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**FACULTY OF LETTERS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
OPTION: LITERATURE & CIVILIZATION**

The Metamorphosis in Becoming a Woman in Patriarchal Hierarchies for Plath & De Beauvoir “Anecdotal Testimonies”

**Thesis Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for Master's Degree in Language, civilization, and Literature**

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Academic Year: 2022/2023

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Declaration

We hereby declare that the thesis entitled, “The Metamorphosis in Becoming a Woman in Patriarchal Hierarchies (Anecdotal Testimonies)”, is our own work and that all the sources we have quoted have been acknowledged by means of references.

Signatures:

Date:

Dedication

To everyone who taught me a letter in this world... To my dear heart, my FATHER ... To my heaven, my dear MOTHER... To my dear HUSBAND " Mohamed "and my CHILDREN "Rokaya and Bahaeddine. To my BROTHERs, SISTERS, and loved ones .I do not forget my brother's wife FAKKAR. Kh, for her help and support for me ... To all the administrative and educational family... To all of these, I dedicate my humble work, which I hope others will benefit from.

Djihad Chelali

I'm dedicating this thesis to my beloved parents "Mouhamed Rabie "& "Hakima May Allah protect them, I would like to thank them for all their efforts, motivation. and prayers

To my beloved husband "Ayman Siad for loving and supporting me

To my dearest brothers Houssam, Ayman, Nabil, and my sister Maissa

and my dearest grandmother Kelthoum.may Allah protect her

To all my family.

Barkat Soumia

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Abstract

This research aims to highlight the significant prejudice against women which in consequence leads to a serious impact on both the mental health of females and the image of women in patriarchal hierarchies. In this sense, this research tends to tackle the issues of gender stereotype, subjugation, and existentialism that were highly crucial concerning the conceptions held by social stratification in the period following WW2. Therefore, martial laws and arbitrariness in the ingrained oppressive patterns were a point of sublimation for Simone De Beauvoir and Sylvia Plath to question their role as women in their societies in specific and in the world above all, and on what grounds they shall stand. *The Bell Jar* and *The Second Sex* offered an explicit account of what is it like to feel suffocated and othered in society by refusing any means of typecast, preordained purpose, and lack of freedom.

Keywords: Existentialism, Gender, Individuality, Othering.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Historically, women have been adhered into all the types of oppression, to make a headway of the injustice witnessed by females, intersectionality identifies as the prominent figure of all the discrimination females had to go through during the process of becoming a woman in a society that is entrenched upon the charge of the patriarchal hierarchy as the supreme authority and power to dictate social rules upon the gratification of the male dominated society.

Centuries ago, communities have been built on patriarchal hierarchies, spanning across different structures such as monarchies and religious institutions, in this sense in every bit of history, women faced frequent exclusion from roles of power, leadership, and influence. Moreover, their societal contributions were frequently undervalued and merely recognized. Unfortunately, being trapped in patriarchal structures women had no choice but to be forced to be obedient because they had to legally and socially be subservient to men.

The discrimination and profiling of women inspired many feminist writers to write about this spectrum as a dominant issue of all, Simone de Beauvoir and Sylvia Plath both had strong opinions on patriarchy and its impact on women. De Beauvoir as a French existentialist, philosopher, and feminist writer famously wrote "*The Second Sex*," the groundbreaking feminist work that was published in 1949. In her book, de Beauvoir argued that women are not born but rather made 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman', and that their position in society as women is a result of social and cultural constructions that highly reinforces gender roles and perpetuate all types of discrimination and inequality.

This thesis attempts to distinguish the aspects of oppression through the conception of other/second as a perception of women's value in a patriarchal hierarchy and also the notion of the bell jar by Plath as a representation of the female entrapment in the due order of society, in order to scrutinize women's oppression and injustice, initially this research aims to

represent the two important feelings a woman go through her entire life starting from the point she comes out as a fetus, baby, toddler, child, and most importantly an adolescent through the expressions of Plath and Beauvoir as women first and as feminist writers secondly, therefore, as the bell jar expression pertain to the second sex perfectly the thesis statement of the research paper reveals that the metamorphosis in becoming a woman in patriarchal hierarchies for Plath and De Beauvoir “anecdotal testimonies” shall be explored as a feminist conundrum, then measured upon the psychoanalytic feminism theory to represent the areas of stress for women over ages, and how science represents women under such stress and limitations with the response of feminism on such interpretations, this work will carefully highlight the important meanings of both works selected to provide a clear understanding of womanhood exploitation through the answers for the following subsidiary questions:

- ❖ To what extent a woman’s behavior, mannerisms, and aspirations for the future can be abnormal according to the society?
- ❖ How far can ingrained arbitrary conceptions about females affect their process of becoming? and in doing so, their mental health and life?

So, we divide our research paper into two chapters : First of all, the first chapter is a theoretical framework of *The Bell Jar* and *The Second Sex* as the fundamental elements of the research, moreover, the second chapter embodies the analytical sphere of the thesis, to delve into the analysis of the research questions for further inquiry of the given information about the significance of Simone and Plath’s ideas on femininity and womanhood, this research is an account to represent the feminine dilemma in patriarchal hierarchies on the ground of relating two works together to build a significant understanding on the feminine psyche and how society stands as the main element of burden with many aspects of hypocrisy and power abuse.

The Research Problem

Systematically, developing a sense of identity was always hard for women, especially in patriarchal hierarchies, therefore the research problem extends from the thesis statement that stands for significant problematic terminology ‘metamorphosis’ that was critically chosen to accurately address the issue that made De Beauvoir and Plath and, every woman alive to suffer from particular injustices in the atmosphere they lived, are living or will endlessly continue to live in. Luckily people like Plath and Simone were brave enough to express such words to make sure everything is clear enough.

Metamorphosis refers to a process of transformation or change, often used to describe a significant or profound alteration in form, character, or nature. The term is commonly used in biology to describe the transformation of a larva into an adult, such as the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly. However, it can also be used more broadly to describe any kind of significant change or transformation, such as a personal transformation, a cultural or societal shift, or a dramatic change in the course of history.

This research is an attempt to explore two extraordinary works of literature by Simone De Beauvoir the French feminist, activist as well as an existentialist philosopher that had the shrewdness to present her book “*The Second Sex*” where she explores areas that she considered a myth of femininity, and Sylvia Plath the young poet whom “*The Bell Jar*” belongs to which was regarded as a feminist manifesto, both of their works were at some point anecdotal testimonies which productively serve literature and feminism.

In this thesis, it is provided that the research will focus on exploring, and analyzing the areas of the experience of being/becoming a woman in patriarchal hierarchies. Based on the philosophy of Plath and De Beauvoir as the fundamental variables in the research problem, therefore to pursue accurate findings it is a must to understand and analyze both works through the psychoanalytic feminism theory.

The Aim of the Research

The role of identity loss, othering, subjugation, and inability to decide as serious factors to fully govern women under the realm of men's manuscript; has not been widely considered a serious threat to the psyche of women. This thesis aimed to gain an understanding of the dimensions of the issue presented which is regarded as conventions and sacred norms since humanity's dawn. The influence of such a mindset paralyzed women like Sylvia Plath in *Bell Jars* and women like Simone De Beauvoir in the sensuality of the second and others for the man-kind. Hereafter this research aims to provide a crystal clear rational understanding of how women feel in the process of being/becoming by the perspective of Plath in her fig tree story in "The Bell Jar" and the conception of becoming a woman in "*The Second Sex*" for De Beauvoir, in which both of these feminist writers serve an amazing feminist duality of womanhood attributes and essence.

Methodology of Study

This research is an endeavor to understand both the philosophy of feminism and the existential dilemma through the experiences of Sylvia Plath and Simone De Beauvoir, which are substantiated as anecdotal testimonies in their works that this research tends to investigate and analyze in order to provide a comprehensive account of how these two women documented their suffering from mental stress due to the limitations imposed to them in the light of no more than social conventions implied by the opposite gender.

This research will tackle two significant bodies of work which perfectly describe life for women when they are exposed to certain distress and anxiety to the extent they get entrapped in an identity loss situation which according to feminism is called gender disparity, therefore this research tries to understand how the society affects the marginalized individual and how the alienated individual explains reacts and documents their journey.

Both Plath and De Beauvoir explicitly expressed their discontent with the double standardized society they lived in and how arbitrary it was for the society to draw the picture of gender roles and the dichotomy of subject and object that subjects women to inferiority and otherness to cause mental distress that affects women's psyches severely.

Making matters, madness was diagnosed by men and referred to women, in this situation the feminist voices of Plath and Beauvoir had, were only to explore the areas of oppression in patriarchal hierarchies that caused such mental discomfort for women such as anxiety, madness, hysteria, depression, and schizophrenia, therefore this research utilizes psychoanalytic feminism to understand how oppression is in the eyes of Sylvia and Simone because according to Kristina Wolff in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of sociology* following the *Psychoanalytic Feminism* article, the pattern of oppression is already integrated into the society, she argues that:

"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" (Wolff).

Literature Review:

Patriarchal oppressive patterns on women have always been a crucial element on both social and literary levels. In this sense, history has always been an affluent account for many break throughs of numerous literary contributions that offered portraits of how patriarchal hierarchies introduced the subject and object dichotomy; however, many recent studies have focused on the issue of autonomy, while there has been much research on the roots of sexism

in patriarchal hierarchies, few researchers have taken into consideration the fact that despite its' stability, harmony itself wouldn't introduce many astonishing works of literature.

The obvious despair in literary works that speaks of fear, frustration, alienation, trauma, and personal experience is a frightening door to open on the human experience in terms of despair and mental health issues that lead to death. This thesis entitled "The Metamorphosis in Becoming a Woman in Patriarchal Hierarchies for Plath & De Beauvoir "Anecdotal Testimonies" tends to focus on both concepts of transcendence and immanence as two significant factors within the subject and object dichotomy as a topic that addresses naked truth rather than any assumptions made about women's life, mental health, social conditions in patriarchal hierarchies.

Time span and periods of time unveil a lot significant truths that required interpretations about humanity and social myths accumulations arising from old to very recent studies mainly about women's subjugation and objectification as a social constructed matter, starting with the oldest studies of *The Second Sex* as a second wave of feminism by a French existentialist feminist.

First of all, a truth can never downward into a claim except in cases of conformity and social stratification when an individual tends to question everything including identity; therefore the professor of literature and romance studies at Dukes university Toril Moi (1999) theorizes that De Beauvoir herself questioned being a feminine entity: "The third paragraph of *The Second Sex*, covering only two pages in the French text, is a landmark in feminist thought.' At the beginning Beauvoir starts by declaring "I am a woman," at the end she affirms for the first time that woman is the other. How does she get from a declaration about herself to a general claim about all women? And in what way do these claims answer the question about what a woman is?" (Moi. 1999), in addition to this study several other studies have focused on the same issue Moi addressed concerning women's autonomy of being a

woman for De Beauvoir as Sowerwine theorizes upon the idea of *Moi* claiming that ‘woman is ‘a free and autonomous being like all human creatures’, but she ‘finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other. They propose to turn her into an object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is forever to be transcended by another consciousness which is essential and sovereign’ (Sowerwine. 2000).

Concerning the fact of essence and extension Sowerwine also theorizes that a woman isn’t given much choice of what she becomes and how to stating that: “women undergo and submit to the world, man’s world. That is how they ‘become women’, Beauvoir’s original premise—‘on ne naît pas femme, on le devient’” (literally ‘one is not born woman, one becomes it’: the French original conveys much more powerfully the sense that being a woman is a condition or situation). This famous phrase, however, is only her premise (Sowerwine. 2000), in this sense the matter of choices and free will has been widely discussed at a global range especially as a fig tree matter a soon as it was represented by Sylvia Plath to represent the amount of despair and cluelessness a woman face while on the other hand a man can pursue any path without the same amount of stress, “At the heart of it is Plath’s rebellion against the subordinated status of women to men in society, they are expected to be sexually passive and to serve the men whom their lives revolve around completely, only to repaid with the men they serve having affairs and drinking” (Chin-Yi. 2015)

Furthermore, the matter of subject and object has been discussed as a by-product of the second wave of feminism through Sowerwine’s claim: “the more radical part of her argument is that women do not feel responsible for the world. Their fulfillment is in procreation and service, not in action on the world. Thus they remain immanent, immured within themselves: their mental action takes place within their own minds and does not move out to act on the world. Their lives are thus inauthentic. For women to attain self-realization,

they must have a project, they must grasp the world and act upon it” (Sowerwine. 2000), on the other hand Chin-Yi theorizes the symbiotic relationship between man and woman as a sacred relationship and how by social conventions and arbitrary conceptions turned to be a denial of autonomy, subjectivity, identity, and authenticity, in this sense Chin-Yi theorizes: “while the Biblical God did indeed make Eve as companion to man and to be his helper, what Plath seems to imply in the novel is that this being made as an appendage to man is a complete suffocation of women’s rights, independence and freedom, and the bell jar of depression and suicide is the only way to escape this prison and to experience liberty and freedom” (Chin-Yi. 2015)

As a conclusion, this dissertation clearly addresses the issue of autonomy and lack of choice addressed by both Simone De Beauvoir and Sylvia Plath in both of their works, and how they managed to address social conventions, myths, arbitrary obligations, dehumanizing cultural treatment, denial of subjectivity, and autonomy in order to deprive women from all the kinds of authenticity and freedom as a quest to avoid any competition between genders which made it harder for women to grow in a healthy way is such patriarchal hierarchies, in this sense, this research creates a significant linking point between the concept of the other and the bell jar as they both stand for the female entrapment in patriarchal hierarchies.

Chapter One:
Theoretical Framework
“The Bell Jar & The Second Sex”

Introduction

Both Simone De Beauvoir and Sylvia Plath shared the same ideas about individuality and certain significant experiences with social conformity, they are globally known for their groundbreaking feminist legacy. The dichotomy of subject and object questions in the two of their works *The Bell Jar* and *The Second Sex* both explored the concepts of autonomy, femininity, alienation, gender disparity, and most importantly identity.

The existential philosophy of taking certain actions based on gender for Plath and De Beauvoir seemed to weigh down one's autonomy in terms of consequences or the exact opposite, to strengthen them because it serves them with power and value, in this situation, intersectionality inspired Sylvia and Simone to fly in the face of social conventions and strive for more than being stereotyped, othered, burdened, and under airless enclosures.

Statically organized, measured, and constructed, this chapter encompasses the research problem to serve important information about the undertaken. This chapter is a theoretical account of the research problem that aims to have a compelling interpretation. Therefore, this part of the thesis serves as an entire theoretical account of the conducted research.

1. Biographies

1.1 Sylvia Plath's Biographical Account :

According to the Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, The most important thing to start the biography of Plath is to pay tribute to her writing that was mostly characterized by alienation and self-destruction, which was seemingly close to her personal life's experience that made her the first feminist poet who wrote specifically about the plight of women during an era that was characterized by the absence of women's mainstream rights to win a Pulitzer

Prize Posthumously for her book *The Collected Poems* since her career was cut short because died by suicide at the age of thirty (Augustyn).

First of all, according to Amanda Prah, Sylvia Plath was born on the 27th of October, 1932 in Boston, Massachusetts to the German immigrant biology professor Otto Plath and the high school English teacher Aurelia Schober Plath (Prah). From a young age, Sylvia showed remarkable talent and academic excellence, as a rule, she won multiple awards for her writing such as Fulbright Scholarship (1955), Glascock Prize (1955), Pulitzer Prize for Poetry (1982), also Plath was commended for her intelligence by her teachers which was the only privileges she had to witness a life better than the one she had as a child (Prah).

In addition to her life as a child, John Green in Crash Course Literature sums up the life of young Sylvia stating that Plath was very interested in nature as well as a fascination with natural sciences because her life with her father as an entomologist affected the themes of her poems later on her life and was often found outdoors observing the world around her. Sylvia was an avid reader, devouring books on a wide range of topics from mythology to mathematics. She was also a talented artist, creating drawings and sketches that reflected her fascination with the natural world (Green).

As she matured, Sylvia's writing skills continued to develop and she began writing her poems and stories. She wrote her first poem at the age of eight the same year her father passed away (Green), and by the time she was eleven, she had already won awards for her work. She was accepted into Smith College in 1950 where she won a scholarship to Cambridge University in England, where she majored in English and minored in history. During her college years, she continued to write and publish her work and was praised for her poetic voice and talent (Prah).

Sylvia Plath's marriage to the British poet Ted Hughes was a complex and tumultuous one. They first met in 1956 while studying at Cambridge University and were married in 1956. They had two children together, Frieda and Nicholas (Prah).

The fact that Plath's marriage to Hughes was marked by infidelity, so their relationship was often fraught with tension and conflict. Consequently, Plath's later poetry, particularly in her collection "*Ariel*," explores themes of betrayal, loss, and the breakdown of their marriage. In 1962, Plath discovered that Hughes had been having an affair with another woman, Assia Wevill¹. Plath and Hughes separated, and Plath moved with her children to a new home in London. It was during this time that Plath wrote some of her most famous poems, including "*Daddy*" and "*Lady Lazarus*" (Green).

Tragically, on February 11, 1963, Plath died by suicide at the age of 30. The circumstances of her death have been the subject of much speculation and controversy, with some attributing it to the breakdown of her marriage and others to her struggles with mental illness. Hughes went on to become a successful poet in his own right, but the legacy of his marriage to Plath continues to be a topic of interest and debate among literary scholars and readers (Augustyn).

According to the interpretation of Iseult Gillespie, Sylvia is widely regarded as one of the most important and influential writers of the 20th century as she was the inspirational figure of feminist confessional poetry movements, Plath's life and work continue to be the subject of intense critical interest and analysis, and she remains one of the most widely read and studied poets of the 20th century as she was diagnosed with clinical depression that she was hospitalized several times for it due to the extreme stress she felt paralyzed and suffocated by both her society and the choices she had to make in her life, yet growing older Sylvia Plath

¹ According to the biography of Ted Hughes detailed on the website of StudySmarter, Sylvia Plath's spouse, this was the timeline of his relationships that clearly shows his infidelity: (1956-1963) Assia Wevill (1962-1969) (StudySmarter).

explored her states of mind with such breathtaking perspectives on life, emotion, and nature around her, for example, Plath significantly wrote in her poem *The Colossus* about a feeling of nothingness “white, it is a complexion of the mind” (Plath).

1.2. Simone De Beauvoir's Biographical account:

To begin with, De Beauvoir’s name is a dead ringer to feminism and existentialism; this can be seen in her way of asking questions about life and striving for more than being the second or other. Born in Paris exactly Montparnasse's district on the 9th of January 1908, in *The Biography of Simone De Beauvoir*, Lisa Appignanesi wrote: “From the window of the modest family flat, above the soon to be famous Café de la Rotonde, the little Simone-Lucie-Ernestine-Marie Bertrand de Beauvoir already an inveterate observer of the human spectacle, looked out on the hurly-burly of the neighborhood in transition” (Appignanesi, 8).

Simone De Beauvoir lived her life as an intellectual, philosopher, and feminist activist (Bainbridgge, 10). Above all, Simone used to go to school with the French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the French anthropologist and structuralist Claude Levi-Strauss, and also the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre who later on their life engage in a romantic relationship that never ended with marriage (Barbara s.Andrew, 26).

Barbara in *The Cambridge Companion to Simone De Beauvoir* also argues in the chapter on *Beauvoir's place in philosophical thought* that Simone's philosophical training began early when she had dealt with many philosophical readings in her journey in the Catholic girl's school which absorbing thoughts of Thomas Aquinas in addition to reading for medieval philosophers like Immanuel Kant, Rene Descartes, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and mystics at that time in France was considered to be her generous resourcefulness to master any philosophical problematic (Barbara S. Andrews, 24 25).

Although this might seem purely nihilistic, Simone explicitly refused nihilism and called this responsibility; in this situation Barbara S. Andrews in *The Cambridge Companion to Simone De Beauvoir* in the chapter of *Beauvoir's place in philosophical thought* she addressed this idea writing that De Beauvoir explicitly rejects nihilism, and the view that nothing matters. Instead, she ascribes enormous responsibility to the individual. As a rule according to Beauvoir, each person 'bears the responsibility for the world which is not the work of a strange power, but of himself, where his defeats are inscribed and his victories as well' (EA 16) (Barbara S.Andrews, 25 26).

As she considered that there is no divorce between life and philosophy; in her book *The Second Sex* Simone argues that gender is not predestined like our life meaning, De Beauvoir defined othering as the process of labeling women as less than men who'd historically defined, and been defined as the ideal human subjects, and consequently systematically restricting them from pursuing freedom. and to "become" a woman, she argued, was to become the other, Encyclopedia Britannica's editors argue that *The Second Sex* is a scholarly and passionate plea for the abolition of what she called the myth of the "eternal feminine." It became a classic of feminist literature, in addition, she wrote four books of philosophy, including *Pour une Morale de l'ambiguïté* (1947; *The Ethics of Ambiguity*); travel books about China (*La Longue Marche: essai sur la Chine* [1957]; *The Long March*); and the United States (*L'Amérique au jour de jour* [1948]; *America Day by Day*); as well as several essays, the best known of which is *The Second Sex* (Britannica).

The editors of Encyclopedia Britannica briefly illustrated the fact that Simone de Beauvoir was a significant philosopher of existentialism and a pioneering figure of contemporary philosophical feminism (Britannica), but every event in history comes to an end; because Lisa Appenganesi mentioned that the ashes of Simone were placed peacefully next to her romantic and intellectual partner Sartre in life and death on 19 April 1986 after her death on the 14th of

April (Appegnanesi, 1). After a long history of activism, the founder of *Les Temps Modernes* who won *Prix Goncourt* in 1954 and a role in women's rights movements (Britannica), the world hath won a feminist figure who dared to stir the why's within significant societal issues by her evident self-awareness as an existential philosopher.

2. The Bell Jar & The Second Sex Overviews:

2.1. The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath, an Overview:

Victoria Lucas was the pen name under which *The Bell Jar* was published for the first time in 1963 one month or less after the death of Sylvia Plath the writer of the semi-autobiographical account of her only novel *The Bell Jar*, where she fictionalized the time that she spent working for *Mademoiselle Magazine* as a summer internship award by her college (Green).

“The Bell Jar was first published in London, England, in January 1963, less than one month before its author, Sylvia Plath, committed suicide by asphyxiation. Published under the pseudonym of Victoria Lucas, the novel opened to some positive reviews, although Plath was distressed by its reception. In 1966, *The Bell Jar* was published in England under Plath's real name. By the early 1970s, it had been published to many favorable reviews in the United States” (Cengage, 1).

In an interview with Sylvia Plath in 1962 she was asked about the things that she would write about in her poems and maybe prose in the future, she answered that she was not into writing prose, yet she wrote short stories during her years of being a teenager, therefore she was fascinated by Robert Lowell's life studies since they were an intense breakthrough into a very serious and emotional experience which she felt has been tabooed because he wrote about his experiences in a mental hospital (Nagusd).

Sylvia found a peculiar way to explore new dimensions of thoughts through the freedom in her interest in talking about subjects that were regarded as taboos back then in the 1950s in America, hence she felt very explored in recent American poetry because she also found it amazing how Anne Saxton wrote about her experience with mental breakdowns as a young mother who's feeling extremely emotional and young, she adds: " her poems are wonderfully craftsman like poems and yet they have a kind of emotional and psychological depth which I think something quite new quite exciting" (Nagusd).

Sylvia Plath explores many themes such as culture clash, sex roles, search for self, mental illness, and suicide in her novel. Still, the most important aspect she tackled is the coming of age and the perspective of life for a very ambitious woman within social constructions that does not serve her potential and bring her down by non-wholesome arbitrary limitations by the lack of choices in the fifties era which was an era that was marked by a total absence of feminism (Cengage) Plath declares about her novel:

"What I've done is to throw together events from my own life, fictionalizing to add color – it's a potboiler really, but I think it will show how isolated a person feels when he is suffering a breakdown...I've tried to picture my world and the people in it as seen through the distorting lens of a bell jar" (Plath, 83), instead, the 1950s were described as a boom² era (HISTORY.com editors).

² Historians use the word "boom" to describe a lot of things about the 1950s: the booming economy, the booming suburbs and most of all the so-called "baby boom." This boom began in 1946 when a record number of babies—3.4 million—were born in the United States. About 4 million babies were born each year during the 1950s. In all, by the time the boom finally tapered off in 1964, there were almost 77 million "baby boomers" (HISTORY.com editors).

2.2. The Second Sex by Simone De Beauvoir, an Overview:

Historically, women have been treated unequally for an ambiguous and somehow clear reason, the clear one was because they are inadequate and fall short of being compatible with men, the ambiguous reason is no one knows why those conventions were believed and made at the first place, in this sense, it's a must to recall the experience of the author of *The Second Sex* in 1949 in two volumes (Jake, 00:24-16:31) Simone De Beauvoir archived in the new article on the website of *The New York Times*:

“In 1946, Simone de Beauvoir began to outline what she thought would be an autobiographical essay explaining why, when she had tried to define herself, the first sentence that came to mind was “I am a woman.” That October, my maiden aunt, Beauvoir’s contemporary, came to visit me in the hospital nursery. I was a day old, and she found a little tag on my bassinet that announced, “It’s a Girl!” In the next bassinet was another newborn (“a lot punier,” she recalled), whose little tag announced, “I’m a Boy!” There we lay, innocent of a distinction — between a female object and a male subject — that would shape our destinies. It would also shape Beauvoir’s great treatise on the subject. Beauvoir was then a thirty-eight-year-old public intellectual who had been enfranchised for only a year. Legal birth control would be denied to French women until 1967, and legal abortion, until 1975. Not until the late 1960s was there an elected female head of state anywhere in the world. Girls of my generation searching for examples of exceptional women outside the ranks of queens and courtesans, and of a few artists and saints, found precious few. (The queens, as Beauvoir remarks, “were neither male nor female: they were sovereigns.”) Opportunities for women have proliferated so broadly in the past six decades, at least in the Western world, that the distance between

2010 and 1949, when *The Second Sex* was published in France, seems like an eternity (until that is, one opens a newspaper — the victims of misogyny and sexual abuse are still with us, everywhere). While no one individual or her work is responsible for that seismic shift in laws and attitudes, the millions of young women who now confidently assume that their entitlement to work, pleasure, and autonomy is equal to that of their brothers owe a measure of their freedom to Beauvoir. *The Second Sex* was an act of Promethean audacity — a theft of Olympian fire — from which there was no turning back. It is not the last word on “the problem of woman,” which, Beauvoir wrote, “has always been a problem of men,” but it marks the place in history where enlightenment begins” (Thurman).

The second sex is a pure feminist work by the existential philosopher and feminist scholar and activist Simone De Beauvoir who sought to break the rules of patriarchy because she strongly declared that the world is sinking into virility and misconceptions about women which affected the entire history to turn into the dichotomy of subject and object to other women and subjugate them into less than men by nature, in this sense Bergoffen et al state in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy that:

“Somewhat later, Simone de Beauvoir addressed the discourse of psychoanalysis in *The Second Sex* (1989 [1949]), devoting an early chapter to her distrust of “The Psychoanalytic Point of View” (Beauvoir 1989, 38–52). Like Horney, Beauvoir denounces Freud's idea that there is but one, masculine, libido and no feminine libido with “its own original nature” (Beauvoir 1989, 39). Freud, in her view, takes for granted what he needs to account for, namely the value placed on virility. Beauvoir takes Freud to task for not considering the social origins of masculine and paternal power and privilege and deems his theory inadequate to account for woman's

otherness. If women envy men, she argues, it is because of the social power and privilege they enjoy, and not because of anatomical superiority. Unlike the determinisms and objectifications of human life offered by biological science (which treats human beings as determinate objects in the natural world and thus not as free or self-determining subjects with agency), but similar to the “economic monism” of historical materialism (Beauvoir 1989, 52), psychoanalysis is characterized by Beauvoir as “sexual monism” (Beauvoir 1989, 52): everything in its purview is interpreted through a single lens” (Bergoffen. et al).

De Beauvoir managed to combine philosophy with being absorbed in life and delved deep down into the roots of oppression as well as the conception of otherness, destiny, myths, freedom, equality, and the most important part “woman”. In the article "*HISTORICIZING THE SECOND SEX*" by Judith G. Coffin it is mentioned that the second wave of feminism's formative context was *The Second Sex*, De Beauvoir expresses her thoughts about her book saying:

"For a long time I have hesitated to write a book on women. The subject is irritating, especially to women; and it is not new. Enough ink has been spilled in the quarreling over feminism, now practically over and perhaps we should say no more about it. It is still talked about, however, for the voluminous nonsense uttered during the last century seems to have done little to illuminate the problem. After all, is there a problem? And if so, what is it? Are there women, really?" (Coffin).

De Beauvoir gathered her thoughts in a specific way to address a meaningful deep-rooted issue back then at the time of 1944 which was famously concluded in her saying “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (De Beauvoir), not to mention that she addressed a personal and what is significantly universal issue by the virtue of her deep philosophical voice where she started to question her freedom and if everyone were free to pursue their

life's meaning why was she restricted by society's ideals of womanhood? Regarding this concern, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy illustrates:

"The Second Sex speaks of the specific ways that the natural and social sciences and the European literary, social, moral, political and religious traditions have created a world where impossible and conflicting ideals of femininity produce an ideology of women's "natural" inferiority to justify patriarchal domination." (Bergoffen et al.).

3. Psychoanalytic Feminism Theory:

The uniqueness in perspective that psychoanalytic feminism theory offers in terms of being a feminist intertwined with a psychoanalysis approach that seeks to understand the ways in which gender and sexuality are shaped by unconscious psychological forces, taking into account that gender and sexuality have the greatest impact on mental health.

Psychoanalytic feminism combines insights from psychoanalysis with feminist theory and seeks to uncover how patriarchy and sexism impact individuals and society at large, in their article *Psychoanalytic Feminism* Zarkin, and Emily state that: "psychoanalytic feminism interrupts many assumptions about what feminism is and the conceptual and material objects it theorizes, including especially the very concept of woman. In unsettling our understanding of this concept, psychoanalysis also poses questions to feminism about the value of difference and the quest for equality, and the unresolved tensions between these divergent pursuits" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

According to Zarkin and Emily psychoanalytic feminism is a theoretical framework that combines psychoanalytic concepts with feminist theory to analyze gender and power dynamics. It explores how gender identities and roles are constructed, and how they intersect with other forms of identity such as race, class, and sexuality...

“Psychoanalytic feminist attention to the core constituents of civilization, to the nuclei of sexual difference and communal affiliation, helps explain the perpetuation of masculine power and enables feminist theorists to articulate possible correctives, challenges, routes of amelioration, or ethical interruptions that go to the roots of political life and to its beyond and do not simply operate on the given social terrain” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

Psychoanalytic feminism can be applied to feminist contexts through some ways in which the researcher attempts to find significant bonds that relate to the understanding the origins of gender roles, and to step by step start the process of examining the effects of patriarchy through analyzing representations of gender in media Exploring the intersection of gender with other forms of identity.

Overall, psychoanalytic feminism provides a useful framework for examining the complex interplay between gender and power dynamics in feminist contexts. It can help us understand the origins of gender roles, the effects of patriarchy on individuals' psyches, and the intersections of gender with other forms of identity.

4. Key Concepts (Important Terminology):

Existentialism, Gender, Individuality, Othering.

4.1 Existentialism:

According to Oxford's dictionary existentialism is the theory that humans are free and responsible for their own actions in a world without a meaning /,egzɪ'stɛnʃəlɪzəm/, which is derived from the word existence /ɪg'zɪstəns/ that in the same dictionary stands for the state of facts of being real or living or of being present.

Sartre famously declared that "existence precedes essence therefore existentialism stands for a philosophical movement that strongly emphasizes individual freedom and choice of all the subjective experiences of life, it asserts that each individual is responsible for

creating meaning in their own life rather than being reliant on some external factors such as social norms and religion.

Existentialism appeared as a reaction to essentialism because of the human condition of anxiety and the inevitability of death and suggests that individuals must confront these realities in order to live authentically, for existentialism the importance of personal responsibility and the need to take action in the face of uncertainty, in this sense, existentialists reject the idea of objective universal values of meaning and simply argue that each person must create their own meaning in life, and the importance of authenticity and encouraging individuals to be true to themselves and their own values rather than conforming to societal expectations.

Existentialism is a concept that is most often associated with themes such as anxiety, freedom, authenticity, and choice, therefore existentialists believe that individuals must confront the fundamental absurdity of human existence and take responsibility for creating their own lives and finding their own meaning. Some existentialists embrace the nihilistic concept but others can seem to confront the nihilistic perspectives of emptiness and nothingness. However, existentialism fundamentally builds on these significant concepts; the first concept is established by Sartre which is that existence precedes essence, authenticity, freedom, nihilism, engagement versus detachment, and ethics. In literature, existentialism is often associated with themes of loneliness, isolation, and alienation as well as the search for authenticity and individuality.

According to the existentialism article first published on Friday, January 6th, 2023, it was regarded that existentialism is an intellectual movement that seemingly exploded in the mid-20th century in France existentialism is mostly viewed as a historically situated event that seen and witnessed emergence against the bank drop-off the second world war the Nazi death camps and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki all of which they had a

deep wound in the humanity back then that's created the circumstances of what is called the existence last movement (Baert 2015) (Aho et al.):

“Where an entire generation was forced to confront the human condition and the anxiety-provoking givens of death, freedom, and meaninglessness. Although the most popular voices of this movement were French, most notably Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, as well as compatriots such as Albert Camus, Gabriel Marcel, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the conceptual groundwork of the movement was laid much earlier in the nineteenth century by pioneers like Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche and twentieth-century German philosophers like Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Karl Jaspers as well as prominent Spanish intellectuals José Ortega y Gasset and Miguel de Unamuno. The core ideas have also been illuminated in key literary works. Beyond the plays, short stories, and novels by French luminaries like Sartre, Beauvoir, and Camus, there were Parisian writers such as Jean Genet and André Gide, the Russian novelists Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky, the work of Norwegian authors such as Henrik Ibsen and Knut Hamsun, and the German-language iconoclasts Franz Kafka and Rainer Maria Rilke. The movement even found expression across the pond in the work of the “lost generation” of American writers like F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, mid-century “beat” authors like Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsburg, and William S. Burroughs, and the self-proclaimed “American existentialist,” Norman Mailer” (Cotkin 2003, 185).

4.2 Gender:

The issue of gender is not as easy as it seems, it is true that it started when the term started to give significance as an academic word and concept in the 20th century, the three

theories of functional, symbolic interaction, and social conflict that sociology is build on the main question of what is gender in particular?

First of all, gender is a means to organize society into two distinct roles and functions naturally, both genders work in harmony as the yin and yang, because according to Sarikas in *Yin And Yang: What Does the Symbol Mean?* Yin (the black section of the symbol) represents shadows, feminine energy, and generally the more mysterious side of things. Yang (the white section of the symbol) represents the sun, masculine energy, and things that are more out in the open. Neither is more powerful than the other, and both are needed in equal amounts for harmony to exist (Sarikas).

The matter of gender is biological when it comes to scientific reasons, for example, we have a human being with feminine body parts, and that makes this creature a female, and another human being with masculine body parts and that makes this creature a male simple equation! The riddle of gender started in the 20th century when it was first introduced.

For gender issues, society is considered the orbit in terms of the labeling process, therefore important sociology theories have different perspectives on why gender exists. First of all structural functionalism argues that gender stands for two roles that complement each other in terms of the social organizing aspect, in other words, men are providers because they were taught instrumental qualities and women are the keepers because they were taught expressive qualities, all of this to only maintain a stable ongoing life (Theories of Gender: Crash Course Sociology).

Secondly, symbolic interactionists provide that gender impacts the day to day life in terms of social conformity, they argue that gender is what a person does despite the fact that gender is something that comes from within, simply gender is what someone does not what someone is taught by any kind of institution to do according to the pattern of gender roles

because everyday social interaction reflects and helps reinforce gender stratification (Nickerson).

Furthermore, distributing power can be unfair for the issues of gender roles because somehow it gives power and privilege to one side and devalues the other side; gender conflict theory elaborates the arguments around the conception of gender as the structural system that distributes powers unequally, which is patriarchy.

Patriarchy draws a picture of the irrational sensitive woman against the rational sane man, which constantly makes everyone agree on attaching the leadership image to men rather than women, because who wants a leader with less rational sense? In this sense, it is a must to draw more attention to intersectionality in sociology because there is a huge gap made between genders for arbitrary reasons, which historically affected the social hierarchy; hence societies are created via the repeated actions of individuals (Carter and Fuller, 2015).

4.3 Individuality:

Simply, individuality as a conception (individualism) stands for what is called the power of one. Individualism is a philosophy that emphasizes the importance of individual rights, freedom, and autonomy. It is the belief that the individual is the most important unit of society and that each person has the right to pursue their own goals and desires, this is why it is often contrasted with collectivism, which places greater emphasis on the needs and goals of the group or community as a whole. In its purest form, individualism holds that government should have limited power and that individuals should be free to make their own choices without interference from others. According to the article "*Methodological Individualism*", Heath and Joseph illustrate how the terminology of individualism was coined firstly:

“The phrase *methodische Individualismus* was actually coined by Weber’s student, Joseph Schumpeter, in his 1908 work *Das Wesen und der Hauptinhalt der theoretischen Nationalökonomie*. The first use of the term

“methodological individualism” in English was again by Schumpeter in his 1909 *Quarterly Journal of Economics* paper, “On the Concept of Social Value” (see Udehn 2001, 214). However, the theoretical elaboration of the doctrine is due to Weber, and Schumpeter uses the term as a way of referring to the Weberian view” (Heathet al.).

One example of the concept of individualism can be found in the work of philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who argued that individuals are naturally free and equal and that social institutions and inequality are the results of human-made constructs. In his book "The Social Contract," he writes, "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains. One man thinks himself the master of others, but remains more of a slave than they are" (Rousseau, 1762, p.1). This quote highlights Rousseau's belief that individuals are inherently free and equal but are oppressed by societal structures that prioritize the interests of the few over the many. Through this lens, individualism is seen as a means to break free from these chains and establish a society that values the rights and autonomy of all individuals equally.

4.4 Othering:

Othering is a social process of creating and reinforcing boundaries between an "us" and a "them" based on perceived differences such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or nationality. Othering can manifest in various forms, such as stereotyping, stigmatization, marginalization, discrimination, and violence, and it can have harmful effects on the targeted individuals and groups (Cherry).

Exploring the concept of othering in the article “*What is Othering*” Kendra Cherry defines othering as follows:

“Othering is a phenomenon in which some individuals or groups are defined and labeled as not fitting in within the norms of a social group. It is an effect that influences how people perceive and treat those who are viewed as being part of the in-

group versus those who are seen as being part of the out-group. Othering also involves attributing negative characteristics to people or groups that differentiate them from the perceived normative social group” (Cherry).

Cherry Kendra also puts an emphasis on the matter that the dominant discourse on othering tends to reinforce binary thinking that perpetuates the dichotomy of "us" versus "them" and overlooks the complexity and fluidity of social identities, in this sense othering can manifest in various ways, including discrimination, marginalization, stigmatization, and exclusion, and can have serious implications for individuals and society, concerning this Cherry, states that:

“Othering is a way of negating another person's individual humanity and, consequently, those that have been othered are seen as less worthy of dignity and respect, on an individual level, othering plays a role in the formation of prejudices against people and groups. On a larger scale, it can also play a role in the dehumanization of entire groups of people which can then be exploited to drive changes in institutions, governments, and societies. It can lead to the persecution of marginalized groups, the denial of rights based on group identities, or even acts of violence against others” (Cherry).

Conclusion

In order to conclude this chapter, it is a must to highlight the significance of both literary works of Sylvia and Simone who lived through an existential crisis that affected their mental health and ability to take a decision due to the historically deep-rooted social conventions, and how society affects the individual taking into consideration the outcomes of social stratification as an arbitrary dilemma depending on certain crucial areas of it.

The human being as a sociable creature is a fundamental unit of society therefore society is the mirror of the individual, in other terms, it is a must to explore the areas of stress for individuals in societies because society tends to be affected by individuals and vice versa, any stress practiced upon an individual to the extent that it affects their identity tends to be a turning point for both individuals and society.

From the last point luckily De Beauvoir lived to see the results of feminist activism and the existential quest for the sake of purpose, but Plath did not get the chance to see how her book left a huge impact as a feminist manifesto and paved the way for further analytical perspectives as this work is offering to make the areas of stress for Plath and De Beauvoir only as women clear for the sake of unveiling the feminine womanhood innocence in their expressions.

Chapter Two

A View in Depth: The Second Sex & The Bell

Jar: A Journey Fulfilled

Introduction

This chapter will explore the works of Simone De Beauvoir and Sylvia Plath in the light of the psychoanalytic feminism theory to reveal the most important parts of the oppression women witness as a part of a society that conforms to a patriarchal hierarchy, therefore, in order to explore the accuracy and strength of feminist literature, this chapter tends to shed light on the facts expressed in both books to maintain a clear explanation and correspondence to the realm of oppression and define in what sense patriarchal assumptions on women were harmful psychologically, and socially restrictive on women and the opposite to men, and also highlight how hypocrisy in the relation of women and society creates ambivalence and how women must perceive themselves as subjects of their own not objects of men or society.

Patriarchy and Psychoanalysis, the Plight of Women

The archetypes of potential energies like masculinity and femininity are gendered in the collective subconscious of society members who have been exposed to certain patterns of authority, patriarchy is the type of power that makes a gender out of an energy, also it defines an intellectual upon a certain social typecast for example according to the theory of subject and object dichotomy a man is identified as a subject of morality, freedom, power, rationality, leadership, choice maker, and most importantly the subject himself, but on the other hand, a woman is seen and considered as an object of the subject mentioned above.

The archetypes of energies here describe how dominant the man's energy which is labeled as the masculine energy and how submissive and devalued is the feminine energy, in this sense however, the man identifies as a man through his masculine energy and the total absence of the feminine energy, and by the feminine energy here is meant the object mindset and attributes, for example, if a woman does something outside her feminine era she would not be labeled as a woman anymore rather as fragmented full of shame object that is ought to

seek help to be back to normal again. The act of suppressing a potential energy results in excluding certain intellectual aspects results in denying freedom for arbitrary reasons.

Patriarchy and psychoanalysis can both represent women in different ways, but these representations are often problematic and controversial, and certainly not in favor for women, both patriarchy and psychoanalysis represent women in problematic ways in terms of reinforcing toxic and negative stereotypes along with perpetuating gender inequality, inferiority, and subjugation. However, pathologizing women's experiences and reinforcing traditional gender roles; both patriarchy and psychoanalysis have contributed to the marginalization and oppression of women on many levels women who challenge traditional gender roles or express anger or aggression are often labeled as "hysterical" or "masculine," and are encouraged to conform to traditional gender norms (Green).

1. Psychoanalysis as a Theory of Oppression

Sigmund Freud, the name associated with the most controversial complex theory of understanding both human development and the features of the psychological functioning of the human mind, Anna O was the first patient of Sigmund Freud after his graduation from medical school and training as a neurologist earning a medical degree in 1881 who was described by his colleague Dr. Joseph Breuer as a person who witnessed and experienced multiple physical symptoms with absolutely zero physical cause and that sparked Freud's attention because his colleague seemingly got to a point in which he presumed that the only fair diagnosis of the case in which Anna is the patient was through helping her recover from traumatic memories of past experiences that were repressed from her conscious awareness (Nash).

Freud was highly interested in analyzing and understanding this case and how can repressed feelings from the conscious affect the unconscious mind soon to be developed into a theory of interpretation and analysis for the human psyche and the starting point of his most

controversial and highly influential ideas, Freud as a certified doctor divides the mind into three labels the conscious the unconscious and the preconscious, in simple terms Freud's model of the mind consists of three parts the ego which is the surface of the mind the superego which is the hidden part of the mind and the ID which is the deepest part of the mind (Nash).

In the three components of What's called the human mind by Freud, we find that the ID functions as the unconscious spectrum that consists of three parts the first part is the main and central drive of the survival instincts and the part of activities that makes humans engage in life-sustaining activities, and the death instinct the destructive part of the human behavior that expresses aggressiveness and violent behavior, superego is the level in which our survival instincts, death, and sex are filtered to be socially appropriate and oriented into a navigation reality, according to Freud it starts to be developed in infancy period, however, the superego part is an accurate term that Freud constructed and gave to the conscious part as it serves higher principles and morality in order to encourage human beings to instruct their behaviors in order to be socially and morally acceptable (Nash).

Although psychoanalysis as a theory provides an aspect of a therapy talking concept to find the issues of significant trauma or disorder concerning relating the factors of the unconscious and the conscious elements of any psychological experience of a certain individual using particular techniques of clinical therapy “Psychoanalysis is a talking therapy that aims to treat a range of mental health issues by investigating the relationship between the unconscious and conscious elements of psychological experience using clinical techniques like free association and dream interpretation (Pick, 2015)”; it was considered not to be fully accurate because it was based only on Freud's personal interpretations, by that it is meant to say that Freud's personal interpretations are somehow biased in terms of diagnosing the types

of experiences he's ever seen and dealt with and building them up as theories to be applied on similar cases (Nash).

In the sense of generalizing particular analysis in terms of any psychological interpretation, it's worth mentioning that Freud was living during a traditional era in which he was on a total exposure of gender roles and the stereotyping of both men as well as women, and it is a must to highlight the fact that women at that time were exposed to the same mental distress because of social stratification and other strong psychological abuse, psychological violence is the most painful sort of violence someone would experience, because it leaves no bruises on one's body. However, Psychological violence is hidden therefore it can be easily normalized as well as tolerated in the day by day experiences, it is also worth mentioning that any sort of power abuse can result in game-changing factors concerning identities and choices of individuals/intellectuals which strongly affected the way society considers the balance of rights, duties, and tasks of both genders (Khankan).

Starting from the point that the limitations of psychoanalysis are highly concerned with the interpretations of the psychoanalytic theory in which its hypothesis can not be tested empirically, giving it an impossible scheme of thoughts between falsifying or validating the results of any given interpretation, because it gives the mightier share to the role of biology and the unconscious rather than environmental influences and the role of the conscious mind as a key factor of the human existence. Therefore, the psychoanalytic theory is associated with the sexist ideas of Freud due to the fact that his sexism traces remain in the theory and practice to this day, Freud seemingly dealt with small groups of people specifically patients from specific cultural backgrounds and a particular historical period, therefore, he gives a sense that his theory wasn't clearly developed upon a certain scientific method application, it was rather deeply Eurocentric and unsupported cross-culturally, in a sense that it may be

applied to certain patients from Western Judeo-Christian and secular cultures (Nash), in this sense C. G. Jung argues that:

“[195] In general, we must expect the most violent resistance from medical men and psychologists, chiefly because of scientific prejudices based on a different way of thinking to which they obstinately adhere. Our critics, unlike earlier ones, have progressed in as much as they try to be more serious and to strike a more moderate note. But they commit the mistake of criticizing the psychoanalytic method as though it rested on a priori principles, whereas in reality, it is purely empirical and totally lacking in any final theoretical framework (Jung, 115).”

About his controversial ideas on women, Freud in his 1925 paper entitled *"The Psychological Consequences of the Anatomic Distinction Between the Sexes."* explicitly expressed his sexist thoughts about women, to him women were passive inferior creatures to men and governed by the traditional thoughts of sex roles, the only purpose of women in life was the subject of production as he says: "Women oppose change, receive passively, and add nothing of their own," in addition to this, a professor and chair of women's health at the University Health Network, Donna Stewart, M.D., explained that: "Freud was a man of his times. He was opposed to the women's emancipation movement and believed that women's lives were dominated by their sexual reproductive functions." Ernest Jones highlighted a very important idea about Sigmund in his book *"Sigmund Freud: Life and Work"*: "The great question that has never been answered, and which I have not yet been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is 'What does a woman want?'" (Cherry), it is crystal clear that Freud with his interpretation did not grasp a bit of what a woman had in her psyche or mind despite the fact that he had a lot to say about women as individuals, bodies, minds,

and creatures. However, the representation of women through his lenses provided the sexist outline of his prejudices as a man of his times rather than a psychoanalyst of his own field.

As a psychoanalyst, Freud had established certain theories to support his thoughts about women concerning the fact that as Simone De Beauvoir argued “sexuality is coextensive with existence” (De Beauvoir, 74), the first theory stands upon the idea that a woman is an incomplete man, her anger and dissatisfaction comes from the fact that she wants to be a man and have what men had the chance to take, the theory is called Penis Envy³. According to Zawn Villenes in “*What is penis envy, and is it real?*” she states that the concept of penis envy is the theory in which Freud believed that when female children figure out they lack a penis, they tend to feel they are castrated in comparison to males, this moment for Freud plays a huge role in the life of women and plays a pivotal role in their life as it is the source of their mental illness.

The unfriendly thoughts of Freud about women were fragmented according to many psychologists describing it as misogynistic, sexist, and lacking proof, according to Kendra Cherry in “*Freud's Perspective on Women*” it is worth mentioning that penis envy is the female counterpart to Freud’s concept of castration anxiety. In his theory of psychosexual development of his, Freud ultimately suggested that during the phallic stage (around ages 3 to 6 years) young girls distance themselves from their mothers and instead devote their affections to their fathers (Cherry). According to Freud, this occurs when a girl realizes that she has no penis. “Girls hold their mother responsible for their lack of a penis and do not forgive her for their being thus put at a disadvantage,” Freud suggested (1933) (Cherry).

³ According to Medical News Today Zawn illustrates that: since coining the term “penis envy” in 1908, the psychologists have questioned and criticized it. Freud based the idea on his own beliefs about sex and gender rather than on data. To date, no research has ever proven that penis envy exists. Many also argue that the theory is sexist, as it assumes that being male is inherently more desirable than being female. Despite this criticism, penis envy was a popular concept in Freudian psychoanalysis during the 20th century. Some analysts have attempted to reimagine penis envy as the result of gender inequality in societies where men have more power than women (Villenes).

Freud supports his theory of penis envy by saying that in the third stage when the genital fixation occurs which is between 3 to 6 years old, the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud argues that when females begin to notice the lack of a penis as an organ of identity, which they consider it a red ink, consequently they seek to identify with the father and tend to blame the mother for it, Freud believed that any sort of mental illness or distress can be revoked at any certain period of development, for example if there were no disruptions at any given time of development there will be no further threat of mental illness in adulthood (Villenes).

For Freud penis envy pulls the strings of mental health issues such as trauma, fear, inferiority, and inadequacy throughout the life of females, concerning this he shows that females fall under the displacement defense mechanism because they experience jealousy more than males, so this represents their penis envy displacement, on the other hand Freud argues that anxiety castration is a punishment caused for male children that destroy their fantasies of replacing their fathers due to their sexual fantasies for their mothers (Villenes).

However, Freud's theory has been widely attacked and criticized by many modern psychologists and feminists, making it unacceptable to deal with on many levels, in this sense many argue that the idea of penis envy only reinforces gender stereotypes and promotes the idea that men by any means either biologically or socially are always superior to women due to the way Freud centers the attention around the competition between males and females trying to interpret the female psyche and understand the starting point of frustration for them, concerning this Kendra Cherry highlighted the two important views on Freud's conception in her "*Freud's Perspective on Women*":

“Karen Horney: Freud's concept of penis envy was criticized in his own time, most notably by psychoanalyst Karen Horney. She suggested that it is men who are adversely affected by their inability to bear children, which she referred to as "womb envy." Freud's Response: Freud responded, although

indirectly, writing, "We shall not be very greatly surprised if a woman analyst who has not been sufficiently convinced of the intensity of her own wish for a penis also fails to attach proper importance to that factor in her patients" (Freud, 1949). According to Freud, Horney's concept of womb envy emerged as a result of her own supposed penis envy. Sophie Freud: While Freud's notions of female sexuality often ran contrary to the patriarchal tendencies of the Victorian era, he was still very much a man of his time. His work is often dismissed as misogynistic and his own granddaughter, Sophie Freud, described his theories as outdated. "His ideas grew out of society. He mirrored in his theories the belief that women were secondary and were not the norm and didn't quite measure up to the norm," she explained. Final Thoughts: Even Freud himself admitted that his understanding of women was limited. "That is all I have to say to you about femininity," he wrote in 1933. "It is certainly incomplete and fragmentary and does not always sound friendly... If you want to know more about femininity, enquire about your own experiences of life, or turn to poets, or wait until science can give you deeper and more coherent information."(Cherry).

In the present day, most psychologists believe that gender identity and the process of sexual development are biologically and socially complex and multifaceted, and have no chance to settle on evidence in order to support the idea that young girls might experience a universal sense of penis envy at a certain point of their process of growing⁴ older in the scope of psychoanalysis. Instead, they believe that gender identity is indeed shaped by a certain variety of biological, social, and cultural factors just as stipulated.

⁴ Freud writes that "psychoanalysis does not try to describe what a woman is—that would be a task it could scarcely perform—but sets about enquiring how she comes into being, how a woman develops out of a child with a bisexual disposition" (Freud 1968 [1933], 116).

2. Psychoanalytic Feminism: A Tool To Explore Feminine Exertion In

“The Bell Jar & The Second Sex”

As a headway to understand the concept of analyzing the conceptual notions built in *The Second Sex* and *The Bell Jar*, psychoanalytic feminism is not the same as feminism psychoanalysis in terms of considering the fact that psychoanalytic feminism is a theory of oppression, which according to Kristina Wolff, this theory asserts that men have an inherent psychological need to subjugate women as inferior creatures to them which is the matter of existential questioning both Simone and Sylvia tried to find an answer to, in other terms the main question of their quest was why women were stereotyped only for being the weaker sex and assigned to do things that god forbid men would do according to gender identity and social norms (Wolff).

In addition to that, the root of men's compulsion to dominate women and women's minimal resistance to subjugation lies deep within their human psyche which according to Simone is a matter of ingrained unhealthy concepts that start early from childhood when the child starts to learn about body and society in which the child finds a way through everything to start shaping a certain understanding about life through his, in this sense De Beauvoir wrote:

“One is not born, but rather becomes, woman. No biological, psychic, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine. Only the mediation of another can constitute an individual as an Other. In as much as he exists for himself, the child would not grasp himself as sexually differentiated. For girls and boys, the body is first the radiation of subjectivity, the instrument that brings

about the comprehension of the world: they apprehend the universe through their eyes and hands and not through their sexual parts” (De Beauvoir, 330).

Wolff adds that this branch of feminism utterly seeks to gain insight into how our psychic lives develop in order to better understand and change women's oppression which is the same method Simone De Beauvoir used to explore the areas of free will and pursuing meaning in life through the radical new philosophy of existentialism, Kristina, on the other hand, adds:

“The pattern of oppression is also integrated into society, thus creating and sustaining patriarchy. 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” (Wolff)

In order to understand how patriarchy affects women and society, Sylvia Plath and Simone De Beauvoir addressed the issue of alienation and conditional acceptance that foreshadows struggles of lack of choice, desire, free will, responsibility, and the value of personal experience. Starting from the point in which Simone argued that the freedom that is only interested in denying others freedom must be denied because of the restrictions of womanhood both Simone and Sylvia were exposed to as women in an environment of patriarchal atmosphere.

People have a tendency to accept what seems and is unfortunate in life as soon as it is a part of a certain norm or in simple terms naturally exists, which is the case that made patriarchy assert oppression over women as a natural order in society historically. According to Simone De Beauvoir if you are oppressed you must not acquire this idea and cope with it

as a matter of making a frame of this era of chains in life there is an ethical obligation of willing freedom in life of yours and other people in life Philosophize This!, 19:30-26:30).

According to Nietzsche's philosophy of camel, lion and the child, a camel is a figure that is loaded with plenty of baggage and told exactly where to go, in order to represent the phase in which an individual is burdened with social and cultural expectations in terms of being guided to a certain destination, here the adventure in the eyes of De Beauvoir is laying down any load to maintain freedom and for Nietzsche is to be a lion through being recognized for refusing all the possible ways of being a camel, in order to separate from all the cultural conventions an individual is exposed to in order to maintain the child's level of existence where the intellectual is no longer spoon-fed, and in an era of existence that allows the complete withdrawal of any prepackaged life.

Through Esther Greenwood, the main character of Sylvia Plath's coming-of-age fictional novel experiences an existential weight as a woman in a society that doesn't support any of her choices as a woman which affects her mental health causing her many mental health issues to get instant psychological healthcare in order to recover, but that seems to make her case worse when she gets treated with electroconvulsive therapy as a new technique in the field of psychology in the 1950s, Plath introduced a culture hero described in the website of BookNotes as:

“The mood is often meditative. Esther is a very introspective character. However, she has a strongly sardonic humor. She is enough on the outside of her society that she can see its foibles with bemused irony. The people around her often come off as caricatures. For a novel about mental illness, very little of the pain of struggling through emotional troubles is given. Even the scenes of the hospitals are scenes filled with odd caricatures and bizarre actions” (Booknotes).

During the cold war era, women found themselves in a critical place and time to create an identity in the realm of the nuclear family⁵ concept of the West, most women like Esther were fragmented and witnessed a lack of choice as they grow old as the burden of social conventions get mightier and more intense in terms or restrictions, in this sense Isaac Azzopardi writes: “The Bell Jar, and in essence Sylvia Plath, nestle in the arms of the feminist—a tender and catatonic parable of the American mid-century woman, caught between two worlds: the institution of the American family and the liberation of the independent woman, against a background of haunting, cold war politics” (Azzopardi).

Feminine exertion in the bell jar resides in two main aspects, first of all, society seemed to matter more than an individual does, in short terms, it is a must to conform to social conventions in order to avoid any sort of neglect and marginality. The absence of feminism during the era between the 1940s/1950s had the greatest impact on women’s life despite the prosperity that America witnessed at that time, hypocrisy towards women was crystal clear at that time concerning gender equality, opportunities, free will, estimation, value, and social status, in this sense Cengage elaborates important facts to support arguments about the American atmosphere at that time, women fates, and double standard society:

“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

⁵ It is important to highlight the fact that family as a unit shows a great example of stability in the society on a larger scale, according to Britannica Encyclopedia it is: “Thus defined, the nuclear family was once widely held to be the most basic and universal form of social organization. Anthropological research, however, has illuminated so much variability of this form that it is safer to assume that what is universal is a “nuclear family complex” in which the roles of husband, wife, mother, father, son, daughter, brother, and sister are embodied by people whose biological relationships do not necessarily conform to the Western definitions of these terms”(Britannica Encyclopedia).

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 work force. 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 work force. 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 work force indefinitely. A married woman—with or without children—who earned as much as her husband was rare”(Cengage, 8).

3. *The Second Sex* As A Revolutionary Feminist Device:

As a massive liberation movement, *The Second Sex* is undeniably considered as the second wave of feminism as a women’s liberation asset against any patriarchal assumption made about femininity. Hence, the aim is to shed light on the pervasive oppression experienced by women throughout history, and how this system of oppression has been perpetuated by societal structures. In order to start a certain exploration of liberation movements continuity, De Beauvoir explores the social and cultural construction of gender and the ways in which women have been oppressed throughout history.

De Beauvoir argues that women are not born as a separate category from men, but rather are made into 'the second sex' through societal norms, conventional expectations, and biased prejudices. She examines the ways in which women have been relegated to the margins of society and denied equal opportunities and rights, concerning this De Beauvoir provided detailed historical information in the chapter of *The Point of View of Historical Materialism*:

“Engels retraces woman’s history from this point of view in *The Origin of the Family*; to him, this history depends essentially on the history of technology. In the Stone Age, when the land belonged to all members of the clan, the rudimentary nature of the primitive spade and hoe limited agricultural possibilities: feminine strength was at the level of work needed for gardening. In this primitive division of labor, the two sexes already constitute two classes in a way; there is equality between these classes; while the man hunts and fishes, the woman stays at home; but the domestic tasks include productive work: pottery making, weaving, gardening; and in this way, she has an important role in economic life. With the discovery of copper, tin, bronze, and iron, and with the advent of the plow, agriculture expands its reach: intensive labor is necessary to clear the forests and cultivate the fields. So man has recourse to the service of other men, reducing them to slavery. Private property appears: master of slaves and land, man also becomes the proprietor of the woman. This is the “great historical defeat of the female sex.” (De Beauvoir, 88).

Simone De Beauvoir simply addresses the issue of being othered upon religious, social, mythical, and historical perpetuations which lead to unbalanced power between men and women. However, during the course of history women have never enjoyed the same opportunities or rights as much as men did, for example, the right to learn, vote, and inherent. Simone argues that men had not pursue the real definition of women because they simply can’t think with more than prejudices, a woman is defined upon what she can do or what she is costumed to be:

“Woman? Very simple, say those who like simple answers: She is a womb, an ovary; she is a female: this word is enough to define her. From a man’s mouth,

the epithet “female” sounds like an insult; but he, not ashamed of his animality, is proud to hear: “He’s a male!” The term “female” is pejorative not because it roots woman in nature but because it confines her in her sex, and if this sex, even in an innocent animal, seems despicable and an enemy to man, it is obviously because of the disquieting hostility woman triggers in him” (De Beauvoir, 47).

Simone De Beauvoir introduced the dichotomy of subject and object and the interconnectedness between them, and how the subject (man) removes subjectivity from the object (women), systematically removing subjectivity from a particular person and objectifying them leads to associate this person as an extension to the subject that objectified this person, which is the case of women regarded as the other or second sex comparing to man who is in the higher place comparing to his property (woman): “In reality, the struggle between them cannot be clear-cut, since woman’s very being is opacity; she does not stand in front of man as a subject but as an object paradoxically endowed with subjectivity; she assumes herself as both self and other, which is a contradiction with disconcerting consequences” (De Beauvoir, 850).

De Beauvoir declined this patriarchal myth of women being inferior to man starting by the theory of psychoanalysis that denied the superiority of a woman as an individual who does not lack agency or understanding and does not fear or envy the man just because she want equality, a woman wants equality because she is in need of it not because she is jealous of man n any sense of being or becoming, for De Beauvoir psychoanalysis and Freud both are concerned with women’s destiny that she refuses clearly because for her existence precedes essence, “The two essential objections to this description stem from the fact that Freud copied it from a masculine model. He assumes that a woman feels like a mutilated man; but the notion of mutilation implies comparison and valorization”(De Beauvoir, 76).

In the introduction to her work *The Second Sex* she question the roots of the female inferiority concept, who built is? who was responsible over creating such understanding of the female psyche an how it developed to be a global and historical idea about women being an extension for the man or being an object for a male subject, furthermore she argues that this idea had the greatest share of grasp in culture, and as a matter of fact it controlled the correlation of power in society till the present day. For De Beauvoir man have essentially been the only responsible for enslaving women to be caregiver under the concept of inferiority by building vague conceptions about the weakness of women, she elaborates:

“But to find a home in oneself, one must first have realized oneself in works or acts. Man has only a middling interest in his domestic interior because he has access to the entire universe and because he can affirm himself in his projects. Woman, instead, is locked into the conjugal community: she has to change this prison into a kingdom. Her attitude to her home is dictated by this same dialectic that generally defines her condition: she takes by becoming prey, she liberates herself by abdicating; by renouncing the world, she means to conquer a world” (De Beauvoir, 853).

For De Beauvoir, religion also had a fine share of objectifying woman starting from the point of Eve being an extension from Adam and how she got him out of heavens because she could not think properly which brought up the idea of women being less than human, De Beauvoir adds: “where Eve appears as if drawn from Adam’s “supernumerary” bone, in Bossuet’s words” (De Beauvoir, 25), also Simone as a philosopher relies on the critical examination of history of male assertions on women inferiority within Aristotle’s philosophy whereas she highlights the concept inferiority through this quote: “Aristotle said. “We should regard women’s nature as suffering from natural defectiveness.” And Saint Thomas in his turn decreed that woman was an “incomplete man,” an “incidental” being”(De Beauvoir, 25).

The formula of gender equality as a cure to the vicious cycle of inferiority went on many phases according to De Beauvoir, the first phase is women not being able to work or inherent because they are considered to their husbands property,, therefore the rejection of the idea of the second sex or the other that she sought to break was due the vague concept of the idea that a man is the provider and the woman as a keeper and a cre giver. She sees the struggle for women's liberation as part of a larger movement towards human liberation, in which all individuals are free to define themselves and pursue their own goals (ESP).

De Beauvoir tried to explore free will through the adventure of the breaking the rules of being attached to a regime that only restricts the freedom of individuals for no obvious reasons considering that as a fundamental stone to the change towards the better world women deserve to live into without worrying about future, autonomy, rights, and tension free atmosphere (Philosophize This!), in the fifth chapter De Beauvoir provided an outline for France as an example of how women were treated back then:

“From the feminist point of view, France was ahead of other countries; but for the unfortunate modern French woman, her status was determined during a military dictatorship; the Napoleonic Code, which sealed her fate for a century, greatly held back her emancipation. Like all military leaders, Napoleon wants to see woman 158 solely as a mother; but, heir to a bourgeois revolution, he does not intend to demolish the social structure by giving the mother priority over the wife: he prohibits the querying of paternity; he sets down harsh conditions for the unwed mother and the illegitimate child. Yet the married woman herself does not find recourse in her dignity as mother; the feudal paradox is perpetuated. Girls and wives are deprived of citizens’ rights, prohibiting them from functions such as the practice of law or wardship” (De Beauvoir, 158-159).

For De Beauvoir the denial of rights for women's prosperity such as the sphere of all women who have been relegated to secondary roles and denied access to education, political power, body and mind autonomy, and economic opportunities were seen as an obstacle that was vital in terms of giving woman a voice to speak under the oppressive patterns of patriarchy she argues that this myth is perpetuated by patriarchal institutions such as marriage and motherhood, which reinforce women's subordination to men because a woman is not defined as a woman but rather upon her relationship to the man (ESP).

3.1 The Connotation of *The Bell Jar* As A Feminist Manifesto:

The Bell Jar is a novel written by a feminist writer at a time feminism was not included as a power to protect women's rights, however, Esther a young woman with high potentials is deemed into a society that fractures her thoughts about herself which highly affects her mental health as a skilled and bright young woman, regardless of the fact that she was smart enough to be aware of the world around her she gets affected by everything and everyone as far as she experiences new dimensions of life in society out of her small town into a huge one like NYC, Isaac Azzopardi explains:

“This once-removed Esther, it will be seen, achieves an unnerving universality as she is passed through a Foucaultian sieve. As a nineteen-year-old, Esther, on the cusp of womanhood, precipitates into a bleak, suicidal depression, she is ‘glued back together’ to go back and continue her life in the so-called real world. The manner in which Esther is ‘glued back together’ and the reason for her condition, provide a Foucaultian field trip—one can say, Esther is institutionalized in order to be ‘fixed’, conform and function within her society”(Azzopardi).

Hence the voice echoes in the book tend to provide a certain profile of anxiety related to society and social stratification because the novel deals with an ironical sense of the protagonist's fears and fate, the novel starts with the electrocution of the Rosenbergs couple,

which according to that era of Cold War politics they were considered traitors to their country due to the fact of selling atomic secrets to the soviets, Esther proceeds on wondering about their experience being electrocuted (*The Bell Jar*).

While it is obvious that Plath intended Esther's obsession with the Rosenberg trials and the news of the impending execution as a parallel to Esther's eventual electroshock therapy, this parallel also highlights society's intolerance and the dangers associated with deviating from the norm (*The Bell Jar*).

The Rosenbergs, a couple, encountered the tyranny of the norm; they were executed amidst enormous media sensation; their trial and execution were covered in the lurid detail of the raunchiest scandal magazine. Historians are still divided on whether the Rosenbergs were really spies for the Russians as they were accused of being. They were immigrants, Jews, and they were politically left-wing. None of these things fit into the norm of 1950s America (Azzopardi), Plath introduces her experience with ECT through Esther Greenwood who kept wondering about the awful experience of the rosenbergs couple: "It had nothing to do with me, but I couldn't help wondering what it would be like, being burned alive all along your nerves. I thought it must be the worst thing in the world" (Plath, 1)

As Plath continues to narrate the life events in the life of Esther who slips into severe depressive episodes to be treated with ECT, Plath writes about the experience of ESther as follows: "Then something bent down and took hold of me and shook me like the end of the world. Whee-ee-ee-ee-ee, it shrilled, through an air crackling with blue light, and with each flash a great jolt drubbed me till I thought my bones would break and the sap fly out of me like a split plant. I wondered what terrible thing it was that I had done" (Plath, 76), in this sense Azzopardi adds:

"The parallel between the Rosenberg executions and the feminist movement is not as far-fetched as it might seem at first sight. The Rosenbergs encountered

the brutality of society's backlash against anything different. Women in the 1950s who did not fit in with what was expected of them were left feeling inadequate, unattractive, unwanted, ugly, and crazy. There were very few role models visible of women who did not conform to the norm. Keep in mind that Plath's a feminist for European-American middle-class women. The concerns of this feminism are with reconciling the demands of a career with that of a family. The private psychiatric hospital described in *The Bell Jar* is filled with bored, middle-class housewives and mothers of debutantes. The dysfunctional gender role assigned to women during the fifties--stay at home and get your satisfaction there alone--reached its logical conclusion in the boom in the psychiatric profession especially as it concentrated on the treatment of women" (Azzopardi).

Esther's distress about her identity extends from the lack of choices as a middle-class woman, also the restriction that comes with the patriarchal prepackaged destiny as a female in society and her designated role in it, in addition to that the novel offers an account of endless fears and uncontrolled life, yet a controlled death at some points of the author's embodiment character Esther as she attempts to take her own life as she was controlled by the fear of not being able to maintain an adequate life in such society without being on the edge of marginality as she perceives how society accepts certain patterns of behaviors and decisions about women, for example, women like her boss Jay Cee are not as acceptable as women like Betsy "the Beauty Editor persuaded Betsy to cut her hair and made a cover girl out of her, and I still see her fare now and then, smiling out of those "P.Q.'s wife wears B.H. Wragge" ads" (Plath, 5).

Jay Cee was a woman in Plath's novel who represents a female figure that does not meet the manuscript of women's appearance or mannerisms which basically classifies her

within the unwanted figures of womanhood, Plath provides simple how society perceives women like Cee through patterns of Betsy's thought as a product of her society: "Jay Cee's ugly as sin,' Doreen went on coolly"(Plath, 5), but Esther had something else to say about her boss as she admired her: "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).

All between a subject that is navigating the world freely exploring the areas of being successful and full of creativity and an object within others' subjective view of conformity aspects in society, Esther finds herself simultaneously a person that she needs to be and a person that she is obliged to be in order to be normal in the eyes of her surroundings, as a matter of fact, this had the greatest impact on her mental health to be trapped in an airless enclosure due to the restrictions of the designated life for her as an American woman addressing a universal issue about every single woman from the dawn of history and drawing a picture of a woman who needs a male savior in order to find her purpose in life.

As a woman, society ingrained the idea of dependency on male savior era and that every woman can be satisfied and filled her occupation in life as she meets the right savior of her, Esther as a matter of fact was waiting for that one man to come and fulfill a need for her, if it was not her boyfriend Buddy Willard it would be someone else to experience that particular thing with him, so far Esther wanted to be given a certain feeling of being a woman via not being virgin anymore, so she focuses all the time on the idea of losing her virginity for two reasons, the first reason is that society at that time was not supportive concerning relationships outside marriage, or none-chast women getting married because women were obliged to stay chaste until they get married or else they would be considered and seen as promiscuous even by their own kind, as Esther described Buddy Willard's mother as a

Under these obligations and terms, Esther considers her virginity as a burden so she must take it away one way or another, along with the burden of marrying the wrong person, Plath addresses a very deep-rooted issue that really affects females mental health severely, the fear has never been out of women's minds concerning their lives and the life they would end up living, the problem with living with another person of one's choice or someone that is not of the choice is not seen as an aspect of life but rather as a responsibility to be taken, Plath speaks through Esther about this issue exploring the significance of marriage burden:

“I climbed up on the examination table, thinking I am climbing to freedom, freedom from fear, freedom from marrying the wrong person, like Buddy Willard, just because of sex, freedom from the Florence Crittenden Homes where all the poor girls go who should have been fitted out like me, because what they did, they would do anyway, regardless...”(Plath, 117)

Women were deemed to a certain fate by male denominated society, starting from the point women had to make themselves pretty to satisfy men and to find a way to their hearts, and eventually their houses. Everything was about men at a certain point of women's life so by that men resided at the top off the social complexity, Esther concluded everything about men describing her significant other Buddy Willard “Now Joan said stoutly, ‘I never really liked Buddy Willard. He thought he knew everything. He thought he knew everything about women’ . . .” (Plath, 115).

Marriage institution is the biggest enemy of a woman in particular ways, in a patriarchal society there are plenty of restrictions that makes the relationship of couples deemed to fall if not living miserably as a result because of the expectations women are ahead to, and the responsibilities that come with the man as a patriarchal product, Esther however precisely describes this issue in a very accurate and explicit way “And I knew that in spite of all the roses and kisses and restaurant dinners a man showered on a woman before he married

her, what he secretly wanted when the wedding service ended was for her to flatten out underneath his feet like Mrs. Willard's kitchen mat" (Plath, 45).

In addition to the issue of the shrinkage of opportunities and possibilities despite the big chance Esther is ahead of in the internship of *Mademoiselle Magazine* she won to NYC, she gets paralyzed with her own thoughts by the prospect of making a wrong choice that would affect the rest her life negatively, also the thought process of being subjugated⁶ touched her weakest spot to be caught in the nets of settling for what made her sick at the first point. Plath looks at Esther through the lenses of irony and history which promotes the ideas of family as a key of stability and as a frame of happiness as America's prosperous era, in this sense Esther questions what Buddy tries to pour into her:

"I also remembered Buddy Willard saying in a sinister, knowing way that after I had children I would feel differently, I wouldn't want to write poems any more. So I began to think maybe it was true that when you were married and had children it was like being brainwashed, and afterward you went about numb as a slave in some private, totalitarian state" (Plath, 45)

3.2 *The Second Sex Under The Bell Jar, Femininity In The Obscure "An Existential Conundrum"*

First of all, the important element to notice about both of these works that indicate existential questioning and crisis concerning the way authors used to highlight certain facts about women. Firstly, Simone De Beauvoir utilized the pronoun "We" to show that the entire

⁶ "From centuries, woman is struggling against the patriarchal subjugation and exploitation. Whether born in east or west, she is regarded as an other, an unwanted inferior being. Patriarchs try to control each and every movement of woman. Man expects woman to act according to his wishes and to achieve this goal of subjugation of woman,... Man written literature that is full of women characters who are totally submissive to every will of man. Male writers present woman as an embodiment of sex and lust. Males consider woman as an object which they can mould in whatever shape they like" (*Mary Wollstonecraft's the Subjugation of Women* | ipl.org).

world accords with her about the facts she holds in her book within all of its chapters, secondly, Sylvia Plath addressed issues about trauma, sexuality, frustration, mental illness and life in society of patriarchal patterns through the “I” pronoun, both of the pronouns illustrate a fact of being included in this context, both as ambitious women and individuals been declined their rights and been suffocated under the shrinkage of horizon upon them for reasons they sought to break silence about their frustration about being objectified and below man.

Being a woman ultimately stands for the fact of being chained as a judged person for only being a female, specifically being the weaker gender, the dilemma of patriarchy breaks down the entity of woman to two chained components the body and the conscience, a woman’s body is her identity according to De Beauvoir in patriarchal societies, she is defined with her womb and ovaries (De Beauvoir). In *The Bell Jar* and *The Second Sex* women’s interior are explored psychologically, historically, socially, and from their own point of view. *The Bell Jar* and *The Second Sex* stand as an exploration of the abstract conscience of women as subtle and sophisticated yet simple female conscience (Philosophize This!).

The Bell Jar is an autobiographical account of Sylvia Plath and a coming of age piece of fiction with a plot that revolves around mental health issues of a young woman named Esther Greenwood addressing universal issues about fate, frustration, sexuality, lack of choice, patriarchy, and marriage, on the other hand *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir is a seminal work in the feminist movement, providing a comprehensive analysis of the social and cultural oppression of women, the book argues that women are not born inferior to men, but rather are made so through societal conditioning and institutionalized sexism through her famous saying “One is not born, but rather, becomes, woman” (De Beauvoir).

Additionally, both *The Bell Jar* and *The Second Sex* are feminist products that elevated the second wave of feminism in terms of accuracy, starting with the first point that

strengthens this given accuracy is the symbolism in both books titles', the other/ the bell jar, firstly the term 'the other' is used to describe someone that is an extension of the first option, moving to the next symbol, the bell jar which is a scientific experiment⁷ used by Plath to demonstrate the feeling of female entrapment she is living in, which paralyzes her and narrows her interests into paths she doesn't consider taking which traps her under an airless enclosure, in *Female Entrapment in The Bell Jar*, Chin-Yi, Chung elaborates:

“While the Biblical God did indeed make Eve as companion to man and to be his helper, what Plath seems to imply in the novel is that this being made as an appendage to man is a complete suffocation of women's rights, independence and freedom, and the bell jar of depression and suicide is the only way to escape this prison and to experience liberty and freedom” (Chin-Yi, 591-592).

In order to support the previous paragraph, De Beauvoir also examines the ways in which women's sexuality has been repressed and policed by society same as Esther's wondering of all the men she met and could think of in her society. Simone De Beauvoir shows how women have been expected to conform to strict standards of sexual morality, while men have been given more freedom to express their desires while women were assigned to chastity and purity till marriage, this stresses Esther and make her neurotic in the eyes of her society, in this sense Chin-Yi adds:

“Being female comes with the expectations of eventually becoming a domestic keeper no matter what one has achieved prior to getting married, as Plath mentions when she says men like Buddy Willard intend to serenade her with

⁷ The bell jar experiment is a common experiment used to demonstrate that sound needs a medium to travel. It involves placing an electrical bell in a glass jar and pumping out the air from the jar. As the air is removed, the sound from the bell becomes fainter and eventually stops, even though the bell is still ringing. This shows that sound cannot travel through a vacuum (Wikipedia contributors).

high romance only to iron her out flat like a mat like Buddy Willard's mother after marriage, reduced to a life of menial household chores and work that revolves entirely around the family while Buddy Willard lives a double life of male hypocrisy and is able by virtue of his status as a male to engage in casual sex with a waitress "(Chin-Yi, 591-592).

De Beauvoir would look at Esther's case of being perplexed into a double standard society from her book *The Second Sex* providing that the paths Esther Greenwood is exposed to are not an obligation on her, but rather society constructed them to weaken her in terms of gender roles and underestimating her ability to take a path of her own choice, because as an ambitious woman nothing would stop her if she navigates to the depth where she finds her strength, in this sense Simone De Beauvoir writes:

"When she makes a weapon of both her weakness and her strength, it is not a deliberate calculation: she is spontaneously seeking her salvation in the path imposed on her, that of passivity, at the same time as she is actively demanding her sovereignty; and this process is undoubtedly not "fair play," but it is dictated by the ambiguous situation assigned to her. Man, though, when he treats her like a freedom, is indignant that she is still a trap for him; while he flatters and satisfies her in her role as his prey, he gets annoyed at her claims to autonomy; whatever he does, he feels duped and she feels wronged" (De Beauvoir, 850).

Esther represents a phase of life that Simone De Beauvoir describes as getting out of childhood era to adulthood era, which is in consequence called the era of ambiguity. The existential weight Esther is holding comes from the fact of being the second/other as well as being exposed to certain choices she didn't the chance to approve on them, this makes her

question her worth as an intellectual and as a woman, what part of life makes rights and duties conventionally dictated and imposed upon people without their consent and free will?

Consequently, according to De Beauvoir, Esther is trying to will her freedom through decision in life which comes with responsibility as De Beauvoir argues, despite the wrong path Esther has taken to free her will, it remains a conscience act of her to notice that any convention that doesn't serve her well as a woman must be questioned, therefore Plath represented the same idea of questioning patriarchal conventions De Beauvoir mentioned in the introduction of her book *The Second Sex*, Plath explored this concept through Esther in:

“I thought it sounded just like the sort of drug a man would invent. Here was a woman in terrible pain, obviously feeling every bit of it or she wouldn't groan like that, and she would go straight home and start another baby, because the drug would make her forget how bad the pain had been, when all the time, in some secret part of her, that long, blind, doorless and windowless corridor of pain was waiting to open up and shut her in again” (Plath, 35).

Regardless of the fact of human continuity and prosperity as a kind, Esther thought of birth a a thing that's highly governed by man which De Beauvoire writes on:

“Woman has ovaries and a uterus; such are the particular conditions that lock her in her subjectivity; some even say she thinks with her hormones. Man vainly forgets that his anatomy also includes hormones and testicles. He grasps his body as a direct and normal link with the world that he believes he apprehends in all objectivity, whereas he considers woman's body an obstacle, a prison, burdened by everything that particularizes it. ‘The female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities’” (De Beauvoir, 25)

In the sense of Buddy Willard taking Esther to see her purpose in life after making her feel small about her interest in poetry and that the only thing she must be interested in is

starting a family, persuading her in this way paints a clear picture of De Beauvoir's idea of women being defined as their role in life, their purpose must be inside the realm of their body, She argues that this is called instrumentality which means the treatment of a person as a tool for the objectifier's purposes, and also the concept of denial of autonomy which refers to the treatment of a person as lacking autonomy and self determination (SEP), De Beauvoir argues that being the other means being defined on what the essence is not, in this sense she writes:

“Humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being. “Woman, the relative being,” writes Michelet. Thus Monsieur Benda declares in *Le rapport d’Uriel* (Uriel’s Report): “A man’s body has meaning by itself, disregarding the body of the woman, whereas the woman’s body seems devoid of meaning without reference to the male. Man thinks himself without woman. Woman does not think herself without man.” And she is nothing other than what man decides; she is thus called “the sex,” meaning that the male sees her essentially as a sexed being; for him she is sex, so she is it in the absolute. She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other” (De Beauvoir, 26).

Esther as a woman had met types of men during her journey, each man represented how ingrained patriarchal conventions about women work, for example Marco the woman hater, in other clear terms the misogynist who mistreated her and tried to engage in an intercourse without her consent on their first date together and treating her like an object, and Buddy Willard her boyfriend who insisted on her purity “Suddenly, after I finished a poem, he said, "Esther, have you ever seen a man?" The way he said it I knew he didn't mean a

regular man or a man in general, I knew he meant a man naked” (Plath, 36), to later on discover that he was having an affair with the waitress, in this sense Soundarya elaborates her arguments about it:

“The concept of defloration is as such viewed in such a way that, women give away themselves for the love and men take them as possessions. In *The Bell jar*, Esther Greenwood, resists taking this idea and revolts within herself. In chapter seven she expresses to herself, “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” (77 Plath). Beauvoir also revolts the idea in her *The Second Sex*, “it is not the women, but the men who control the world” (314 Beauvoir). But recent lifestyle of women, universally, is not much confined to the household” (Soundarya, 1588).

The sick rose is the closest meaning to the concept of women impurity for the understanding of patriarchal society, Plath provides a certain frame for women’s life in such societies by the virtue of restrictions women are more likely to be under a huge amount of stress regarding the responsibilities men defaults them to comparing the total freedom of men to the total absence of freedom women are exposed to, Chin-Yi explains:

“Plath thus feels that being female is little more than being an appendage to men as they are allowed sexual liberties that are forbidden to women and allowed to pursue money glamour and fame all at the expense of their wives who have to make sacrifices and raise children for them. The idea of marriage appeals Plath who finds it little more than an entrapment and imprisonment for someone as talented and full of promise independently as herself. Plath is also repulsed by the idea of females being completely passive, indebted and at the mercy of male desire” (Chin-Yi, 590).

After finally being free of the chastity chains and engaging in an action of intercourse with a professor, Esther feels that she finally took her revenge from patriarchy, society, her mother, and especially Buddy Willard she discovers that it was not worth it as it is a man's pleasure rather than a woman, Chin-Yi provides that Plath painted a clear picture for this idea: "...she bleeds incessantly, demonstrating that the sexual act has more gratification for males than females and leads to more suffering on the part of females than males" (Chin-Yi, 590), the far ingrained patriarchal can go is quite terrifying for Esther when they tried to persuade her into considering to marry Buddy rather than thinking of anything else:

"I didn't know what to say. My mother and my grandmother had started hinting around to me a lot lately about what a fine, clean boy Buddy Willard was, coming from such a fine, clean family, and how everybody at church thought he was a model person, so kind to his parents and to older people, as well as so athletic and so handsome and so intelligent. All I'd heard about, really, was how fine and clean Buddy was and how he was the kind of a person a girl should stay fine and clean for. So I didn't really see the harm in anything Buddy would think up to do" (Plath, 36).

In the fig tree story in *The Bell Jar* Sylvia Plath explores what Simone De Beauvoir represents as the existential weight of considering the freedom one has within all the different choices to take, "the responsibility of the different choices you have, all the different plates you need to keep spinning to balance within these dualities, all the mystery, all the regret, all the responsibility you have for every single choice you make" (Philosophize This! 04:10-26:30), through Esther, Plath gave the most perfect explanation about the female psyche and what is it like to be a woman in which Janet McCann notes that "The Bell Jar in fact presents a challenging analysis of the barriers that stood between young women and achievement in the 1950s"(Đurđević, 4):

“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,... 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, 40-41).

Conclusion

In order to conclude this chapter, the idea of existence is a significant matter to question if one is a woman in a patriarchal society, because no matter what women would achieve they would be denied parts of their rights, if not all of them just because of the instrumentality and denial of autonomy females are exposed to, both *The Bell Jar* and *The Second Sex* explored areas of oppression of women, from society.

The tension that comes along with responsibility and prejudices against women either by the opposite gender or by their own kind becomes a cultural thing that functions as a generational trauma that few people could get over and question their existence as individuals not as an extension of anything else but who they are as people with conscience and less prepackaged life with a clear pathway to take, the fig tree and the dichotomy of subject and object have been draining for femininity for ages, Esther is a woman who lives inside every woman, who is in need for a woman like Simone De Beauvoir to provide a context for her questions and anxiety.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis as a work have explored areas of oppression and prejudice towards women in *The Bell Jar* and made clear through *The Second Sex*. The main answer of Freud as a male psychoanalyst “The great question that has never been answered and which I have not yet been able to answer, despite my 30 years of research into the feminine soul, is: “What does a woman want?” (Sigmund Freud), on one hand, the only answer to questioning any feminine blues is to dive deep into the social stratification, and how women are perceived as creatures in the first place as fundamental contributors to society, on the other hand, one must question patriarchal patterns of oppression first.

In order to solve a problem there has to be an accurate diagnostic for it, hence, the perfect diagnosis for feminine distress is the burden of accumulations when intersectionality issues overlap together creating an identity crisis that is primarily caused by patriarchal norms in the society. In other terms the social construction realm has been historically judgmental about women and all of this was concluded in the statement of Pythagoras: "There is a good principle that created order, light, man, and a bad principle that created chaos, darkness, and woman.", to be confronted by the same ideas of the French feminist writer Poulain De La Barre in his famous saying: “Everything that has been written by men about women should be viewed with suspicion because they are both judge and party”, here it is provided that the answer to all the prejudices and biased pathways Esther was forced to go through as a woman, that whatever was dictated by a man is not correct and must be questioned as De Beauvoir Provided in *The Second Sex* about this inaccuracy.

A woman as an entity and a subject of her own must define herself to gain the stolen autonomy from her in order to weaken her knees by all the means of power exploitation of men in order to abolish all the definitions given to a woman compared to men because a

woman was never an extension for anything but rather an independent feminine unity of her own, here De Beauvoir settles on the fact that “Nature does not define a woman: it is she who defines herself by reclaiming nature for herself in her affectivity” Simone de Beauvoir.

Abnormality in female mannerisms simply refers to the kind of behaviors that do not correspond with the ones patriarchy has set for women, Esther as an example being a woman in her mind was not the same as being the woman in the mind of any of her female colleagues in the Amazon hotel, nor the woman in each mind of the men she knew in her journey, or the woman for her mother, Jay Cee, and America itself at that time, this novel represents the proportionality of the portrayal of women upon social restrictions and effect of conformity on the minds of people as an extension/ product of their society.

Restrictions imposed on women in society would shape their lives as simple ideas developing into concepts about life, and eventually become a cultural thing regarding the fact of generational effects, here the concept of culture affects generations on two levels, the first one is the ingrained patterns, this extension of the concept refers to the idea that those patterns are not questioned, rather followed and embraced blindly because why would someone not follow such cultural regime? what part of history dictates the necessity of going against conforming to these certain cultural rules? The second one is the effect of not conforming to the social construction and the implications that come along with the act of going against the flow and questioning the cultural concepts that have been constructed to build certain understanding of individuals and their relations within society.

According to Friedan no authority has the right to impose such limited choices on any individual under any circumstances based on gender, in short terms Esther did not conform to any of these concepts which caused great implications on her life and cost her a lot of her energy and health, but within the process of struggling to fit in, Esther has been building stamina against such cultural conventions, at the end of the novel Esther had gone through

what Plath called rebirth, Esther survived what she thought she can't endure, therefore De Beauvoir's saying of "one is not born, rather, becomes, woman" navigates all the areas of stress and existential weight within Esther's mind and life as an ambitious young woman.

ملخص:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على التحيز الكبير ضد المرأة والذي يؤدي بالتالي إلى تأثير خطير على كل من الصحة العقلية للإناث وصورة المرأة في التسلسل الهرمي الأبوي ، وبهذا المعنى ، يهدف هذا البحث إلى التركيز على قضايا الصورة النمطية للجنسين ، القهر ، و انبثاق فكرة الوجودية التي كانت حاسمة للغاية فيما يتعلق بالمفاهيم التي يحملها التقسيم الطبقي الاجتماعي في الفترة التي أعقبت الحرب العالمية الثانية. لذلك كانت الأحكام العرفية والتعسف في الأنماط القمعية المتأصلة في المجتمع نقطة تسامي لسيمون دي بوفوار و سيلفيا بلاث للتساؤل على أهمية دورهما كنساء في مجتمعاتهم بشكل خاص وفي العالم قبل كل شيء، وعلى أي أساس يجب أن يتصرفوا. قدم الناقدون الزجاجي والجنس الثاني سردا صريحا لما يعنيه الشعور بالاختناق و الاستبعاد في المجتمع من خلال رفض أي وسيلة لتأدية دور مفروض من طرف المجتمع، القدر المحدد مسبقا والافتقار إلى الحرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الوجودية، الجنس، الفردية، الآخر.

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