (Plath CH 13).

## 2.10 Symbolism in the Bell Jar:

Sylvia Plath has used different symbols to describe and express her desires and emotions:

### 2.10.1 The fig tree:

This metaphor used by Sylvia to convey Esther's options and confusion to choose her future planning. While the possibility to choose one fig instead of many increased her destruction:

“One fig was a husband and a happy home and children, and another fig was a famous poet and another fig was Ee Gee, the amazing editor, and another fig was a brilliant professor, and another fig was Europe and Africa and south America, and another fig was Constantin and Socrates and Atilla 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". (Plath CH 7).

According to Moraski, her stress came from her panic, that this fig will "wrinkle and go black" one by one. (92).

### 2.10.2 The Rosenberg's death:

Plath has utilized the Rosenberg's doom, in the beginning, to recover the bell jar themes, as the simile between names when Ethel complete name is Esther Ethel Greenglass Rosenberg, this displays the relation between Esther and the women that both have injustice treatment from the American social perspective.( Dunkle 66).

### 2.11 Esther fate

Esther Greenwood recovery was expressed by the statement becoming "all right again"(Plath CH 1). It is achieved due to her acceptance to her role and functions as housewife and mother, although she refused the idea of marriage and had children earlier in her life. When she considers being a wife and doing her husband's private matters (cleaning, washing, preparing food....) is so boring and gloomy "this seemed [to her] a dreary and wasted life for a girl with fifties years of straight A's"(Plath CH 7), and the idea of having children make her "sick"(Moraski 88). Esther has changed from a distressed girl to a satisfied woman. through the end of the novel, the decision of the doctors to demonstrate her healing to leave the mental institution, will enable her to back on her natural life and complete her study then graduate, however, she has transformed to "patched retreaded and approved for the road", and her animation to negativity, and from the rejection of marriage to future wife. (Moraski 92). In addition she mentioned details describing her mental case after getting a baby, for instance, she enjoyed her gifts that had giving to her before her mental decline:

"For a long time after ward I hid them away, but later, when I was right again, I brought them out, and I still have them around the house, I use the lipsticks now and then, and last week I cut the plastic starfish off the sunglasses case for the baby to play with". (Plath CH 1).

Esther's plans for future are completely in contrast with her present situation, and her direction to narrating the story from a house wife and mother model. Also leaving her inspiration and achieving good career, then she accepted to the social expectation indicates the fact that the bell jar had failed to destroy the social perspectives as she wished before.(Moraski 92).

It is supposed that Esther has been treated in the end, even though that never been clear or told through the story. This imbigiuty shapes a doubt that maybe when she entered with Doctor Nolan in a new room to meet the doctors was a sign to another Bell Jar. (Cliffs notes). Furthermore, Moraski has demonstrated "the Bell Jar is "fascinating novel because it is unfinished"; Plath thought of composing her second novel when the main character could in good manner interpret what it was to be "all right again" (97).

**2.12 CONCLUSION:**

Esther Greenwood's mental illness and her decline into depression were the most important themes in the novel. In the above chapter, we used a psychoanalysis view to analyse this character and the story by using Sigmund Freud's theory, which depends on the personality theories such as ego, id, and superego, to make a better understanding and a deep comprehension of the story as a whole and the main character; the protagonist Esther Greenwood in particular. We have also analysed the causes of her mental breakdown and its effects. It was attributed to her inner and outer struggles. Furthermore, Like Plath herself, her previous experiences that she faced in her past affected her present. Esther's memories were restored in her unconscious mind; Esther, in order to deal with those issues and protect herself, used a *defence mechanism* that was theorised by Freud, then finally identifies the metaphors she used and her destiny along with the novel which represents her journey of treatment that consequences in her slow recovery.

**Chapter three:**

**Sylvia Plath reflection on**

**fiction**

**3.1 Introduction**

Author's personal experiences, historical events along with the effect of the individuals around him or her affect the literary works they have composed. Consciously or not, the writer expresses and uses his/her emotions, ideas, beliefs and memories through the work of art, moreover exhibit their talent and creativity also employing self identity what might have a big influence in a particular domain or specific period. Sylvia Plath is a case in point; in the *Bell Jar* she was influenced by her personal life which manifested her persona and its struggle to achieve her identity. The author herself experienced almost the same struggles ranging from social norms' repudiation to depression and suicide same as her counterpart in her fictional autobiography. Plath in the novel reshaped herself and mirrored it in the main character Esther Greenwood who had the similar circumstances and beliefs. Although, unlike Greenwood, Plath put an end to her life and career by suicide, the protagonist survived such struggles. This chapter will discuss the reflection of Plath's own life in shaping the fictional protagonist. We will analyze the similarities between depression in the novel and in the author's life as well as Esther's fate in the novel.

### 3.2 Persona Background:

#### Persona:

Coined by the Swiss Carl Jung and obtained from the Latin word persona. In psychology, it is the personality that the human being shows it to others, it is distinct from the actual one self, as the Etruscan masks for mimes. It is considered as a kind of archetype the person used to treat with its surrounding environment by determines his function on it. It helped to make convention between the person self and the society, therefore, it facilitates for the person to deal with society.(Britannica encyclopedia).

Carl Jung in his book *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* describes it as “mask worn by an actor to signify his role”. (Jung 164). It is occasional and spot portion of the collective psyche, thus its name considered reflecting only the collective psyche, rather than it can not be accepted as individual. It is a mask which makes others and self think that one is individual, as collective psyche is talking, while in the mask is removed during the analysis of the persona, however it’s not real ,it’s a agreement and deal between the individual and society. It is a way of resemblance embrace, it about how a person should “appear to be” .its name ,office ,belonging, when all that somehow is actual ,the persona is a appearance contain two dimensional fact, to give it a pen name ,but it might be false if it submit this issue in the absence of knowing it has something individual in the specific choice in the meaning of persona.( Jung 164-165).then exploring that what looks individual is in fact a collective psych.

Through studying the persona and shadow in analytical psychology and existentialist philosophy that assumed :As much as “the persona is a mask of the soul” , “The shadow is... a sort of counterpart”(Bolea 90), in logic it’s the relation between the appearance and the essence, as same as the truth and untruth, the first point of view was by v. Dem. Zamfierescu whose suggested if persona is the mask between the ego and the outer world , further more the shadow is the link between the ego and the self, while both focused on the individual that had an invisible or repressed depth. In addition, it may be defined as “being-in the world” or “being with” that the society obliged the individual to deal with professional persona, the persona and shadow are in one way or another are separated, when it belonging to psychology.( Bolea 84-85).

According to the same author Stefan Bolea the persona is a kind of opposition between the subject and object, the particular and general, it is a convention between the individual and society, mentioning the approved way that person should appear according to the social acceptance, furthermore, it is described in terms of “the persona is that which in reality one is not, but which one self as well as others think one is”.(86)

The persona known as social archetype, in order to underline the importance of the world in its constitution, fully in conscious level, as an example, noticing that we talk freely and truly with ourselves instead of that lying to the world, without blaming our selves or feeling of making a sin, thus it is like a window to show our best. Therefore, it has two sides ; the negative one is hiding our evil ego and bad self , while the positive is to stimulate likeness from the others. Jung proposed that is so wrong that one person identifies with one’s Job or title, according to its decorum, which he is looks meaningless without it, hence the self cannot be identifying by the persona, in the other hand the society forced the self to identify with the persona. As an example, “a grocer who dreams is offensive to her buyer, because such a grocer is not wholly a grocer”. So he should do compromise with his function.(Bolea 86 - 88).

In case of the world transcend the persona ,underneath not only the ego either the self, the persona state in the middle of the ego and the world, then the shadow, it is a cover between the ego and self, although the persona has an external effect ,the shadow preferred to stay hidden and invisible, live in the underground and becoming harmful, threatening and denser, the ego id the centre between the persona and the shadow, the world and the underworld, the social and evil archetype, “ persona and shadow are usually more or less exact opposites of one another, and yet they are as close as twins”. (Bolea 89).

In Plath fiction, Sylvia generally ignored and cancelled the mother character, despite the possibility that the presence of this persona is reasonable, although the father character is overlooked in her works, the mother character is neglected. Psychologist Alice Miller suggested there are several reasons behind the non-attendance of her mother in her literary works thus Miller describes it in a symbiotic relationship, as the way the parental power forced the child to believe in his /her wrong self and perform it. (Wagner Martin 24).

### **3.3 Self-reflection on literary work:**

Self-reflection involvement of the author is described in different perspectives. As Muzakki in his seeking for the nature of literary work described it as imagery world, composed from ideas and language, expressed in the literary work, both of the items comes from the inner



portion of the writer. Also he illustrated that's it should belong to reality in somehow or such as a mirroring of the writer actual life. (Qtd in Nurhamidha 195).

Another way of thinking, in the same concern, looks to that reflection as a review of experience put as a source of the current decision; its looks as the author portrays his/her self in the same manner as portraying the characters in the literary work. It has the capacity to waken an individual's awareness of her/his feelings in a great way, which to increase emotionally better, together with appreciation to superior self development. It is maintained that self reflect obviously as a skill that might be drilled according to new angles of appearance. Through trained the expert author could shift his appearance from one character to another in several literary works, for instance, such as a writer compose a fancy novel with his or her involvement ,despite the fact that he is mentally unhappy. (Nurhamidha, purwanto, Ekaningsih 195).

### **3.4 Characterization**

It is any effort used by the writer in the sake of providing a description of the character, which it is classified in to two types: direct and indirect characterization, however the first type is telling the reader immediately, while the second type is to refer to anything offered to the reader through alternative sources, moreover, it may be classified in to essential categories: physical depiction, actions, speech, reactions. (Reams 4).

### **3.5 Plath reflects on Esther:**

Starting from the basis that a numerous number of critics argue that the novel is of a semiautobiographical nature, Plath declared through her speech that her novel is "an autobiographical apprentice work"(Qtd in Dunkle 60). Besides, the obvious parallel between the events and experiences in novel and Plath's real life events shed the light to the similarities and differences between the protagonist in the novel and the real character of the female author Sylvia Plath. This fact led many critics to consider the match between the author and the fictional character (Dunkle 60).

As Birkle states that Plath used the novel as "an image for herself"(81). in order to clarify and discover her previous life and comprehend it deeply. She puts main character Esther as mirror reflection for herself, that she has undergone all what she had really experienced. Thus, Esther lived in a way as Plath designed it for her. Plath though that her dominance over her protagonist character, it may applied to herself also.

Further more , Esther like Plath had a lack of certainty of success in her future and her dream of writing and becoming a famous author, or becoming a good house wife, whereas she meet by a chance many options but she didn't profiteer, thus she used the metaphor of fig tree to express her inner struggle

“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 (...) 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 CH 7).

Esther and Plath have the same family situation, they were losing their fathers in early age and grown with their mothers, with one brother. Both of them prevail tournament of writing in New York where their depression began emerged, and suffered from mental illness disease which they experienced a mental breakdown during their adolescent and after a period of treatment in a psychiatric hospital after their first attempting of suicide.

In the physical side, they have a different way of looking to themselves, although both seemed tall and slim by the reading of the novel and biography, but they differentiated in interesting of their outside look. Esther was not aware of her beauty whereas Plath did the opposite, that the first consider her friend Doreen more beautiful than her, when the men interested in Doreen rather than Esther.

“For a minute I had a wild hope we might pair off according to size, which would line me up with the man who had spoken to us in the first place , and he cleared a good six feet, but, he went ahead with Doreen and didn't give me a second look” (Plath CH1).

Also they share the same feeling of depression and sadness then the impulse of suicide, that emerge in Plath works as “a birthday present” (Plath), which seemed happy poem by her title, while it contains a sad content about a cry of despair, presenting her mental illness and the desire of suicide. By her using of the first person the reader would notice that the feelings and story of the author’s own. As same as in the bell jar, which states the same feelings and ideas that emphasize the idea that Esther has the same life as Plath.

As long as Esther is Plath, so the characters also have their similar version in the novel like Buddy Willard resembled Dick Norton. They were sons of Aurelia’s friends, and they attend a medical school, and both built close relationships; Esther with Buddy Willard and Plath with Dick Norton, which those relationships have changed.

Another real character has a copy in the fiction, in the Bell Jar: Jay Cee, and her actual one Cyril Abels also Ms Philomena Guinea as likely as Mrs. Olive Higgins. Furthermore, the event considering as the reflection of Plath’s actual life, as her relation with her mother Aurelia that confused specially after she allowed her to shock treatment, in addition, Esther’s feeling of betrayal from her mother, and from her friend Buddy Willard when he betrayed her with another girl and her boss Jay Cee when she doubted in her talent.

By taking in account all these similarities and others, Plath’s novel might be viewed as an autobiographical novel, in another hand she used imaginative characters, as Doreen, Betsy, and Joan. She used them to enrich the novel by fictionalized elements, when Betsy represents the kind and innocent side of Esther.

“I made a decision about Doreen that night. I decided I would watch her and listen to what she said, but deep down I would have nothing at all to do with her. Deep down, I would be loyal to Betsy and her innocent friends. It was Betsy I resembled at heart”. (Plath CH 2).

In other hand, Doreen represents the sexual, restless and daring side. In other words, she represents Esther’s inner desire and what she wants to be.

“It was so dark in the bar I would hardly make out anything except Doreen, with her white hair and white dress she was so white she looked silver. I think she must have reflected the neons over the bar. I felt myself melting in to the shadows like

the negative of a person I'd never seen before in my life". (Plath CH 1).

Another essential character, which considered as the double of Esther is Joan Gilling, is a totally fictionalized character, which suffered from the same mental disease as her, and they were treating in the same sanatorium. Also they are coming from the same hometown and made relation with buddy Willard, in addition they have the same future dram, and then they have the same idea about the social constraints.

“Joan Giling came from our home town and went to our church and was a year ahead of me at college. She was a big wheel president of her class and physics major and the college hockey champion. She always made me feel squirmy with her starey pebble colored eyes and her gleaming tombstone teeth and her breathy voice. She was big as a horse, too, I began to think buddy had pretty poor taste”. (Plath CH 5).

Joan's suicide at the end of the novel excludes the alter ego of Esther and reinforces the idea of rebirth, which helped her to go outside the Bell Jar.

By taking in consideration the real events and characters it could classify the novel as autobiography. Whereas lejeune theory destroyed this option, when it demonstrates that the novel does not compose a very essential items as the autobiography pact; that refers to the identity between the author and protagonist, when the bell jar does not contain the name of the protagonist the same as author name or a sign in the cover declare that's a biography. Moreover, since Plath used an imaginary events a characters that create a fictional pact not a biography one, so since the novel is not biography, it remains two choices: auto fiction that can use the fictional element and reshape the truth, but it demands Onomastic identity together with confusion between the author and protagonist, and unclear purpose, that's Plath didn't employed it, however the last is an autobiographical novel, that's emphasize on trauma happened to the author. Plath used the first person narrator despite the fact that she hide herself behind Esther character, as a result the novel looks an autobiographical novel, although it consists of a hidden and fictional elements.

According to Harper perennial, in the second page of the bell jar, in 2005 edition, he suggests that “this book is a work of fiction, all characters and events are the product of the author’s imagination. Any similarities to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental”(2). In fact through the reading of Plath biography and previous works stressed the proposition that the novel is about Plath herself and personality and experiences. Although it contain a fictional characters and events then put a false names to the individuals and places.

### 3.6 The Reflection of Society during the 1950s in the Bell Jar

“The problem that has no name”(Qtd in Ghandeharion 64). that expression used by the feminist writer Friedan to describe the female position during the 1950 of the American society in particular, when the women felt as something incorrect happened but they couldn’t determine it, as Plath state in her novel the bell jar to describe her abnormal feeling “I know there was something wrong at me” (Plath CH 1). The socio cultural factors played a big contribution through Esther and Plath life. Thus she has a several perspectives of diverse issues, which this novel depicts the impacts of this pressure on the women soul and body, one of the most important matters emerged in this area is women dissatisfaction and frustration, which consider the women as being for marriage and building a family, thus she waste between achieve her career or the society expectation to be a house wife, Esther didn’t recognize If the marriage will define her life, she illustrated:

“It would mean getting up at seven and cooking to my husband eggs and bacon and toast and coffee ...and when he come home after a lively, fascinating day he’d expect a big dinner, and I’d spend the evening washing up even more dirty plates till I fell to bed, utterly exhausted”( Plath CH 7)

She concluded this from women around her, those she didn’t like. Through the Friedan experiment about considering the women role as a wife or mother, resulted the ultimate number of girls supposed to study and working on high position then meet a expected men to marry him “and that’s as far as a girl has to think. After that, your husband determines and fills your life”

(Qtd in Ghandeharion 64). As the Freudian believes “the anatomy is destiny” (Qtd in Ghandeharion 65). Esther rejected interpret the women as an object of desire and a vehicle for procreation, however she looks to the pregnant women as “an elephant, a ponderous house, a melon strolling on two tendrils”( Qtd in Ghandeharion 65) . The American society during this harsh period looks to the childbirth as marvelous event by women whose consider as a icon for birth and procreation, in spite the fact that pregnancy and childbirth are wonderful idea, Plath and Friedan demonstrated that it is a way of pressure rather than for support, thus the gender equality is neglected whereas the women inferiority is promoted. During the 1950 the society determines the role of women as wife and mother, which Friedan called “True feminine fulfillment”. (Qtd in Ghandeharion 66), consider it as every women dream, it is the women “ whose greatest ambition has been marriage and children” (Qtd in Ghandeharion 66). According to the that society, however Esther rejected this stereotypical picture , but in simultaneously she confused between the two options that referred to her desire or society expectation, as Friedan suggested that contradiction is because the missing of role model which gives a perfect alternatives, that Esther want someone to suggest for her. When she represent her fears and confusion to chose through the fig tree.(Ghandeharion 64-66).

### 3.7 The Style and Language in the Bell Jar

As much as Sylvia Plath, the Bell Jar is about a depressed case of young women as seen before, thus, the trauma and depression are inseparable with the social experiences that happen in the sufferers live. So the language of trauma is so influential, as Cathy Caruth illustrated “he demanded to find a language for trauma is ...a paradoxical obligation to speak without burying the silence at the hurt of the story, to find a language that bears within it, although it does not submit to, the silencing power of the event”.(Caruth 2), which used to express your trauma and do not remain silent, as well as for women to express her issues and selves. As Elissa Marder states “ because traumatic events often happen due to social forces as well as in the social world, trauma has an inherently political, historical and ethical dimension”(“The bell jar: A novel of the fifties”). The women who cannot have an attention and care in society might go through a hard mental illness, as the case of Esther in the Bell Jar that the language was an essential concern as martin Wagner mention “the final question for Esther in her prison house of language misnamed, misaddressed, misheard, and misidentifies , is what does language mean? What does language do?” (78). In other words, Esther was misunderstood even with language; nobody can comprehend her behaviors and desires or thought for future. Through the literary language in the novel makes the protagonist an adult that capable for talking about herself and

shock, however let the reader free to understand the novel from the present to past or from past to past flashback. Esther view from the Bell Jar the limit of language itself thus she used (I) to represent other as Britzolakis demonstrates “at one level of course the glassed in cage the alienated perspective of the bell jar of self consciousness is coextensive with the prison house of language itself, in which the I is always inscribed as another” (Britzolakis 18). in other words is to use the own experience of somebody conditioning to put the limit of language, together with what it is capable to use from words and which is not and the effective way for using I referring to others.

In other side, according to the style of language of madness, the using of connotation and connections in this novel in Jessica Phillips perspective .she argue that “Plath’s writing brings words that do not share obvious connection into relation through implicit and explicit comparison that is through metaphors and simile” (Phillips 53), as seen before the (use of the Bell Jar and Fig Tree), which this preference create a semantic tension which resulted in wondering the reader. This surprise happened by the ambivalence between the reader anticipation and the divest truth relation, which this mystery and semantic tension made a well contribute to Plath writing as Jessica assume “ I will argue that ambiguity and semantic tension are positive attributes of Plath’s writing because they reveal the extent to which reader can never be certain about what she attempting to convey about Esther experience”.(Phillips 37) , furthermore the Bell Jar had written in a formal language style, that the protagonist talking to the reader immediately, Plath used this kind to stimulate the reader attention and make them goes through story as living it.

**3.8 Conclusion:**

In Sylvia Plath the Bell Jar, the characters and author resembled in a highly and very strong way, which the style of narration and the whole story events depends on her own experiences, such as the author feelings and characters through the story based on real model, not only Esther Greenwood but also most of the novel characters. Plath transposed them from real life to fiction in fantastic and so perfect way. Thus, it is so hard to identify the real model due to external information. Despite the fact that she used a fictional characters as had mentioned above to put some fictional element on the novel in order to attract the reader attention. Regarding to the essence of Esther Greenwood the alter ego of Plath and the author herself, the two are mixed which any reader through recognizing the author's life and experiences, might be unable to separate the real characters from the literary one. This is referring to Plath's ability in expressing her feelings and personality beneath the mask of fictional characters which create a very wonderful novel.



# **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

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The Bell Jar portrays Sylvia Plath's point of view about the female situation and struggles during the twentieth century. Women had suffered a lot because of the injustice and strict social rules, furthermore they encounter various obstructions and compressing in their lives in that time, which usually lead in worst cases to insanity and suicide. As it had been mentioned above, Sylvia Plath provides a accurate depiction of her own experience through her main character Esther Greenwood, the mirrored version of Plath herself, which the last emphasized on the ambivalence between Esther's unorthodox expectations and the rigid attitude of America in 1950. Esther as Plath wished to pursue her future plans as a famous writer but she shocked of the social attitudes which forced her to choose between motherhood and career.

As the novel is autobiographical, the protagonist Esther reflects Sylvia's disappointment and life experiences, she suffered from a mental illness and hospitalized in a psychiatric institution because of her unconscious mind effected from her bad experiences, she encountered several factors as her rejection to the social rules , her disappointment from her ex boy friend who betrayal her, and father's absence, troubling relation with her mother, friends...,her surrender by those issues puts her in a midst of *a bell jar* which alienated her from the outer world. Her depression's episodes and her inability to deal with, pushed her to attempt suicide several times, but fortunately she eventually recovered. Despite the fact that Esther and Plath are seemingly one person, the character in the novel was more powerful and brave because she managed to overcome her pain mentally and socially while the author, in contrast, failed to get rid from her inner disputes, and eventually committed suicide two months after the publication of the novel. In fact, the Bell Jar is a novel of a female writer who is trying to be herself and to prove herself. All the barrier and anguish she encountered in her attempts merely to be herself are discussed extensively in fiction instead of overcoming them in reality. She made her voice heard in fiction instead of her failure in life.

## General Conclusion

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In the first chapter, we have discussed the work of Sylvia Plath in relation to her personal life and her mental illness, we have conclude that Sylvia disorder was as a result of outer and inner issues, also we have investigated the relation of literature with mental health, As a result, we have conclude that mental health is strongly linked to literature, and effects the poets authors more than the other genres, and the female more than the male writers. We have also investigated the situation of female during the era; as a result we have deduced that social constraints and gender roles contributed to female madness during the ninetieth century. Also we have discussed some element in the psychoanalysis theory in relation to literature.

In the second chapter, we have applied the psychoanalysis theory by Freud in the analysis of the work as well as the protagonist Esther greenwood, we have conclude that Esther suffered from depression and she has used a defense mechanisms to overcome her inner struggle. We have also investigated Esther fate in the novel; as a result eventually she could recover then survive according to social perspectives.

The last chapter tackled Plath reflection on the work as well as the main character and the writing of the novel. We have conclude that Plath has a big effect on Esther greenwood indeed both are the same person and they have experienced the same issues, also that the bell jar is portrayed a chronicle decline of a young women in to depression which is referred to herself and her own life experiences..

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