

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA  
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY OF MOHAMED BOUDIAF - M'SILA

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

N° : .....



DOMAIN: FOREIGN LANGUAGES

STREAM: ENGLISH LANGUAGE

OPTION: LITERATURE & CIVILIZATION

**American Women's Oppression in Sylvia  
Plath's Novel *The Bell Jar***

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

**By**

Mrs. Arab Hanaa

Miss. BELHADDAD Hassina

**Academic Year: 2016/2017**

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA  
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY OF MOHAMED BOUDIAF - M'SILA

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

N° : .....



DOMAIN: FOREIGN LANGUAGES

STREAM: ENGLISH LANGUAGE

OPTION: LITERATURE & CIVILIZATION

**American Women's Oppression in Sylvia  
Plath's Novel *The Bell Jar***

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

**Submitted by**

- 1- Mrs. ARAB Hanaa
- 2- Miss. BELHADDAD Hassina

**Publically defended Before the following Board of Examiners:**

Mr. TAYOUB Abdelmadjid	Chair	University Mohamed Boudiaf, M'sila
Mr. SABER Med Djemoui	Supervisor	University Mohamed Boudiaf, M'sila
Miss. FARRAH Sabah	Examiner	University Mohamed Boudiaf, M'sila

**Academic Year: 2016/2017**

## *Declaration*

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled, “*American Women’s Oppression in Sylvia Plath’s Novel The Bell Jar*,” is my own work and that all the sources I have quoted have been acknowledged by means of references.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

## *Dedication*

This modest work is dedicated to all the members of my family who assisted me with this project:

My mother and my father who supported me all along this thesis.

I dedicate it to my sister

Dedication also must go to my two dear brothers and to my friend Hanaa.

To the special man in my life: my fiancé Samir

BELHADDAD Hassina

## *Dedication*

I dedicate this work to, my lovely mother, and father.

My brothers, sisters notably Imane.

All the members of ARAB family.

My Husband Berkache Abdellah and to all my second family BERKACHE .

My Supervisor Mr.SABER who spared no effort in making this work successful.

All who taught me even a letter

All my dear students.

My beloved friends and sisters, especially Touati Sakina, Djouhri Rania, Belguelil Nadjet, , Abdelhafid Meriem, Arab wahiba, and Barkache Ikram.Thank you so much for your support. Each of you is an amazing friend. I wish you the best.

I also dedicate it to my partner BELHADDAD Hassina, all my classmates and all those who know me without forgetting those who feel interested in reading my dissertation.

ARAB Hanaa

## *Acknowledgement*

We thank Almighty God for giving us the courage and the determination, as well as guidance in conducting this dissertation, despite all difficulties.

First and foremost, we gratefully acknowledge the important contributions and guidance provided by Mr. SABER Mohamed Djomoui, our research supervisor.

Without his assistance and dedicated involvement throughout the process, this dissertation would have never been accomplished. We would like to thank you very much for your support and understanding over these past months.

We would also like to thank the committee members for their comments and suggestions.

We would like to acknowledge the support provided by our families during the preparation of the dissertation.

We must acknowledge as well the many friends, colleagues, teachers, and librarians who assisted, advised, and supported us over the years.

*Thank you*

## *Abstract*

The aim of this work is to discuss the notion of female oppression in literature by looking to *The Bell Jar*. In order to discuss this notion we looked to the representation of female oppression in literature and the different cultures represented in the novel during the 1960s. *The Bell Jar* represents the American cold war history with regards to female gender identity by looking to the madness of the world. It investigates the struggle of women to achieve personalized identities. Feminist and psychoanalytic theories are employed to assess strategies of female identity formation by looking to the psychology of the protagonist of the novel Esther Greenwood. Furthermore through using those theories different models of sexuality and female dissatisfaction are defined as illnesses treatable by psychology. In this context, Esther search for a self with whom she can identify becomes the novel's main question to follow her mother advice or to accept living in the patriarchal society dominated by the man.

## ملخص

الهدف من هذا العمل هو مناقشة مفهوم قمع الإناث في الأدب من خلال النظر إلى رواية الناكوس الزجاجي. ومن أجل مناقشة هذا المفهوم، نظرنا إلى تمثيل القمع النسائي في الأدب والثقافات المختلفة الممثلة في الرواية خلال الستينيات. الناكوس الزجاجي تمثل تاريخ الحرب الباردة الأمريكية فيما يتعلق الهوية الجنسية للإناث من خلال النظر إلى العالم انذاك. وهو يحقق في نضال المرأة لتحقيق هويات شخصية. وتستخدم النظريات النسوية والتحليلية النفسية لتقييم استراتيجيات تشكيل هوية الإناث من خلال النظر إلى علم النفس من بطل الرواية من إستر غرينوود. وعلاوة على ذلك من خلال استخدام تلك النظريات تعرف نماذج مختلفة من الحياة الجنسية وعدم الرضا للإناث كأعراض يمكن علاجها من قبل علم النفس. وفي هذا السياق، يصبح بحث إستر عن الذات الذي تستطيع أن تحده هو السؤال الرئيسي للرواية في متابعة مشورة والدتها أو قبول العيش في المجتمع الذكوري الذي يهيمن عليه.

## Table of Contents

Declaration.....	I
Dedication.....	II
Acknowledgment.....	IV
Abstract.....	V
Table of Contents.....	VII
General Introduction .....	1
<b>CHAPTER ONE: The Bell Jar Socio-historical and Literary Background</b>	
Introduction.....	6
1. Sylvia Plath’s Biography.....	7
1.1. Childhood and EarlyN Life.....	7
1.2. College Years.....	9
1.3. Careers.....	10
1.4. Relationship and Published Novel “The Bell Jar.....	11
1.5. Suicide and Death.....	12
2. The 1960s Society and Women.....	12
2.1. The American Women from Ideal woman to the Feminis.....	13

2.2. The Sexual War and the Feminist Revolution; looking for new role in society.....	14
3. Postmodernism.....	19
3.1. Postmodernism Emergence.....	19
3.2. General Characteristics of Postmodernism.....	22
3.3. Literature in postmodernism.....	24
3.4. Literary works.....	25
Conclusion.....	27

**CHAPTER TWO: The Depiction of Female Crises**

Introduction.....	29
1. Women’s oppression .....	30
1.1. Womanhood and the patriarchal society.....	30
2. The Symbolic Representation of the Identity Crisis .....	33
2.1. The female identity Vs the American society.....	35
3. The Psychological Outcomes of Women.....	37
3.1. The Protagonist’s Madness and the Woman initiate mental Illness.....	38
3.2. Sylvia Plath and Esther Greenwood.....	41
3.3. Depression .....	44

Conclusion.....	48
General Conclusion .....	49
Work Cited.....	52

## Introduction

American women faced many challenges during the late nineteenth century. Their need of identity encouraged them to find new opportunities. At this point, literature became a source that helped them reveal their inner capacities. Moreover, society criticized women for their contribution in literature. Owing the fact that literature is a repository of both a society's ideologies and its psychological conflicts, it has the capacity to reveal aspects of a culture's psyche. In addition, it is reasonable to assume that American literature would offer a field to explore the interaction between the ideological and psychological aspects of American life.

*The Bell Jar* was distributed in London, England, in January 1963, one month before the writer, Sylvia Plath, committed suicide by asphyxiation. Distributed under the alias of Victoria Lucas, the novel is open to some positive audits, in spite of the fact that Plath bothered by its gathering. 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. Sylvia Plath's novel *The Bell Jar* is one of the representative works of American literature that seeks to draw together these interests. This literary work was written in 1960s.

This research explores the literary life of an exceptional American woman, in which this thesis will attempt to determine the American's women oppression during that period. She stares into the abyss of her soul and tries to transform the revelations into something more tangible. Writing for her was a way of dealing with the demons of her past, a remedy for her soul, she "used raw risk and emotional vulnerability for the sake of vision and sensibility" (Tytell, 12). It is through her extreme sensibility she

finally reaches the reputation of a great artist. Her work is undoubtedly an expression of her innermost feelings.

In 1960s, women revolted against the dominance of man because they felt oppressed and humiliated. This idea was reflected in the image of the *The Bell Jar* resulting in the feminist revolt for freedom. This means that there is a need for a better understanding of female oppression through male dominance and double sexual standards and the social injustice generating woman's psychological space.

This thesis attempts to identify and analyze women's oppression in Sylvia Plath's novel and if she succeeds in refusing the hypocrisy of man. *The Bell Jar* was completed finally on January 14<sup>th</sup> of 1963, after roughly two years of composing of writing. This novel viewed as an incomplete collection of memoirs in light of the fact that *The Bell Jar* parallels the heartbreaking occasions that happened all through her own particular life. Depression, suicide and death accompanied with a sense of hope for resurrection were explored as punier themes in the work of Sylvia Plath.

Erin Catherine O'Neill (2000), was one of the writers who discussed Sylvia Plath's novel .He writes that Plath has been called a heroine, a cult figure, even a goddess, but under the facade lies a sensitive woman, a mother, and a literary geniality. Sylvia Plath's illness, parents and family were a few elemental borders of her short life that was described through the subject of her work. Plath took Yeast's words, in her writings, using sturdy images and symbols to stand for her personal tragedy and to carry herself through her work.

This study will equally deal with the following questions :

- Does the feminist perspective appear in Sylvia Plath work?
- What social pressure led American women of 1960s to revolt?
- To what extent society affected the protagonist's fragmentation of her soul?
- What does the protagonist of the novel, Esther Greenwood, signify and what social pressures have led to the formation of this psychological space?

In order to answer the previous questions, the work divided into two chapters. The first chapter provides an overview about the Socio-historical and Literary Background. It deals also with the biography of the writer and the historical context in which their novels were written.

The second chapter analyses the context of *The Bell Jar* through different perspectives, the feminist perspectives and the psychoanalytical one to explain the American's women oppression during 1960s. It also sheds the light on the main characters, their dissatisfaction, their rebellion, and their destiny. Moreover, this chapter provides different views of different writers. Accordingly, the objectives behind this dissertation are to find out that Sylvia Plath's work is truly full of the feminist perspective and to examine that the female oppression in the 1960s society, as well as to what degree that the social oppression can affect the human psychological motives.

The basic source for this academic research has been the book *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath, for the research is structured around descriptive analytical study of the

novel by tracing the social and personal levels. The Bell Jar is an image that interested the researcher to explore the female oppression. Secondary sources include the electronic media that has found in the internet.

Moreover, the research is going to present an analytical assessment of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, the study will use a psychoanalytic approach. In the light of this theory, this study aims broadly at showing how Sylvia uses her novel as an effective paradigm to inner issues by casting the light on psychoanalytic features that are very close to this study. It will try to elucidate the psychological variables within Esther Greenwood; the protagonist character of the novel relying on the works of Sigmund Freud.

This research on the American women's oppression in Sylvia Plath *The Bell Jar* is innovated because it brings a deeper analysis of the novel to discover the reality behind this piece of writing, with the study of feminist and the psychological variables.

The thesis can be helpful because it improves readers' understanding about the feminist and psychoanalytical theory. Besides, People can anticipate responses for cases similar through the understanding that the culture and the period can affect the human's way of thinking. It is at hand endeavors not to be a rigid analysis of a novel, but it rather constitutes an ongoing impact on readers.

# **Chapter One**

## **The Bell Jar Socio-historical and Literary Background**

## **Introduction**

Sylvia Plath is a standout amongst the most noticeable and perceived driving figures in twentieth-century American writing and culture exactly in Postmodernism period. It was the time that occurs with the occasions of The Second World War which is portrayed by many changes on various fields particularly; social, financial, and abstract ones.

The first chapter audits Sylvia Plath's life and her achievements; moreover, the chapter reviews the reasons behind the rise of Postmodernism as a literary Movement, during the cold war.

## **1. Sylvia Plath's Biography**

Sylvia Plath is widely considered as one of the influential and dynamic writers of the twentieth century literature and culture. Born in the United States of America, in the early 1932. She is famous for her short stories and novels. Her name as an accomplished author has developed because of the publication of her great works. She is called as "modern confessional writer" (Gill 19, 20) because of her use of autobiographical material and the focus of emotion in her art. She had her first book of poems published at the age of twenty eight. This was in fact, one of the only two books that were in print in her life time; all others were published after her death (Asotic, 55).

This part begins with an overview of Plath's life in which her work has produced and became real till her suicide at the age of thirty.

### **1.1. Childhood and Early Life**

Sylvia Plath was born on 27 October 1932 in Jamaica plain, Massachusetts. Her mother named Aurelia Schober and her father named Otto Emil Plath. Both are of German hereditary; her mother is a first generation American, her father comes to the United States from Poland as a young man. Sylvia's father was a professor of biologist at the Boston University. And her mother, Aurelia Frances Plath, was a student of Otto Plath at the Boston University. In 1935 Plath's brother Warren was born, and two years later the family moved to Winthrop (Gill, 1)

Here, on November 5, 1940, just a few weeks after Sylvia's eighth birthday, Her father, Otto Plath, suffered from diabetes and died. Sylvia finds the death a kind of

betrayal by her father. In order to cope with her grief, she found solace in writing. Shortly after her father's death, she had her first poem published in the children's section of Boston Herald. Her writing is filled with allusions to her father's amputation. From her poem *Daddy*, she said: "Daddy, I have had to kill you. You died before I had time [...] I never could talk to you. The tongue stuck in my jaw. It stuck in a barb wire snare. Ich, ich, ich, ich, I could hardly speak" (lines 6, 7, 19, 20). Sylvia has recalled her relationship with her father and how she got shocked with his death. The whole poem is an extended metaphor for the speaker dealing with the loss of her dad and the scars that put on her psyche (Gill, 3).

The family shifted to Wellesley, Massachusetts, in 1942. Where Aurelia begins teaching at Boston University while Sylvia has admitted to Bradford senior high school (Gale, 4). When she has turned eleven she began writing journals. A routine she maintained throughout her life. Side by side, she continued writing poems, many of which were published in local papers and magazines. Her first editorial published in a national paper "Youth's Appeal for World Peace". From that time, her works began to appear regularly in various national papers. After graduation from school in 1950, she entered Smith College on scholarship where she majored in English. She was a remarkably bright student and soon becomes the editor of "The Smith Review" (Gill, 4, 5).

## 1.2 College Years

After Sylvia had finished her studies in high school, she entered Smith College on scholarship. In 1952 Sylvia Plath won *Mademoiselle's* college fiction for her story, "Sunday at the Mintons". Later in 1953, she was elected a guest editor of the magazine and spent the month of June working in New York. During this period, she missed a chance of meeting the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas who she greatly admired. Sometime now she also learned that she had been refused admission to a writers' seminar at Harvard summer school. These incidents depressed her so much that she started behaving unusually. Subsequently, she returned to Wellesley and gradually her depression becomes so pressing that she could not focus on her studies. Her mother took her to a psychiatrist, but the situation did not improve (Gill, 5).

In spite of the fact that *Mademoiselle's* August issue featured numerous of her articles, including her poem 'Mad Girl's Love Song', she began to feel that she had failed. On August 24, 1953, she made her first suicide attempt. She waited till everybody went out of the house, then she broke the lock of the medicine pack and took out the sleeping pills and left a note saying she had gone out for a long walk. She then entered a crawl space and addicted forty sleeping pills. Fortunately, she was discovered alive in time. Sylvia Plath submitted her thesis, 'The Magic Mirror: A Study of the Double in Two of Dostoyevsky's Novels' in January 1955 and graduated from Smith with highest honors in June 1955. Thereafter, she married Ted Hughes, but kept it a secret until the end of her course (Gill, 6).

### 1.3. Careers

In June 1957, Plath returned to the USA, along with Hughes. In July, she began to work on a novel that she had started in Cambridge. In September, she joined Smith College as a faculty member. Unfortunately, the job left her with little time and energy for writing. This too added to her frustration and she lost the desire to write. In contrast, Ted became more successful in writing and publishing. Slowly, she began to wonder why she failed to achieve her goal but did not give up making efforts (Gale, 6).

In the middle of 1958, the couple moved to Boston. Here, she began working as a part time receptionist at the same psychiatric ward of Massachusetts General Hospital where she had been treated after her suicide attempt. Around this time, her poems 'Mussel Hunter at Rock Harbor' and 'Nocturne' were accepted by the prestigious and well paying magazine 'The New Yorker'. This elated her and pushed her to write again. In Plath's journals in 1951, writes "That's where writing comes in. It is as necessary for the survival of my haughty sanity as bread is to my flesh. I must be lean and write and make worlds beside this to live in . . ." (157). She found writing as a tool to escape from her depression and to cope with its society again.

From early 1959, Plath decided to write in a more inward and unique style, trying to portray her own thoughts. Sometime now, she also enrolled at the writing class conducted by Robert Lowell. Eventually she began to have her works printed in 'Harper's', 'The Spectator' and the 'Times Literary Supplement'. In June 1959, Sylvia Plath and her husband left for a trip across America and Canada, visiting several

places, ultimately settling at the Yaddo artist colony in Saratoga Springs, New York State, in September(Gale,7).

In January 1962, she gave birth to her second child, and in July she found that Hughes was having an affair with another woman. This upset her deeply and in a fit of desperation, she burnt the only manuscript of her second novel, a sequel to *The Bell Jar*. She separated from Hughes in September 1962. Though hurt, she kept on writing powerfully and from November, she began to arrange them in manuscript form. It would later be published as 'Ariel'; but she would not live to see that (Gill, 11).

#### **1.4. Relationship and Published Novel *The Bell Jar***

The summer of 1962 was a very painful time in which the Hughes' marriage broke up. Hughes, who was in love with someone else, moved to London, leaving a bitter and devastated Plath with the two children in Devon; she wrote to her mother on 27 August, in Letters Home, that she wanted a legal separation because "I simply cannot go on living the degraded and agonized life I have been living, which has stopped my writing and just about ruined my sleep and my health. . . ." (460). This period marked her separation from Hughes and Plath's desire to "lead a freer life" (460). Battling her despair and disillusionment, she kept busy with beekeeping, took up horseback riding, and wrote intense and often violent poems at top speed.

She also completed *The Bell Jar*, which was accepted for publication by Heinemann, and began work on a second novel; to her brother Warren. In December she left the isolation of Devon and moved to London, occupying a flat in a house where Yeats once lived. *The Bell Jar* was published, in January 1963, and received

relatively good reviews. Although her health was poor, her responsibilities for the children demanding, and her emotional state depressed, she continued to write and to struggle for a stable and meaningful life. Yet, she seemed unable to throw off the effects of the past months, as she indicated in her last letter to her mother, dated 4 February 1963, a few days before her death "I have been feeling a bit grim the upheaval over, I am seeing the finality of it all, and being catapulted from the cow-like happiness of maternity into loneliness and grim problems is no fun" (680). The loss reveals so tragic.

### **1.5. Suicide and Death**

After Hughes left her for another woman in 1962, Sylvia Plath fell into a deep depression. Struggling with her mental illness, she wrote *The Bell Jar*, her only novel, which was based on her life and deals with one young woman's mental breakdown. Plath published the novel under the pseudonym Victoria Lucas. She also created the poems that would make up the collection *Ariel* (1965), which was released after her death. On February 11, 1963, after bringing bread and milk to her children's room, Sylvia closed the door on them. She turned the gas on in her kitchen and ended her life at the early age of thirty (Gill, 11, 12). She expressed, in *Lady Lazarus* "Dying is an art, like everything else. I do it exceptionally well" (43, 44, 45).

## **2. The 1960s Society and Women**

The 1960s era saw an explosion of The Civil Rights movements. For that, women started to prove themselves by becoming engaged with the fight for equal rights against sexism. They wanted to find new role in society by different kind of resistance.

## **2.1. The American Women from Ideal woman to the Feminist**

The role of women in the 1950 was oppressive and constrictive in many ways. Society positioned high importance and many prospect on behavior at home as well as in public. Women were indebted to fulfill certain roles, such as a caring mother, a diligent homemaker, and an obedient wife. The ideal mother was believed to stay home so society would accept them. A careful housewife had dinner on the table specifically at the moment her husband arrived from work. A wife was a superior wife only if she accepted out her man's every order and approved with him on everything. In fact, even if she wanted to voice an opinion, they would not allow it.

Woman could not even go to a college. It was strange and mystic. Most women married after high school and fell into their traditional roles right away. The daring women that chose to learn further were not taught mathematics and science but home economics and cooking. Women did not link the conversations; they just stood close to the men. Men feared intelligent women because of their tendency to think for themselves and disagree with their man. Women believes that they are in some way insufficient, as they feel "unmaternal and apart" in comparison with the calm women (Plath, 212).They stayed at home and look after their families ,as Brett Harvey describes in 2002:

The house was surrounded by a lake of mud. But I was thrilled- it was a very exciting thing to have a house of your own. And everything you dreamed about was there, everything was working, brand-new, no cockroaches. You got a beautiful stainless steel sink with two drains, cabinets, drawers, a three-burner General Electric stove with oven, a Bendix washing machine.

The only thing I had to buy for the house when we moved in was a fluorescent tube over the kitchen sink- the fixture was even there! (113).

The role of women in the 1950 was a society endorsing template that all women had to fill. Women had to be as someone who "was healthy, beautiful, educated, and concerned only about her husband, her children, and her home" (Friedan, 18). This excellence was not a personal point, but rather on society's principles. The raise of the new creation was extremely significant at this time so women worked attentively and rigid to fill the wishes that prepared for them. Many TV shows of the fifties reveal this adorable mother figure with not a concern in the world apart from her family.

## **2.2 .The Sexual War and the Feminist Revolution**

Women's struggles have been a main factor in American history. However, after the Second World War through the first half of the 1960s, the American women's struggles became more apparent and essential. American women felt that they were subjugated. For that, they started to fight against the issues of dissimilarity and domination. They wanted to be alike to men. Women consciousness of social prejudice grows more and more (Bechtel,2).

During the Second World War, women working augmented. At this time many predictable that women were capable workers as men. When the war was over, women still worked but many returned to their former lifestyle (Gale, 8).After the Second World War women obliged to go back to their household lives as house wives. The attitude of the society in 1950s was that women should know her position. After having worked on their own, and having to carry out important decisions, they should not to accept to return to a society where they were always told to what to do and

deprived of independence. There was a rush by women to get married and have babies. During the war so many men had died, there was a great need for marriage and pregnancies. But in 1950s women became disillusioned and bored. Men thought that everything would go back to the prewar norm. But women had had a taste of becoming independent; they would not want more possibilities in the society they were living in.

When many women were obliged to go away the work place, they didn't really end working, they insist to reside at service jobs such as teachers, and nurses. This suggestion was considered the main basis of break up at the time; however, the circumstances where man was similarly responsible in the household was much more unrealistic than real (Gale, 8).

Even with these changes in women's roles, Americans did not think the positions or the responsibilities which were allotted to women could be important and thus, this feminine participation in the working world was not recognized as a real evolution. Therefore, the hard work for the return of the conventional woman were progressively more current in the daily life of families. Magazines, television series, commercials and radio programs were the greatest ways to overtake this thought on to women; the representation of the best housewife and mother was gentle everywhere.

It was as if society refused to see the changes which women on track to live. As if the entire state lived in a steady attempt to believe that women were still the same ones, always pleased of being the great housewife and mother. Friedan, in 1997, states that " I seem to sleep so much. I don't know why I should be so tired. This house isn't nearly so hard to clean as the cold-water flat we had when I was working. The children

are at school all day. It's not the work. I just don't feel alive" (65). Because of their rising displeasure, women didn't want to remain living like this. The calamity of the model women became a national subject and the need for an identity initiated the surprised of the feminine form. Growing displeasure and sense of separation from those women who cheerfully immerse themselves into the roles of wife and mother recalls "the problem that has no name," a psychological condition that Friedan explains in *The Feminine Mystique* (19). The accurate nature of this problem is hard to define, but Friedan describes it as "a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction" that "each suburban wife struggled with . . . alone" (15). Because they believed that other women were content and settled in their marital roles, these suffering women seeing their disappointment as a unique problem, even though numerous women attested to feeling a "terrible tiredness" (Friedan ,31).

In her book Brett Harvey in 2002 describes a discussion that she had with a woman, Carol Freeman, who was a 1950's housewife with a large house and a winning husband, but couldn't feel totally content and pleased with her living:

But I have to be fair here. As dissatisfied as I was, and as restless, I remember so well this feeling we had at the time that the world was going to be your oyster. You were going to make money, your kids were going to go to good schools everything was possible if you just did what you were supposed to do. The future was rosy. There was a tremendous feeling of optimism. You were working for good causes; you believed that politicians were, on the whole, honest. You believed in this idea of good government and you believed you could have a part of it through political activity. You canvassed, gave parties for people to meet your candidate, distributed potholders with your congressman's name on them- and you felt that there was actually a correlation between your actions and the results. Much as I say it washateful, it was also hopeful. It was an innocent time (127).

By 1962 the dilemma of the attentive American housewife had become a national subject; magazines, books, educational conferences and TV shows were dedicated to the dilemma. However, numerous people still did not know that this problem was actual, those who were facing it knew that all the kindly and kind words would not modify a thing and that, in fact, they were somehow drowning the problem in ineffectuality. A sour feeling was beginning to be felt by American women, they were well-liked, envied, pitied, theorized until they were ill of it and no actual result was offered. They acknowledged all kinds of recommendation from the rising number of marriage therapists and psychiatrists, but no other path to completion was offered, they had to regulate to their housewife role. Most did it and attuned to their role and unnoticed the trouble as long as they could, it was a massive group of women that were anguished in soundless.

It is clear that the real cause of women's frustration and, consequentially, of feminism, was the emptiness of the housewife's role. The main work and decision of society were taking position out of the home and women felt the need, and fought for the right to join in this work. If women had gone to use their recently own education and find new identities and opportunity, perhaps housewifery, motherhood, sexual love and family life would have taken easy complementary places in their lives, just like cars and sports in men's lives. But when the idealized picture of women sent them back home, housewifery had to develop into a full-time career. As this began to happen, each logical advance that was elaborated to free women from cooking, cleaning and washing, thus giving them more time for other purposes, instead forced on them higher principles of work awaiting housework not simply extended to fill the

time obtainable, but could barely be done in the accessible time. With all their latest appliances, the housing and city housewives spent more time on housework than the active farmer's wife.

To the great consternation of men, their wives suddenly became experts, whose absolute superiority at home was impossible to compete with, even if certain husbands did a bit of housework evenings and weekends, and very hard to live with. Wives began to care for their husbands as servants or as the latest technical machine. With immediate instruction in home economics, marriage and family in women's magazines; with all the time, abilities, energy and cleverness alert on husband, children and house, the youthful American housewife of the fifties began to govern, in a very structured way, the family, even more absolutely than her mom decades earlier.

When a society asks so little from women, every woman has to listen to her inner voice to find her identity and ways to develop it. She must make, out of her requirements and abilities, a latest life arrangement, fitting to the family and home that have distinct femininity in the past with something that will permit her to develop a new awareness of herself and of her capacities, her capacities to be more than a housewife and a mother.

The changes necessary to bring about the equality were, and still are, very revolutionary indeed. They engage a sex-role upheaval for men and women who will reorganize all our institutions: child rearing, education, marriage, the family, the structural design of the home, the apply of medicine, work, politics, the economy, religion, psychological theory, and human sexuality. I now see the women's

movement for equality as simply the necessary first stage of a much larger sex-role revolution (Friedan ,519).

The fifties period was the problem of femininity. It was a problem that had been touched American women, their husbands, and children, for years. It was a voice that said: “I want more than my husband and my children and my home” (Freidan 520); it was a call that would transform American society.

The American women movements continued till the twentieth century. They made great strides towards helping women .They were opposite a hottest dare, how to find new patterns, a way out of the conflicts, whereby they could use their ability in society and enlarge their identity without, at the same time, renounce house, children, marriage and love. But a woman couldn't modify common patterns by herself, a national attempt was required and, as Betty Friedan in 1997 said “what we need is a political interest group, a social faction like that of the blacks” (517).finally, The 1960s was the time of revolution and the 1970 was the time of change.

### **3. Postmodernism:**

Postmodernism may be said to have been described as frequently radical movement far from custom. Thus, it uses new and inventive types of expression .The coming is about this movement and its characteristics.

#### **3.1. Postmodernism's Emergence**

Postmodernism is one of only a handful few terms in the contemporary basic dictionary that have been as vociferously talked about. Post modernity might be characterized as a general class assigns the way of life that broadens verifiably from

the late 1960s to the mid twenty-first century, and that is monetarily controlled by postindustrial private enterprise.

Postmodernism can be portrayed as a specific style of thought. It is an idea that corresponds the rise of new elements and sorts of social life and monetary request in a culture, regularly called modernization, post-industrialization, buyer, media, or multinational free enterprise social orders. In Modernity, we have the sense or thought that the present is irregular with the past that through a procedure of social, mechanical, and social change (either through change, that is, advance, or through decrease) life in the present is on a very basic level not quite the same as life previously.

Postmodernism is a development that is described by wide doubt, subjectivism, or relativism. It's a general doubt of reason and an intense affectability to the part of belief system in attesting and keeping up political and monetary power. Postmodernism is utilized to assign a huge number of branches in: workmanship, theory, religion, innovation, design, music, human science, correspondence, and numerous different zones that come after the twentieth century. The term has been utilized as a catchall for different parts of society, hypothesis, craftsmanship, and writing.

Generally speaking, postmodernism is the social time that took after Modernism. Essentially, it is a wary interpretive position which sees any result of human culture.

Additionally, it alludes to any development in response to Modernism, commonly that period was characterized by unexpected self-reference and ridiculousness as in writing. Postmodernism takes the reasonable position that there is no supreme truth

or target reality that is the thing that it is experienced as a truth. It is a social develop which comprises just of elucidation of what the world truly intends to each one.

Postmodernism has developed since the 1950s and it has been promoted in the 1970s furthermore, 1980s. There are two principle verifiable occasions which prompted to the advancement of postmodernism: The Second World War and The Revolution in Science and Technology since the 1950s. First of all, the Second World War brought about the demise of more than 70 million individuals. It destroyed various urban communities so individuals got to be distinctly destitute. It is the deadliest clash cruel history. After WWII, the fantasy of quiet and amicable society caved in incapitalist world and individuals started to mirror the general public and human instinct; likewise, they were less sure about their claim judgment . These brought on a feeling of misfortune, weakness, and tension. To put it plainly, the conventional qualities and convictions were reconsidered and the Second World War incredibly fortified the improvement of innovation.

Thus the second reason of the development of Postmodernism is the transformation in science and innovation. Science and Technology have been developed rapidly since 1950s. For example, in 1951, the primary Commercial Computer was invented; besides, 1962 is considered as the year in which the primary Satellite to convey TV broad casts was propelled. Each new innovation and advancement has trigged off a profound transformation in individuals' way of life what's more, contemplations particularly in created countries. Technology has significantly made individuals more grounded also, more quick witted in the meantime. Under the impact of innovation, individuals isolated from the reality and

they carried on with a virtual life. These reasons prompted to the presence of Postmodernism Development.

In other words, postmodernism was a standout amongst the most effective social patterns in the progressed industrialist nations in The Post War Period. The reasons for its ascent were complex, however basically it was the notable move in social examples and scholarly impulses around then which made, the ideal rearing ground for a hypothesis which dismisses the entire convention of The Enlightenment preceding its political and social hypothesis. Postmodernism showed up as air conditioning propensity inside the cultural arts and literature. Therborn (2007) describes Postmodernism as: “*A mutation of the modernist succession of avant-gardes*” (70).

### **3.2. General Characteristics of Postmodernism**

Begun in the twentieth century, postmodernism like any abstract development has various highlights that present it. The most important characteristics of Postmodernism are *the death of the truth, moral relativism, and the rejection of the ultimate faith on science*. To begin with the first one, it demands that dismissing target truth is the foundation of Postmodernism. The second one is about the worldview of Postmodernism in which it provides the foundation for moral relativism. It is the belief that morality is relative to the person. The third one is the dismissal of a definitive confidence on science. Modernism was built up on the confidence in science and rationality. The devastation and injury of the two world wars had framed a negative disposition towards science and innovation in present day mind. Postmodernists have watched that logical advancements prompted to industrialization that causes harms to

mankind since it prompts to destitution, unemployment, natural contamination and so forth.

The rejection of objective knowledge is another feature of postmodernism. It implies that under the umbrella term of postmodernism, information is viewed as dubious, subjective, relative, and consequently provisional; in addition, Postmodernism rejects human learning is a precise portrayal of how things are on reality.

Secondly, Individuality is also one of the major features of postmodernism in which subjective perspectives got more accentuation. Subjective view of various individuals produces learning through which they constitute subjective substances. Nietzsche's argument in this regard raised many important issues only to find the basis of postmodernism. Personal concerns have become more important than state and politics that were used to be the main concern before. Brann (1992) argues that "What each human being reports as a personal conviction is always to be taken seriously" (7).

Another characteristic of Postmodernism is *the assassination of words and language*. This guideline concentrates on the way that learning is intervened by dialect, yet Postmodernists trust that dialect can't sufficiently pass on truth, if dialect that is utilized transmits thoughts about truth, the target reality can't be known; also, what people do with words is not to reflect assurance, yet rather to make it. This is called *Constructivism* which deals with the power to construct reality with human's words. These words then can only refer to other words and not to any *Objective Reality*. For Postmodernists, it is all about interpretation not about what is real or true.

Truth as a matter of perspective also takes place in postmodernism. Truth is considered as a point of view and not all inclusive. There can't be any supreme truth. It is trusted that truth is made as opposed to found (Copan, 92). Rejecting Kant's argument about the universality of truth Nietzsche concluded that truth is a mere illusion. The last feature is the religion pluralism. The essential start of religion pluralism is that nobody religion can honest to goodness claim to prevalence over whatever other religion (Carson, 26), pluralism advocates that God has revealed himself in *Saving Ways* in other religions (26).

### **3.3. Literature on Postmodernism**

Postmodern writing is a piece of socio-social and recorded advancement. It can be viewed as a particular method for a portrayal of the postmodern life and culture. It demonstrates an ethnic, sexual, social, and social emergency of character of person and its battle for legitimization in a deceptive society.

By and large, postmodernism portrays certain components of Post-World War II writing. It vigorously depends on discontinuity, (Catch, 22), flawed storytellers, notwithstanding incongruity, dark silliness, and the general idea of play. These elements considered as the most recognizable qualities of old postmodern writing. As any development, Postmodernism shows up in different sorts of works, for example, sonnets, papers, stories and books; additionally, various authors who arranged Postmodernists were first by and large named dark humorists.

Postmodern writing speaks to a break from the nineteenth century authenticity in which a story was told from a target or omniscient perspective. In character improvement, postmodern writing scouts subjectivism, it turns from outside reality to

analyze inward conditions of cognizance; also, postmodern writing talks about fracture in story character and development.

Concerning themes, postmodernist novelists treat various themes like *meaning of truth; all religions Validity, Completeness, Straight forward, love and Freedom*, as well as *Anti-Religion*. Alice Walker says: “*Any God I ever felt in church I brought in with me*” (176), this *Cite* grasps the subject of Anti-Religion that is regularly shown in Postmodernism works, it demonstrates how the congregation can without much of a stretch be viewed as pointless. These topics and others were discussed by great postmodern authors such as Joseph Heller who is known for his post-World War satires and playwrights that include( *Catch, 22*), which is considered as most well-known of his works. Thomas Punchon, another postmodern writer, is famous for his fictional writing over many different subjects includes: Science, Mathematics, and History. Thomas Puncheon had done stellar works such as: *The Crying of Lot 49*. In addition to other authors like: Kurt Vannegut, Tim O’Brien, John Fowles and Sylvia Plath who is considered as a great postmodern writer. She used various characteristics of Postmodernism on her literary works mainly on his novel *The Bell Jar*.

### **3.4. Literary Works**

In Sylvia Plath’s early childhood, there were many works in prose and verse because of the encouragement of her family. When she was at school, she composed short stories, and when she was 16 years old, Sylvia wrote three stories, one of them was “heat”. The story of heat was about women. What’s more, the climate reflects fatigue, sorrow, and the pool of guarantee to their lives. In "The Attic View", for example, the hero is an anonymous lady whose nearness is as unnoticed as her demise.

Sylvia's prose works are similar to those written in verse in that they are both worked by intense self-consciousness, accusatory despair, disquieting expressions of futility and frustration. Plath is frequently thought to be a confession booth artist, however her profoundly individual groans frequently accomplish all inclusiveness through mythic reference and model imagery. Seen just like a cathartic reaction to her partitioned personae as a craftsman, mother, and spouse, Plath's clear and frequently stunning verse uncovers the mental torment related with the sentiments of estrangement, insufficiency, and deserting.

*The Bell Jar* (1963) was a semi-autobiographic novel about herself and profoundly charged verse in *The Colossus* (1960) and *Ariel* (1965) have won across the board basic gratefulness and keep on attracting academic examination. Posthumously in (1981), a collection of her poems was published and awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1982 "*The Collected Poems*" (Axelrod, 47).

As a rule, Plath has a massive impact on American writing as an aloof visionary of her craft. The *Ariel* lyrics were gathered and distributed after Sylvia's passing by her better half. The volume included lyrics composed generally in the most recent five months of her life. The review evoked many inquiries regarding her life, the impact of family on kids advancement, and future dispositions and conduct. Encourage, she set a case of an insubordinate and wise female in a male society. She was most certainly not happy with being underestimated; she didn't surrender a similar way other ladies did.

## **Conclusion**

In reality American social culture at the time was entirely based on the family. In that respect, the social organization relied on the traditional notions of the male and female role in the family; it was a model of community based on stereotypes. But women challenged those stereotypes and changed the role of femininity looking for new roles and searching for their identity. They struggle to find their personal identities outside what was defined by the cold war ideology of the role of women in the household. Moreover, the novel looks at the madness of the world. The character Esther Greenwood's account of her year in the bell jar is as clear and readable. Her inability to integrate her identity because of the environment and other factors presented in the second chapter becomes an important question.

# **Chapter Two**

## The Depiction of Female

### Crises

## **Introduction**

*The Bell Jar* tells about the 1960's when the feminist movements were much more powerful than it was in the beginning of the nineteenth century. It tells how women struggle against all those repressions coming from same, powerful and patriarchal society. However, Sylvia Plath's novel *The Bell Jar* is about Plath's Madness and women's madness. The discussion introduces that women are facing psychological complexities in order to deal with their own images. The traditional women are expected to maintain the ideal image of a wife. While maintaining their ideal image, they face identity crisis and they urge for rebirth to take the control over their lives.

Moreover, this chapter explores the social pressure on women in this age of conformity, and shows how the novel relates female madness to social structures of the time. It discusses the relationship between women and mental illness. It emphasizes that the Cold War's rhetoric and America's quest for national security created a kind of fear that also affected and formed the female identity in the fifties.

## **1. Women's Oppression in *The Bell Jar***

This part reveals different kind of oppression faced women in the 1960s America. It shows the dominance of male character, happens for a long time. Women's living in the patriarchal society forced them to look for solutions, rejecting this control, and seeking for freedom.

### **1.1. Womanhood and the Patriarchal Society**

Those women who live in the patriarchal societies have a ordinary condition as being below the control of the male statute (Kaya,62). Man power occurs in many aspects of life such as at work, and school. He kept them in a firm space under their power. Throughout this position, women started to be attentive .They begin to defy against this imprisonment as stated in the novel of *The Bell Jar*. The novel sheds a light to the way men live in and control them by power relations, and the way that women resist and break that fence in the last century.

A woman's femininity was tied to her obligation in the home. The more she was organization around clearout, decorating, cooking and washing, the more womanly she was measured to be. To do so was considered a essential female aspiration, which came logically purely due to her biology. The function of mother and wife was the role that God had assigned to women. In addition to nurturing their children, allocation their husbands, and running the household, women were also predictable to educate their children in moral and religious issues, and to raise their daughters according to the notion of part spheres. Separated spheres meant that a woman's sphere, her workplace and duties, was obviously alienated from the man's. This useful largely also

to women who worked outside their own home, as a considerable amount of these women worked as marital servants or in married related occupation( Holt, 1).

Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* novel depicts the struggle and the need of men for imprisonment. It is about a woman called Esther who is a new at work life. The novel speaks about imprisonment and resistance exist and the writer tells about the details of this resistance on women by patriarchy and resistance of women which is a very sharp road leading the protagonist to commit suicide. break is a special focus in the novel because it clearly describes captivity (Kaya,69). There is a representation of break relating to confinement and negative events. It was a queer, sultry summer, the summer they electrocuted the Rosenberg, and I didn't know what I was doing in New York (Plath,1). The story begins by giving name of the city as a place . So the novel starts by the cruelty quality of the space which is making by patriarchal powers. Furthermore, the author tells that Esther and some other girls are kept in a hotel room in New York City (69).

In this aspect, the beginning of the story refers to man and power as electrical energy is power and electrocution of Rosenbergs, which implies the death sentence of Rosenbergs who were accuse of being spies, is a sign of chap supremacy, a manage on society. At this part of the story, according to Buddic "though electricity does not straight away suggest the man, however it represents the male sexuality and power" (Buddic ,878). Esther is limited at the sanctuary in *The Bell Jar*. She is put in a sanctuary by male power. In order to go out she needs acquiescence of a doctors who confirm the patriarchal society as stated in the story .But she resists and her mind doesn't change by those and she says "But I wasn't getting married" (Plath, 233). She

manages to verify herself and stop this power represented by man no matter how powerful it is. She does not think about society. Plath says:

“ This hotel - Amazon- was for women only, only they were mostly girls my age with wealthy parents who wanted to be sure their daughters would be living where men couldn't get them and deceive them; they were all going to posh secretarial schools like Kathy Gibbs, where they had to wear hats and stockings and gloves to class, or they had just graduated from places like Katy Gibbs and were secretaries to executives and simply hanging around in New York waiting to get married to some career man or other” (Plath, 4).

The hotel room becomes as home for them. They were away from man. So women's place at this novel again becomes home or a close location so that they could not be free to move.

However, man restricts them into a room in the novel; Esther Greenwood finds a method to budge. She always changes rooms .In the part of the story that her friend is taken to another sanctuary from the sanctuary she is in, the author hints that having various moves is going up. The author shows that how she restricts barriers and society( Kaya, 70).

Esther says “All my life I'd told myself studying and reading and writing and working like mad was what I wanted to do, and it actually seemed to be factual, I did everything well enough and got all A's, and by the time made it to college nobody could stop me” (Plath, 29).She wanted to supply liberty. Furthermore the fighting of community also enables her to exit from captivity as stated in the novel. She gets hold from writers and feminine friends but not males. “There was famous poet, and Philomena, and Jay Cee, and the Christian Scientist lady and lord knows who, and they all wanted to adopt me in some way, and for the cost of their care and influence,

have resemble them” (Plath, 211). The author means that by the help of community conflict, togetherness (Holt, 1), captivity would be vanished ( Kaya,72).

## **2. The Symbolic Representation of the Identity Crisis in the Bell Jar**

The paper for the most part concentrates on how the women characters are enduring and how they can locate their female identity in a patriarchal society in their books. There are a few courses through which an identity is shaped; having self-learning which has been made through one's close to home history, experience of adolescence and one's enrollment to a specific culture therefore characterizes the individual's idea of himself as indicated by the arrangement of standards of the given culture. These qualities are fundamental to build up a steady individual character and when these are perplexing or risky the individual needs to face battle during the time spent personality development, in a manner of speaking, the individual needs to discover his place in the public arena, resolve the issues of existing identity errors, sentiments of removal and estrangement from his way of life.

Esther’s journey of finding a resolution for her identity crisis is reflected through her straggle to conquer one of the most difficult issues in lives. Esther looks reliably for some sort of identity yet discovers her choices restricted as a young lady with minimal expenditure of her own. After a disillusioning summer as a visitor editorial manager in New York City, she neglects to be acknowledged into a prestigious composition course and bit by bit loses quite a bit of her rational soundness and desire. She rationally investigates numerous wild situations for satisfaction and satisfaction tries to compose a novel, does such unusual things as wearing her mom's garments and eating crude meat, lastly endeavors suicide.

Obviously, she is not rationally well, but rather to some degree society's constraints for females and the absence of inventive motivation in her life have both added to her fall. Since society does not urge Esther to exceed expectations her brilliant evaluations notwithstanding she now and then contends in odd ways. For instance, at a meal for the visitor understudies at Ladies' Day, she eats covetously as though she should devour more than any of alternate assistants. She additionally feels second rate compared to Buddy Willard since he lost his virginity before she did.

In *The Bell Jar* the character Esther recuperates a lot of her mental and passionate security before the finish of the novel; however the explanations behind her change are not by any means clear. To some degree, Dr. Nolan has engaged Esther to comprehend her inspirations, activities, and responses, yet some would contend Esther has in any event mostly reacted to electroconvulsive stun. At least one critic, David Holbrook in *Sylvia Plath: Poetry and Existence*, even questions to what extent Esther has recovered, when he writes, "All that her therapy achieves is symbolized by the last chapter that blankets the asylum grounds ... Sylvia Plath's insight is not deceived. 'Treatment' merely freezes her (Perloff, 260).

A record of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* had described about some literary faultfinders, such as "Linda Wagner-Martin disagrees Esther has undoubtedly entered another stage. She enters her new birth custom, the way toward leaving the haven for this present reality; with as much certainty as a canny individual can gather. There is no doubt that Plath expected to make an altogether positive closure for Esther's story. While the degree of Esther's recuperation is easy to refute, the look for her character will positively proceed after she is discharged from the haven.

Despite *The Bell Jar* addresses the topic of socially satisfactory identity. It inspects Esther's journey to manufacture her own particular identity, to act naturally instead of what others anticipate that her will be". Esther is required to wind up plainly a housewife, and an independent lady, without the choices to accomplish freedom. Esther feels she is a detainee to local obligations and she fears the loss of her internal identity. The Bell Jar sets out to highlight the issues with onerous patriarchal society in mid-twentieth Century America. The men throughout Esther's life are all onerous, regardless of whether it is in a physical way or an enthusiastic one ( Linda, 192).

### **2.1. The Female Identity Vs the American Society**

In a biographical note by Lois Ames, Sylvia Plath says about her novel, *The Bell Jar*, "...I've tried to picture my world and the people in it as seen through the distorting lens of a bell jar."( Lois, 262 ) In this personal novel, the courageous woman is taking a gander at individuals through this misshaped focal point. The novel depicts the abusive and patriarchal society in which the primary character, Esther Greenwood, lives. Her profession to be an artist is yearning as indicated by the principles of the 1950's American culture since it was a field commanded by men around then. Therefore, her battle is that of a female who tries to discover and substantiate herself in a manly world. Materialistically and socially, she is poor as indicated by the social standard. She can't yet utilize her ability as a writer so as to continue living; henceforth she relies on upon keeping her grant and winning prizes. She lives in a general public where women's life is developed by specific gauges that check ladies' aspirations, which Sylvia Plath has dismisses emphatically.

At the point when Esther wins a form magazine challenge alongside eleven other young women by composing papers, stories, ballads and design blurbs, she finds the opportunity to remain in New York and labor for an entire month. Her communication with the general population in NY can be considered as the beginning stage of her declination. She meets individuals that are neither like her social guidelines nor her mental code, along these lines; she starts to understand that she is caught off guard for this charming, focused, all the more turbulently differing "real" world.

She is torn between two universes; the world spoke to by New York and its lifestyle which requires from her more than she can give, and the customary universe of her existence with her family which is excessively basic for her, making it impossible to live. Esther believes that she "should have been excited the way most of the other girls were" (Plath, 2). However in actuality she isn't on the grounds that she has this trouble of settling on the correct decision of life. She has the issue of not comprehending what she truly needs and this choice turns out to be more troublesome for the duration of her life as she experiences distinctive individuals and different episodes that put her occasionally in positions that need basic leadership which she is not fit for making. This might be, as Linda Huf clarifies in her discourse of the story, in light of the fact that the American dream Esther is encountering does not speak to her totally on the grounds that she longs for being an artist and not some breathtaking representative or a housewife that society around then needed ( Linda ,11).

Society has certain norms for young ladies like Esther that they need to reach all together men to remember them. Such benchmarks incorporate their appearance and

their interests, for instance, they need to know how to cook well, sew well and have the capacity to do shorthand not for adapting but rather for awing the inverse sex. As the reader may see, for example, in Esther's mom who tries to persuade her that shorthand is helpful for young ladies trying to attempt to alter her opinion about being a writer or a teacher. As per her mom and so forth, it is a handy thing to learn until she gets a spouse, which embodies ladies of the 1950's couldn't have a vocation other than secretarial work. Society force such convictions that other than secretarial work, ladies have no other choice however to hold up to be hitched and turned into a mother which is something that does not appear to intrigue Esther. Plath exhibits the most noticeably bad kind of men that society could create and by battling him back and dismissing him, Esther, hence, rejects society's part and convictions (Bonds, 52).

Despite the fact that Esther goes to bat for herself a few times and tries to reject society's twofold standard qualities, to accomplish her way of life as female at that society. This estranges her from reality which makes her later feel self-distance and which drives further to Esther's mental breakdown and suicide attempts.

### **3. The Psychological Outcomes of Women in the Bell Jar**

*The Bell Jar* is a story of a young woman struggling with her mental health. Many factors including social oppressions reveal in the novel led her into madness. Esther Greenwood the protagonist of the novel experienced breakdowns in her life which led her at many times to suicide.

### **3.1 .The Protagonist’s Madness and the Woman initiate mental Illness**

Sylvia Plath describes her extensive term sadness that blocks her mind her scope of writing. the majority of her work depicts her life. Her anxious psyche also becomes noticeable in her writing. Thus, psychosis becomes an key factor in Plath's work. This really reflects how greatly she suffered from her mental illness, which includes electroshock therapy. Moreover, Plath's suicide attempt is because her mental illness. In her life Plath worked firm to attain achievement but during her early success she experienced her first crash. As a result, her life became more thorny and she described the hospitalization as, " [a] time of darkness, despair, and disillusion- so black only as the inferno of the human mind can be- symbolic death, and numb shock- then the painful agony of slow rebirth and psychic regeneration” ( Plath, 163). This was followed by a suicide attempt. However, *The Bell Jar* is not just about a “neurotic” (Plath 89) patient Esther, but it deals with the reasons that caused Esther to become mentally not well.

Plath's mental illness is much influenced by the social domination and private sufferings. Her father's death had a huge impact on her psychology. Plath's father Otto Plath died because he avoided doctor's commands about his ill. The loss of her father was to affect Plath for rest of her life. Her love for her father turned into annoyance, grief and confusion because she believed her father could have prohibited his death by following the doctor's submission. Therefore, after the death of her father Plath remote herself from everyone and busy herself in writing. It became an significant basis of expressing her feelings to others.

Besides this, her susceptible mind could not take the stress of being an model woman. Plath was trying her best to become an supreme wife and mother, and for this reason she neglects her gift for writing. Later on, she came to feel the identity crisis where she was not content with her personal life, and her marriage with Huges was facing troubles. That is the time when she realized that she did not really carry any particular self. This uncertainty of her mind led her mental illness to a blow and finally caused her decease (Galle, 97).

Sylvia Plath was suffered from betrayal and identity crises which were the major causes for her illness. That is why she is tired into hopelessness. So, it should be taken in relation that Plath is being marginalized because of her femininity. It becomes obvious that sadness, identity crisis and social obligations took away the will of this endowed woman. Her mental instability was created by all these surrounding causes as she shows hatred for all social oppression.

In addition, the novel portrays the kind of defenselessness she experienced in her life where she was provided with no sustain to overcome her mental insecurity. Also, she was given electro-shock cure that deteriorated her mental steadiness. However, she also developed episodic match of despair and also feelings of suicide.

Therefore, Sylvia Plath 's mental hurt to a big degree explored in the novel *The Bell Jar*. That is why G. Perloff says that, "Throughout the novel, Sylvia Plath emphasizes the curious similarity of physical and mental illness as if to say that both are of a larger condition which is our life today" (507). The Bell jar opens with the following sentence: "It was a queer, sultry summer, the summer they electrocuted the

Rosenbergs, and I didn't know what I was doing in New York” (1). The dreadful electric shock therapy that Dr. Gordon makes her feel is a scary complement of the Rosenbergs ' sentence; Esther feels shattered to see the after effects of the shock treatments of other patient in the hospital. And it creates a fear in Esther's mind so she says, "Each morning, when I heard the nurse knock with my tray, an immense relief flooded over me, because I knew I was out of danger for that day " (217). This response of Esther really portrays the intellectual conflict she has gone through in the novel.

At the end of the novel, Esther, however, does come back to life and she can view the reality of life without getting baffled. She realizes that she does not want any love relation with a man. But she becomes daring to deal with the difficulties of life. So, at the end of the novel Esther gathers the bravery to meet the doctors who will verify her expulsion from the sanatorium after the final meeting with her. Here it goes as, " I had hoped, at my departure, I would feel sure and knowledgeable about everything that lay ahead- after all I had been ' analyzed' ..... I kept execution annoyed glances at the close boardroom door .... There ought, I thought, to be a ritual for being born twice- patched, retreated and approved for the road .. "(Plath, 233). The above scene takes place at the end of the novel that shows Esther's worry before facing the Board of Doctors. Finally, the novel ends as, "The eyes and the faces all turned themselves towards me, and guiding myself by them, as by a magical thread, I stepped into the room" (234).

In conclusion, it can be said that during her existence Sylvia Plath knowledgeable many emotional shock that caused her long time despair. But the argument suggests that true approval of an artist is likely when her mental confusion is not taken into

explanation to judge her flair. Although, the novel ends with the potential of life for the key protagonist Esther, Plath herself fails to deal with the recurrent psychological attacks and eventually surrendered and succumb to the enticement of demise.

### **3.2. Sylvia Plath and Esther Greenwood**

The novel is the story of a young woman harassed with her psychological shape. As such, it is a difficult account of schizophrenic psychosis in a young woman (Garrido,1). *The Bell Jar* does not follow the typical line of the Bildungs roman. The protagonist is nineteen-year-old Esther Greenwood. Instead of passing the common developmental milestones leading to adulthood, young Esther regresses into madness. Being a student at popular Smith College, she wins a position at a fashion magazine in New York on explanation of her academic brilliance. Since Esther's goal is to become a writer, she welcomes this chance at first, but soon after frequent home to her mother, she finds herself in a severe despair. She experiences a worried collapse .When Esther moved to New York City, she found her Life in a big city, together with her depression, which challenges Esther's relationship with the apparently reputable checkup student Buddy Willard. Having expected a rejection form Harvard aggravates her situation even more. Despite healing for her state she barely improves. During the peak of her depression, Esther tries to commit suicide with sleeping pills. After numerous treatment attempts, she finally recovers and finally manages to return to school.

*The Bell Jar* observes the question of identity. It examines Esther's "quest to forge her own identity, to be herself rather than what others expect her to be" (Perloff ,1).

Esther is expected to become a self-satisfactory woman and unselfish wife-mother, without any choice to get freedom. Esther feels she held against her will to household duties and fears the pasting of her inner self. The novel does not follow the common course of youth growth into adulthood. Instead of experiencing a progressive education in the ways of the world, culminating in an access into adulthood, Esther returns into insanity. Esther's first time in New York City, her first marriage suggestion, her success in education, all upsets her. Instead of finding a new understanding in life, Esther has a desire to die (Chandran,411).

Esther visited Buddy, a medical student at Yale University. She hated the fact that being a doctor; she drugged women during pregnancy so that they forget the pain of relief as they wake up. She was not sexually concerned to him too. She says "But undressing in front of Buddy swiftly appeal to me about as much as having my attitude image taken at college, where you have to stand in front of the, knowing all the time that a picture of you stark naked,"(65). Esther relationship with Buddy was not agreeable( Chandran,412).

Another psychic problem that Esther suffers from is neurosis Sylvia says "...i am neurotic. I could never settle down in either the country or the city" (89). Neurosis is a class of handy mental disorders involving anguish but neither delusions nor hallucinations. The psychoneurosis are minor mental disorder characterized by inner struggles and disturbed social relationship. Two essential features of psychoneurosis are that they are precipitated by emotional stresses, conflicts and frustrations (depression-guide.com). This definition explains Esther's situation in particular. Esther

represent s her first evident signs of neurosis at the country dance club in New York City.

Esther tries a lot of times to bring her soul once more. She enters at a l sanatorium and delivers flowers to a woman who has just given birth. She makes the woman feel discontented to throw out dead and dying flowers and rearranging a new posy of flowers. Despite her grief and pain, Esther terminates her activities. She finds solace only visiting her father's grave and she finally realizes that she had not anymore to cry about her father's death. For Esther, the death of her father seemed imaginary. This shows Esther's love and mercy towards her father.

By the end of the novel, Esther, returns to normal states after her suicide attempt. She started enjoying life and becoming healthy after her illness. She could feel life again and breaking the bell jar that cut her off from the society. She finds herself regular, involved to men like Irvin, where, finally she manages to make love with him , she says “ it was only as Irwin swung me into his arms, back at the apartment, and carried me, wine-dazed and limp, into the pitch-black bedroom....”(218).But she could not continue the relationship with him. She fears that the bell jar could go down again to her (Chandran, 414).

*The Bell Jar* depicts the psyche of both Esther and Plath herself. The protagonist madness is the result of her ego's failure to cope with society. However, the novel may be seen as an stab to Plath to find help through her writing. For Plath, writing considers as manner of release. Psychoanalysis approach becomes an important tool in finding the distinction of certain complex work as *The Bell Jar* ( Chandran, 415).

### 3.3. Depression

The ringer container is a picture that perusers of twentieth-century writing perceive great. The ringer bump itself as a secluded protest is sufficiently straightforward to describe – a covering, solid, unbreakable case, the hostage vulnerably encased inside its glass dividers. Nonetheless, the implanted typical importance is marginally darker.

The greater part of critics, who tend to see the courageous woman fundamentally through our social imperatives of the 60s, for the most part disregard to perceive that the heredity of occasions inside the novel are dug in Esther's own mental turmoil. Subsequently, the path in which the story basically depicts a depressive, and the route in which the account's build and Esther's mental result is to a great extent dependant on this reality, is plainly similarly as appropriate a perusing as that which keeps up a focal point of social scrutinize. For example, in reflecting on *The Bell Jar*, Pat Macpherson interprets Plath's novel solely through a lens of social criticism. Esther's suicide attempt becomes an act of retaliation against suburbia (Pat, 41)., what's more, her definitive discharge from the mental healing facility, or her "last-passed-test" is simply a reflection of her "social" and "psychic" maturity (Pat, 6.). Diane Bonds describes Esther's dejection as a heinous psychic clash created by attempting to meet social desires of women (Bonds, 57).

Marjorie Perloff portrays it as her human powerlessness to adapt to an unacceptable circumstance(520-21). These investigations or the analyses, however not the slightest bit discreditable, don't represent the prompt reality of Esther's ailment.

Commentators tend to contend that society is making Esther wiped out; be that as it may, it is difficult to allude to Esther's recognitions – her encounters, her perceptions, her self-reactions – without representing the way that her point of view is shaky. It is obvious that Esther views the suburbs as a jail (Macpherson, 167 , 44) on the grounds that she is as of now detained inside her own particular personality. Instead of overwhelmingly attributing typical intending to the creator's utilization of dialect, items, connections or endeavoring to comprehend Esther's internal turmoil through the mayhem of the outside world, the novel can be neatly laid out as far as Esther's mental sickness and her skewed impression of her general surroundings.

Esther is influenced by two normal and unmistakable reasons for despondency that therapist Aaron T. Beck notes in his exploration. The first of which, Beck writes: "In the course of development, the depression-prone person may become sensitized by certain unfavorable types of life situations such as the loss of a parent"(07). The consequence of this, Beck states, is that such early traumatic encounters make the discouraged individual overstate future misfortunes further down the road. This sort of connection between misfortunes is plainly depicted by Esther in the novel. Basically, Esther says her dad three times all through the content, and in one later scene ends up stooping at her dad's tombstone, crying [her] misfortune into the frosty salt rain (167).Plath's improvement of this physically truant character represents the hidden agony that outcomes from Esther's Tsank Father's unexpected passing, coming full circle in an unmistakable snapshot of mental and enthusiastic ejection amid Esther's visit to the cemetery site. The inconspicuous route in which Plath draws out this mental show is most apropos showed in the second specify of Esther's dad. Esther

writes in reference to her father's death: "I thought how strange it had never occurred to me before that I was only purely happy until I was nine years old" (Plath, 75). This affirmation particularly pinpoints the refinement that mists Esther mind all through the entire of the novel. Be that as it may, her dad's passing is not really an immediate trigger to Esther's depression; rather, it makes Esther separate without cautioning due to her propensity to drastically go overboard to later misfortunes and dole out more noteworthy intending to them than need be. In particular, Esther's dismissal from a Harvard composing course fills in as the tipping point, a misfortune that makes her completely separate mentally.

The second variable Beck traces that is additionally in charge of later crumpling Esther's mental state is the idea that "depression-prone individuals spend their childhood setting rigid, perfectionist goals for themselves so that their universe collapses when they confront inevitable disappointments later in life"(07). The structure of Esther's life before her moderate plunge into franticness is obviously a fussbudget's fantasy. She describes her college life as "nineteen years of running after good marks and prizes and grants of one sort and another" (Plath, 29). As a straight An understudy, editorial manager of a school artistic magazine, journalist to the town Gazette, secretary of the Honor Board, victor of various grants and prizes like the month in New York with Ladies' Day, and being the main young lady in material science class to get An (a subject she despised) Esther's vision for herself obviously rules out the likelihood of blunder or disappointment.

Another character whose relation to Esther is often evaluated is "big toothed, horsey, goggly-eyed" Joan Gilling (Plath, 216). Hughes writes, "With [Esther's]

attempted suicide [the artificial ego] is successfully dislodged, scape-goated into the heroine's double, Joan Gilling, and finally, at the end of the book, physically annihilated when Joan Gilling hangs herself"(1-10). Hughes goes ahead to clarify that subsequently of Joan's passing, Esther's credible self rises, an air that permits her to break free of her "old inner self or ego," and with the loss of her virginity at long last sets itself as entire. True, Esther does refer to Joan as "the beaming double of my old best self, specially designed to follow and torment me" (Plath, 205). However this is an announcement that is both effortlessly made and effectively disposed of. In fact, Joan looks to some extent like Esther's previous self. Joan's carefulness and meet with Buddy are maybe the main likenesses, characteristics which are both normal and adventitious. What's more, Esther has no motivation to reject her own previous desire – it is, truth be told, what she once respected most about herself at the end of the day rejects because of her discouragements hang at the forefront of her thoughts. It is just conceivable that after Esther's potential recuperation, she will come back to the previous propensity for persistence and insight that she once so profoundly esteemed. Furthermore, the theoretical bell jar lifts from Esther, "suspended, a few feet above my head," (Plath ,215)

Plath writes in Esther's voice that of a depressive, originating from a writer and artist who was no more interesting to the malady herself, and can give a standout amongst the most precisely gnawing remedies for wellbeing.

## **Conclusion**

The social oppression is responsible for the identity crisis of women. They are facing problems in making their certain identity in life. So, this is how society is responsible for increasing problem in women's life. However, Women are drawn into madness due to constant domination of the society, after being marginalized in every stage. Women's lives take a passion turn when they face psychological disorders while continuously fighting with social oppression. In the work Sylvia Plath exposed the vulnerable psychological conditions of those women.

## General Conclusion

*The Bell Jar* is about the problems that faced women in the cold war era. It tells how women rebel in patriarchal society and about the 1960's when the feminist movements were much more powerful than it was in the nineteenth century. It tells how women struggle against all kind of oppression. Therefore, Sylvia Plath reflects that male dominated society's use of different kind of power on women. At the same time, the novel emphasizes that in such an unchanging society, women could still struggle, resist and overcome the obstacles of the male dominated society. Therefore, the analysis of the work provides an understanding of the dynamics of the society where man control dominates many places in society. Thus, the analysis reveals how men try to allow their unequal desires and requests on women or make their unjust acts seem rightful and how women become aware of these relations and set themselves free against such acts by different kinds of resistance.

However, In *The Bell Jar*, Plath introduced a woman who has aspirations and desires. Esther Greenwood is interested in poetry and writing and she looks up to her female boss who stands for qualities that she admires. She also distances herself from the stereotypical women whom she refers to as "fashion magazine gushers" wearing "giddy jewellery" (Plath 5). Eventually, a clash appears between who they are as individuals and the image constructed by society and the character realizes that she cannot be true to herself and live up to that image at the same time. Esther learns that society would accept her if she only stays at home obeying man's demands, especially in relation to having children and giving birth. This leads to the fact that she loses hold and control over her because she faced problems in this oppressed patriarchal society.

As Esther loses the one thing in her life that she has chosen for herself, the writing course, she does not see anything else around her that she can relate to. In the fear of turning into a housewife, she becomes depressed and sees herself as being trapped in a bell jar.

At the end, the novel remained unclear whether Esther was married, whether she was finally able to find true love, or whether she had the child out of wedlock. And it is certainly not clear whether she would sink into a suicidal depression again. In some ways, this early passage is the real ending to the novel, although it leaves just as many questions unanswered. She remains uncertain about her future and even seems slightly concerned about the fact that she doesn't know "who would marry me now" (Plath, 231). But what happens with her is that she turns away from what society expects her to do and take control over her life again. This awakening is for Esther caused by a combination of psychological treatments together with an active revolt against society by getting birth control and losing her virginity. These actions make her feel as if she finally is a part of something and that she, as she expresses it herself, is her own woman. She has come to a realization that she was on her way of losing herself in a socially constructed image. By the end, she takes an active role in her life and manifests her power in relation to the ideal. Esther has therefore gone from descending into deep darkness to rising out of it again, now standing as stronger women.

Finally, we would propose some suggestions for further research. As observed through our thesis there are several episodes in *The Bell Jar* which are also reflected in the link between Sylvia Plath's and Esther Greenwood's mental illness, and their discussion of the 1950's era. Furthermore, if we were to give a short description of the

period and offer a comparison with another author's work; we would include Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* (1969). In her novel she deals with the cold war era. The novel focuses on women living in the patriarchal society (Kitanoska 2). The character's breakdown will be compared in the same term as Esther Greenwood, the same crisis and the solution. Both characters struggle adapting to the common ideal of women in the 1950's and 1960's and the areas for falling apart in the Cold War era.

## Work Cited

### Primary Sources

Plath, Sylvia. *The Bell Jar*. Queen Square, London WCIN; Faber and Faber. 1966. Print.

“*The journals of Sylvia Plath*”. *The Journals*. Karen V. Kukil, Hardcover Import, 2000. Print.

*Ariel*. 1965. New York: Harper, 1999. Print.

*Letters Home: Correspondence 1950-1963*. Ed. Aurelia Schober Plath. New York: Harper and Row, 1975. Print.

*Daddy. Ariel*. Ed. Harper & Row. 1981 by the Estate of Sylvia Plath. 6-20. Print.

*Lady Lazarus. Ariel*. Harper and Row. 43-46. print.

*The Journals of Sylvia Plath*. New York: The Dial Press, 1982. Print.

### Secondary Sources:

Alexander, Marguerite. *Flights from Realism, Themes and Strategies in Postmodernist British Fiction*. London: Edward Arnold, 1990. Print.

Ames, Lois Biographical note to Sylvia Plath: *The Bell Jar* (New York: Perennial Classics, 1999), p.262

Amiran, Eyal, and John Unsworth, eds. *Essays in Postmodern Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. Print.

Asotic, Selema. "Sylvia Plath and the Dangers of Biography", *Journal of Education Culture and Society*.2005 .64.Print.

Axelrod, S. *Sylvia Plath: The Literary Encyclopedia: paper presented to*

Bagchee, Syhamal. *The Collector: The Paradoxical Imagination of John Fowles*, *Journal of Modern Literature*, 1980.Print.

Bennigton, Geoff, Massumi, Brian. *The Postmodern Condition*. Minneapolis. University of Minnesota, Lyatard.J Press, 1979.Print.

Bonds. Diane S. "The Separative Self in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*". *Women's Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, May, 1990, pp. 49-64. Reproduced by permission.

Buddick, E. Miller. "The Feminist Discourse of Sylvia Plath's *the Bell Jar*". College Chandran, Navya. "A Psychological Study of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*". *International Journal Of English Language, Literature and Translation Studies*. Vol. 3. Issue.2.,2016 (April-June ).

Diane S. Bonds, " The separative Self in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* " in *Women's Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, May, 1990, p. 52.

Eileen Höhn, Marilena Elizabeth. *Female Insanity from the 1890s to the 1970s on the Basis of Women's Social History in "The Yellow Wallpaper", The Bell Jar, and Surfacing*. The University of Oslo 2007.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: Norton, 1997. Print.

Galle, Barbara. *Sylvia Plath - a woman between Eros and Thanatos* .Vol 38, No 1-2 (2005).

Garrido , Luisa Pascual . *Psychotic perception and literary construction of the self: some Plathian images of an ordered chaos*. University of Cordoba (Spain). June 29 - July 4, 2005.

Gentry, Suiter Deborah. *The Art of Dying: Suicide in the Works of Kate Chopin and Sylvia Plath.*; v.56. Peter Lang Publishing New York 2006 , 2007.Print.

Gill, Jo. *The Cambridge Introduction to Sylvia Plath*.Vn:01. The United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York.2008.Print.

Harvey, Brett. 2002. *The Fifties: A Women's Oral History*. Lincoln, NE: ASJA Press.

Holt, Jennifer. "*The Ideal Woman*". *The Good Wife's Guide*. Turlock, CA: California State University Stanislaus Indiana University Approved Rooms for Women Official Rental Contract (2006). Web.

Huf, Linda Contemporary Literary Criticism, Vol.62, 1991. P. 11

Hughes, Ted. "On Sylvia Plath." *Raritan* 14.2: Fall 1994, 1-10. Print.

Kitanoska, Karolina. "I was my own woman": Breakdown and Recovery in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*. 2013 Centre for Languages and Literature Lund University. Print.

Macpherson, Pat. *Reflecting on The Bell Jar*. London: Routledge, 1991. Print.

Martins Lamb, Vanessa. *The 1950's and 1960's and the American Woman: the transition from the "housewife" to the feminist*.History 2011.

Pelt, April. *Esther's Sartorial Selves: Fashioning a Feminine Identity in Te Bell Jar*.v.8. The Department of English at Clemson University. 2005.Print.

Perloff, Marjori. "A Ritual for Being Born Twice": Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*".

University of Wisconsin Press, 2012. P 260.

"*A Ritual for Being Born Twice: Sylvia Plath's The Bell Jar*". *Contemporary Literature* . (Vol 13, No. 4),1972 . 507- 522.

Scholes , Robert. "*Esther Came Back Like a Retreaded Tire*". *The New York Times* . April 11, 1971 . Web.

Wagner-Martin, Linda. *Sylvia Plath: a Biography*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.web.

Wagner-Martin, Linda (1988). *Sylvia Plath, the Critical Heritage*. New York: Routledge, May 21, 2001.p 192.

### **Website Sources:**

-*Encyclopedia of World Biography*. ©2005-2006 Thomson Gale, a part of the Thomson Corporation. <http://www.bookrags.com/biography/sylvia-plath-dtx/> Accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017

- <http://www.depression-guide.com/psychoneurosis.htm>. Accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017

- <http://doczz.net/doc/3251254/the-1950-s-and-the-1960-s-and-the-american-woman--dumas.04.2017>.

- <http://docplayer.net/23245936-Out-of-her-mind-by-marilena-elizabeth-eileen-hohn.htm.03.04.2017>

- <http://doczz.biz.tr/doc/194129/ci%CC%87lt-4-sayi-1--2015-04.2017>.

-<https://www.coursehero.com/file/p2vcibgp/So-both-novels-begin-by-the-confinement-quality-of-the-space-which-is-applied/05.03.2017>

*[https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/25512/66828.pdf?sequence1.04.2017.](https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/25512/66828.pdf?sequence1.04.2017)*