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ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

MENTAL ILLNESS AND POWER IN *ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST* AND *THE BELL JAR*

MASTER'S THESIS

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THESIS EXAM REPORT

DECLARATION

I hereby declare with the respect that the study "Mental Illness and Power in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *The Bell Jar*", which I submitted as a Master thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the References. (28/03/2024)

<div align="right">Alaa GAZAIRI</div>

FOREWORD

MENTAL ILLNESS AND POWER IN *ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST* AND *THE BELL JAR*

ABSTRACT

The Bell Jar (1966), Sylvia Plath's only novel, narrates the story of Esther Greenwood and her dream of becoming a famous poet and the shattering of that dream due to the deterioration of her mental health. The novel explores the mental and emotional struggles of Esther and depicts an image of the effects of societal pressures, gender roles and the institution of psychiatry's treatment on Esther's psyche. Through the protagonist, the novel focuses on the potential harm that can result from ineffective, brutal and harmful psychotherapeutic treatment in the 1960s. Similarly, Ken Kesey's *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) is an authentic portrayal of what is like to be in a mental hospital, shedding light on the dehumanizing and punitive acts under the label of medical treatment that are done to the patients. The novel is narrated by Chief Bromden, a native American who pretends to be deaf to avoid interactions with anyone around him. This thesis will argue that the 1960s psychiatric therapeutic measures and treatments contributed to the construction of a deteriorated, split psyche as exemplified in the novels. Moreover, it will highlight the power of storytelling in challenging the mental institution metanarrative as well as the therapeutic aspects of the act of writing in gaining power and agency.

Keywords: Mental illness, Split Psyche, Storytelling, Agency, Metanarrative, *The Bell Jar,* Sylvia Plath, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Ken Kesey

SYLVİA PLATH'İN *SIRÇA FANUS* VE KEN KESEY'İN *GUGUK KUŞU* ESERLERİNDE ZİHİNSEL HASTALIK VE GÜÇ

ÖZET

Sylvia Plath'ın tek romanı olan *Sırça Fanus* (1966), Esther Greenwood'un ünlü bir şair olma hayalini ve bu hayalinin ruh sağlığının bozulması nedeniyle parçalanışını anlatır. Roman, Esther'in zihinsel ve duygusal mücadelelerini ele alır ve toplumsal baskıların, cinsiyet rollerinin ve psikiyatri kurumunun Esther'in ruhu üzerindeki etkilerini tasvir eder. Roman, başkahraman aracılığıyla, 1960'lı yıllardaki başarısız, acımasız ve zararlı psikoterapötik tedavinin yol açabileceği potansiyel zarara odaklanır. Aynı şekilde, Ken Kesey'in *Guguk Kuşu* (1962), akıl hastanesinde olmanın nasıl bir şey olduğunu, hastalara tıbbi tedavi etiketi altında yapılan insanlık dışı ve cezalandırıcı eylemlere ışık tutarak tasvir eder. Roman, etrafındaki herhangi biriyle etkileşimden kaçınmak için sağır gibi davranan yerli Amerikalı Chief Bromden tarafından anlatılıyor. Bu tez, 1960'lardaki psikiyatrik terapötik boyut ve tedavilerin, romanlarda örneklendiği gibi, bozulmuş ve bölünmüş bir aklın inşasına katkıda bulunduğunu savunacaktır. Dahası, hikaye anlatımının akıl hastanesinin üst anlatısına meydan okumadaki gücünün yanı sıra, güç ve eylemlilik kazanmada yazma eyleminin terapötik yönlerini de vurgulayacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Akıl Hastalığı, Bölünmüş Akıl, Hikaye Anlatımı, Faillik, Üst Anlatı, *Sırça Fanus*, Sylvia Plath, *Guguk Kuşu*, Ken Kesey

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.   INTRODUCTION

The 1960s was a tumultuous period filled with many social and political upheavals around the world. In the United State in particular, it was marked with several political and cultural movements including the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War and the Counterculture movement. One of the most influential movements is the anti-psychiatry that challenged the traditional method of treating mental illness and advocated for a humane model of treating patients. The main argument of the anti-psychiatrists is that mental illness is a social construct which aims to mold nonconformists into obedient individuals, denying them their individuality and freedom. The term anti-psychiatry was coined by David Cooper in his book *Psychiatry and Anti-Psychiatry* (1967). In his book, Cooper criticizes the practices of psychiatric institutions and calls for humane approaches in mental healthcare. Similarly, other pioneers such as R.D Laing, Thomas Szasz and Michel Foucault advocated that biomedical psychiatry with its extreme methods of treatment function to abolish individuals' autonomy. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *The Bell Jar* reflect and express these views before the emergence of the movement since both novels are a critique of the psychiatric institutions and its destructive role in the disintegration of the self and human agency. The conventional treatments of the institution of psychiatry include insulin therapy, electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), hydrotherapy and lobotomy. This thesis contends that the 1960s therapeutic measures and treatments contributed to the construction of a deteriorated, split psyche as exemplified in the novels. Moreover, it will highlight the power of storytelling in challenging the mental institution's metanarrative as well as the therapeutic aspects of the act of writing in gaining power and agency. To that aim, the research will closely examine the common mental treatments and the psychiatric settings in the novels and the inner struggles of the characters and the function of the marginalized narratives in challenging the narrative of the mental institution. All of this will underline the consequences of therapeutic interventions on the psyche and agency of the characters.

1

Sylvia Plath was born in 1932 in Massachusetts. Plath lost her father at an early age. The loss of her father had great impact on her. She had a passion for writing and her talent has flourished during her time at Smith College. Similar to Esther, Plath was grappling with societal expectation concerning choosing a life of domesticity or following her dream of becoming a famous poet. In 1952, Plath was elected as a guest editor for *Mademoiselle* magazine which meant that she had to move to New York. Despite all the perks of the job which included staying at Barbizon hotel, Plath's sense of disillusionment was only growing further. All of these life experiences are reflected in *The Bell Jar*. After her time at New York, Plath received a rejection letter from a summer writing course leading to her depression. Her nervous breakdown was followed by receiving electroconvulsive therapy. After going through all these hardships, Plath resumed her education at Smith College and graduated in 1955. She also received a scholarship to Cambridge University and at that time she met Ted Hughes. She married Hughes and stayed married to him until 1962 where she was left raising two children on her own. *The Bell Jar* was published in 1963, the same year that Plath committed suicide. After her death, Plath's legacy as a writer and famous cultural icon has only grown. Up until this moment, Plath's literary works are considered to be masterpieces and way ahead of their time. Plath's works touch on many important issues such as mental health and feminism. All of this has contributed to distinguishing Sylvia Plath as one of the most celebrated writers of the 20th century.

Ken Kesey was a central figure in the American countercultural movement of the 1960s. Kesey enrolled in a creative writing program at Stanford University and became a key figure of the literary movement of the West Coast. During his time at Stanford University, he volunteered for a government experiment that involved trying psychedelics drugs. Kesey worked as a night aide in a mental hospital. This experience enabled him to know the ugly realties of the mental institution. This had affected his perspective and his way of writing. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, published in 1962, was Kesey first novel. The novel led Kesey to his literary fame. It skilfully criticizes the practices of the mental institution in the 1960s. During the 1960s, Kesey was involved in the counterculture movement and supported the use of psychedelics as means of challenging the status quo.

Many scholars have conducted research on *The Bell Jar* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. For example, William Schopf compares the character of McMurphy to that of Promethean heroes, going head on with Zeus-figures. Schopf argues that "Randle McMurphy" is "a Promethean hero warring against an American Zeus. Broom . . . is heroic simply because of his accomplishment, his invisibly feeling his way back into the world without the Power Structure suspecting" (1972: 96). Therefore, for Schopf the victorious character is Chief Bromden with his invisibility and adaptability techniques. However, Thomas H. Fick also argues that McMurphy is the savior of the inmates of the asylum, transferring his powers to them through helping them to find their identities and the most character that benefited from him is Chief Bromden. Fick argues that "McMurphy's death is a direct consequence of his successful efforts to establish a community of men, a success demanding forms of personal commitment in conflict with his essentially public nature" (1989: 26). McMurphy's death is a symbol for the inmates to escape the grip of the psychiatric asylum and form their identities. Moreover, Elaine Ware explores the suffering that Chief Bromden endures concerning his identity as a native American character and the effects it has on his psychology in addition to his participation in World War II and his mental state in the psychiatric asylum. Ware contends that "Bromden's psychological problems are further compounded when he is incarcerated in a mental hospital. Rather than as a therapeutic environment, Kesey exposes the hospital as a chamber of tortures" (1986: 99). In addition, Ashley E. Reis links Chief Bromden's mental state to the displacement from his environment. Thus, she argues that "the novel attends in a more sustained way to the Chief's own psychological deterioration in lieu of his home environment's degradation, and the advancement of hyper-industrial forces in the postwar era" (Reis, 2016: 721). Her argument revolves around the fact that ecological reasons for Chief Bromden's displacement from his native environment have caused him a troubled psychology.

Other scholars have tried to shed the light on the fact that the novel is filled with sexism and hate toward women. Robert Forrey argues that "One Flew Over was written from the point of view that man's problems are caused by woman who refuses to allow him to play the domineering role which nature intended him to play" (1975: 224). For Forrey, the character of McMurphy is not the savior of the inmates

but is only a white man trying to maintain the dominance of males over females. Therefore, by defeating Nurse Ratched, McMurphy has fulfilled his goal as a white alpha male. Moreover, Laszlo K. Géfin agrees with Forrey that the novel is simply a satire along with narrative techniques to support archetypal values. Géfin states that "[u]nwittingly or not, satire as invaded by narrative cannot but reveal its own prejudices while also showing up the deficiencies of archetypal (and other) criticism's image of the female character in American fiction" (1992: 100). Lastly, Daniel J. Vitkus employs Foucault's notions in *Madness and Civilization* to argue that McMurphy is a false representation of a non-conformist; rather he is a misogynist character trying to achieve his dominance. Viktus argues that "McMurphy's psychopathic madness is the crudest and most violent form of misogyny a rape and this is the novel's representation of genuine madness, with none of the redeeming features that are found in the politically radical irrationality of Foucault's *Civilization and Madness*" (1994: 84). For Viktus, the novel is a mere representation of the male myth over the Combine that is represented by the woman figure.

The Bell Jar has received numerous critical attentions. For example, Garry M. Leonard discusses the type of influence that *Mademoiselle* magazine had on Plath and other females at the time and focuses on consumer culture's attitudes toward the advertised products. Leonard contends that *Mademoiselle* magazine "is an unsettling example of how an ideology designed to sell products becomes in her anxious mind a list of commandments dictating what it means to be a 'woman' and what it means to be 'neurotic'" (1992: 68). Similarly, Caroline J. Smith focuses on the comparison between *The Bell Jar* and *Mademoiselle* magazine. Iin her comparison, she analyses the hidden messages that the magazine transmits to its readers. Smith argues that "[t]hough attempting to provide readers with choices, *Mademoiselle* simultaneously limits those choices and, at times, seems to discourage women's navigation beyond the private sphere" (2010: 7). The way that *Mademoiselle* magazine convey dual messages to women is their method of limiting females of breaking the norms of the era. Moreover, E. Miller Budick applies a feminist approach to *The Bell Jar*. She asserts that Plath was able to create her own unique language which is purely feminine and moves beyond the realms of a male language that surrounds Esther.

4

Budick argues that "Plath's text, I believe, demonstrates a pattern of artistic growth whereby intuitive and spontaneous, self-protective, and often self-destructive forms of female response are converted into an independent aesthetic" (1987: 873).

On the contrary, María Luisa Pascual-Garrido moves beyond the feminist approach and employs Jean-Luc Nancy's notions from *The Inoperative Community* in her analyse of Plath's novel. She discusses how Esther's alienation is because she lives in an inoperative community which is filled with deception and false cultural values. Pascual-Garrido contends that "[i]t is this plight of the isolated individual, this predicament of the singular being who mourns the absence of the other or the loss of an ideal community that is at the heart of *The Bell jar*" (2017: 86). Thus, Esther can never gain her self-autonomy while surrounded by misconceptions and false ideals in the postwar American culture. Furthermore, in "Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*: Understanding Cultural and Historical Context in an Iconic Text," Iris Jamahl Dunkle focuses on relating women's situation in the 1950s to the cultural norms of the era with an emphasis on historical context. Dunkle states that "Plath uses her [Ethel Rosenberg] as a way of invoking the extreme pressures motherhood placed on women living in the 1950s and of suggesting a climate in which being different or acting in a way that did not fit prescribed cultural norms was threatened with extreme punishment" (2011: 66-67). Lastly, Kate A. Baldwin similarly focuses on the historical context of the novel, showcasing the hardships of the Cold War era that prevent Esther from gaining her integrated selfhood. Baldwin argues that "The Bell Jar offers us the opportunity to see U.S. Cold War femininity as caught up in the weird performance - as perpetuated by the U.S. media - of the Soviet other" (2004: 31). Therefore, Baldwin asserts that the novel shows us how Esther's desires can only end up into failures.

Despite all these impressive studies on *The Bell Jar* and *Cuckoo's Nest*, the subject of how psychiatry and its treatments contributed to the construction of a deteriorated, split psyche has still remained underexamined. Overall, mental institutions' function was to lock down any insubordinate individuals, justifying that they are mentally unstable and could cause disruption to the status quo. Using biomedical psychiatry, the institutions enforce their power. Studying these novels from the scope of psychiatry is significant because literature creates a medium to

delve into characters' psyche and contextualizes the effects of their situation in the specific era they are living in. Literature grants us the opportunity to look closely at the lives of these characters and their suffering as a result of the manipulation of power against their individuality. Therefore, this research aims to answer the following questions: How was mental illness legitimized as a means of power in *The Bell Jar and One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*? What are the outcomes and implications of the psychiatric interventions on the psyche of the characters in *The Bell Jar* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*? How does storytelling and the act of writing challenge the mental institution's metanarrative?

The novels will be analysed through the lens of anti-psychiatry movement. It will first cover R. D. Laing's notion of the false-self system. In *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (1960), he discusses how a person creates a false image of themselves in order to feel safe and prevent any further existential harm to their core, authentic self. This is a defence mechanism for the individual to adjust to the threatening world around them. Laing argues that the false-self system "consists in acting according to other people's definitions of what one is, in lieu of translating into action one's own definition of whom or what one wishes to be. It consists in becoming what the other person wants or expects" (1960: 98). This is exactly what Esther Greenwood does as she creates a false self to be able to comply with the expectations of other people around her and at the same time to preserve her authentic female self. For Esther it is the false self that will let her fit in with the patriarchal world around her and be acceptable to them.

The thesis will also explore and draw on Thomas Szasz's argument that mental illness is a metaphor rather than a disease in itself. For Szasz, mental illness is a social construct notion and a means to oppress individuals' freedom. He urges to differentiate between treating a mentally ill person for therapy reasons or for the sake of social control. In *The Myth of Mental Illness* (1961), he argues that "[t]he temptation to embrace all medical interventions as forms of therapy, or to reject them all as forms of social control, must be firmly resisted. It behooves us, instead, to discriminate intelligently and to describe honestly the things doctors do to cure the sick and the things they do to control the deviant" (Szasz, 1974: 69). Moreover, in *The Manufacturer of Madness* (1997), he argues that the mentally ill person is

perceived and treated in the same wat as witchcrafts and heretics were back in the Middle Ages. Szasz argues that "[s]ince heresy could be destroyed only by destroying heretics, and mental illness can be controlled only by controlling people alleged to be mentally ill, both social movements involve curtailing the liberties, or taking the lives, of the stigmatized members of the group" (1997: 208). The two novels in question reflect the power of psychiatry as a means of controlling deviant individuals and shaping them into obedient members of society.

Moreover, this study will focus on Foucault's concepts of the Panopticon and docile bodies in *Discipline and Punish* (1995). The panopticon is a design for a prison created by Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century. The design is a round building with a central watchtower that functions to observe and watch all cells at any given moment. This in turn allows for constant surveillance of prisoners without them knowing whether they are being watched or not. This is simply because of the lighting that shines from that watchtower over the cells. Thus, this leads the inmates in the prison to self-police themselves in fear of being observed or watched. For Foucault, the Panopticon is not only to be found in a prison but actually in every aspect of our daily lives. It is the surveillance that surrounds us, the invisible eye that keeps on watching us. He explores and argues how methods of torture are different now. In fact, exercising power does not need to take a physical form anymore. Rather, it now focuses on and targets the mind of the individual through an intricate surveillance mechanism. Foucault argues that "[h]ence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (1995: 201). In this manner, the individual internalizes power and through automatic regulation this will in turn create docile bodies that are easily controlled and manipulated. This type of power dynamics is at the heart of *The Bell Jar* and *Cuckoo's Nest* since the psychiatric intervention as portrayed in the novels aims to control individuals and regulate them into a state of discipline and conformity. Therefore, the next chapter will explore these theories in more detail to set the ground for an analysis of the novels.

II.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. The Development of the Anti-Psychiatry Movment

Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1966) tells the story of Esther Greenwood and her dream of becoming a famous poet, which is shattered by the deterioration of her mental health. The novel explores the mental and emotional struggles of Esther and depicts an image of the effects of social pressures, gender roles and psychiatric institutions' interventions on Esther's psychological well-being. Similarly, Ken Kesey's *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) is an authentic portrayal of what is like to be in a mental hospital shedding light on the dehumanizing and punitive acts under the label of medical treatment that are done to the patients in a mental hospital. The novel is narrated by Chief Bromden, a native American character who pretends to be deaf and stay invisible to avoid interactions with anyone around him. Moreover, the novel portrays Randle McMurphy as the savior of those patients, challenging Nurse Ratched and her ultimate authority. The display of the clash between McMurphy and Nurse Ratched motivates the other patients to rebel against her rules as well. *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* focuses on the disastrous effects of mental illness treatments such as enforced hospitalization, electroconvulsive therapy, hydrotherapy, the use of drugs and lobotomy on the psyche of the patients. These novels are significant because both are artistic representations of what later came to be known as the anti-psychiatry movement that challenges the orthodox methods of treating mentally ill patients and calls for a humane method in treating mental illness. As the novels argue, the notion of mental illness is a social construct, one which the state shapes to control individuals and deny them of their rights and freedom. This chapter will highlight the importance of the history of mental illness and the major preoccupations of the anti-psychiatry movement along with Foucault's emphasis on power relations in this regard.

Since ancient times, madness has been a very complex notion to define and grasp and find a treatment for. The definition and construction of the concept of

madness and mental illness is clearly shaped by the prevailing beliefs and the religious interpretation of each period of time. Formerly, mental illness was mainly linked to supernatural and spiritual beliefs. As Ingrid G. Farreras stated that "[t]hroughout classical antiquity we see a return to supernatural theories of demonic possession or godly displeasure to account for abnormal behaviour that was beyond the person's control" (2019: 246). Therefore, madness was perceived as a way of divine punishment and demonic possessions. Moreover, women who were deemed witches were the scapegoat and considered as the cause for the ills of the society. Similarly, they were viewed as possessing demonic powers. They became a target of inquisition and were subjected to witch trials. These women often ended being burned at the stake. In *Witchcraft, Gender and Society in Early Modern Germany*, Jonathan B. Durrant argues that "[t]he emphasis of the interrogation was therefore placed primarily on establishing that the defendant was spiritually corrupted, that she had transferred her allegiance from God to the Devil, ignored or abused the sacraments of the Church and taken part in other heretical activities" (2007: 47). Later on, Johann Weyer and Reginald Scot attempted to convince the public that these so-called witches were suffering from mental illnesses which has nothing to do with demonic possession or supernatural believes. However, soon enough the inquisition banned their writings (Farreras, 2019: 247). Therefore, the dominant view and ideology of each period regarding the notion of madness differs. Yet, the aim and function are still the same. whether a witch or mad, the outcome would be banning any misconduct that might jeopardize the ruling of the dominant ideology.

However, this changes as the first mental asylums, whose function is to marginalize and confine individuals afflicted with mental illness, are established in around the 17th century. As Farreras argues, "[m]odern treatments of mental illness are most associated with the establishment of hospitals and asylums beginning in the 16th century. Such institutions' mission was to house and confine the mentally ill, the poor, the homeless, the unemployed, and the criminal" (2019: 247). These newly established hospitals work by confining any individual who is considered to be troublesome and labelled as mad. Furthermore, in *Madness and Civilization* (1988), Foucault traces the emergence of *Hôpital général* of Paris in 1656 which showcases the changing attitude toward the so-called mad. As he explicates, the hospital did not function as a medical institution but rather as a part of social order system: "From the

very start, one thing is clear: the Hôpital général is not a medical establishment. It is rather a sort of semijudicial structure, an administrative entity which, along with the already constituted powers, and outside of the courts, decides, judges, and executes" (Foucault, 1988, p. 40). Therefore, the main aim of the General hospital of Paris was to enforce its rules upon individuals who deviated from the accustomed norms of the society. Confinement in the hospital had a dual role: the first one was to protect society from deviant individuals and in turn this will protect the morality of society; and the second one was a kind of moral correction for the ill-suited individuals. As Foucault puts it, "[i]t is common knowledge that the seventeenth century created enormous houses of confinement; it is less commonly known that more than one out of every hundred inhabitants of the city of Paris found themselves confined there, within several months" (1988: 38). The establishment of the General hospital of Paris paved the way for the foundation of a more medicalized focused institutions. This change was because of the advancement in the scientific field, the birth of psychiatry in the late 18th century and early 19th century and the development of psychiatric medications. During this period of time, the method of involuntary hospitalization assumed a medical basis for locking individuals away. Furthermore, this reaches its climax in the 20th century with the advancements of psychiatric institutions and more advanced medical treatments such as antipsychotics and lobotomy. Therefore, the dominant ideology constructed the notion of mental illness as a threat to the smoothly-functioning society.

It is the counterculture movements of the 60s which displayed the corruption of these psychiatry institutes. The late 20th century witnessed the emergence of these movements as a reaction against the existing conditions of society. They challenged the mainstream societal morals, institutions and values and called for a drastic change in every aspect of life. One of the most influential movements is the anti-psychiatry movement that challenged the mainstream of psychiatric institutions and advocated for a change in different psychiatry treatments such as involuntary hospitalization, coercive treatments and the legitimacy of mental illness as a method of manipulating individuals. The anti-psychiatry movement took its roots from existentialism and phenomenology. As Arya Aryan explains:

> Anti-psychiatry was a key reference point of the countercultural critique of institutionalisation, instrumentalisation and scientism. Although it took its cue from

French philosophy, especially phenomenology and existentialism, anti-psychiatry came to be identified with the more popular image of the Counterculture, with experimentation with psychedelic or recreational drugs and music that altered the 'normal' state of consciousness, with the advocacy of open, free sexual relations, premarital sex, homosexuality and the normalisation of contraception. (2020: 94)

Moreover, the anti-psychiatry movement flourished in the post-war period due to the constant growth of psychiatry authority with the return of veterans to their homeland. Having this type of authority meant that they could gain control in every aspect of patients' lives. Therefore, the anti-psychiatry movement was a necessary step to question the psychiatric institutions' legitimacy and reveal their true motive which lies behind their therapeutic measures.

One of the key figures of this movement is the Hungarian American psychiatrist, Thomas Szasz. In *The Myth of Mental illness* (1974), he argues that until the middle of 19th century illnesses were used to describe a bodily malfunction and later psychiatrists created a new criterion for identifying mental illnesses. Szasz contends that "the identification of new psychiatric diseases—began not by identifying such diseases by means of the established methods of pathology, but by creating a new criterion of what constitutes disease" (1974: 12). Hence, the method for diagnosing mental illnesses relies on examining the patient's behaviours. To Szasz, this is a complete subjective method where there is no empirical evidence that can support if the patient actually has any mental disease. This implies that the classifications of mental diseases are based solely on the physician's judgment which in turn lessens the legitimacy of such classifications. Moreover, this criterion encompasses a wide range of so-called mental illnesses and legitimizes them as a means of control over individuals via coercive treatments. As Szasz puts it, "[w]e have thus come to regard addiction, delinquency, divorce, homosexuality, homicide, suicide, and so on almost without limit, as psychiatric illnesses" (1974: 38). Therefore, when a psychiatrist classifies a person as mentally ill, the society in turn will treat him as such. Szasz further argues that "[m]ental illness is a myth. Psychiatrists are not concerned with mental illnesses and their treatments. In actual practice they deal with personal, social, and ethical problems in living" (1974: 262). Consequently, the creation of this myth was to control individuals' behaviours so that they would fit the dominant ideology of the time and unproblematically maintain the

11

status quo. Furthermore, *The Manufacturer of Madness* (1997), Szasz explicates how those ascribed as mad are treated the same way as witches were treated. The analogy between the two describes the irony of how the dominant ideology controls individuals based on the societal values of each particular time. As Szasz puts it:

> Like the typical European witch in the fifteenth century, the typical American mental patient today is usually a poor person in trouble or accused of making trouble, who is declared mentally ill against his will. Such a person may accept the role or may try to repudiate it; the institutional psychiatrist confronted with him may try to keep him confined in his role, and perhaps in a hospital, for a long time, or may release him after a relatively brief period of incarceration. In any case, the psychiatric authorities are in full control of the relationship. (1997: xxvii- xxviii)

Szasz draws this parallel to foreground how institutional psychiatry functions as a manipulative system with its aims to enforce its power over individuals. Moreover, he elucidates the aftermath of labelling individuals as mentally ill and the disastrous effects that will forever stigmatize their lives:

> Since the consequences of being labeled mentally ill include such penalties as personal degradation, . . . and, last but not least, incarceration in a mental hospital, possibly for life—the expansion of the category of people who can be so designated is essential for increasing the scope and power of the Mental Health Movement and its psychiatric methods of social control. (Szasz, 1997: xxxi)

Thus, Szasz exposes the authoritative power of institutional psychiatry and its interventions as a means of social control rather than a genuine health care system that aims to be benevolent.

Another prominent figure in the anti-psychiatry movement is the Scottish psychiatrist Ronald David Laing. In *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (1960), Laing explores different cases of individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia and relates their experiences in a way that is comprehensible to everyone. He believes that mental illnesses are induced by social factors rather than biological ones. He emphasizes the relation between mental disorders and the past experiences of each individual which might have caused them. He also stresses the fact that discovering mental illness is a daunting task and even the most capable psychiatrist will have difficulty in doing so. In *The Divided Self*, Laing argues "that

except in the case of chronic schizophrenics I have difficulty in actually discovering the 'signs and symptoms' of psychosis in persons I am myself interviewing" (1960: 28). This demonstrates how the scientific field of psychiatry has a huge margin of error when it comes to classifying individuals as mentally sick. Furthermore, Laing introduces the important notion of ontological insecurity:

> The individual, then, may experience his own being as real, alive, whole; as differentiated from the rest of the world in ordinary circumstances so clearly that his identity and autonomy are never in question; as a continuum in time; as having an inner consistency, substantiality, genuineness, and worth; as spatially coextensive with the body; and, usually, as having begun in or around birth and liable to extinction with death. He thus has a firm core of ontological security. (Laing, 1960: 41-42)

In other words, ontological security refers to the feeling of stability and security and the constant perception of the self and identity despite any changes or circumstances that might occur in the individual's life. However, not every individual enjoys a sense of ontological security. As Laing explains, "[t]he individual in the ordinary circumstances of living may feel more unreal than real; in a literal sense, more dead than alive; precariously differentiated from the rest of the world, so that his identity and autonomy are always in question" (1960: 42). Thus, experiencing ontological insecurity causes the individual to feel disconnected with the world they inhabit, and this in turn will make them experience the fragmentation of their self. Such an individual will find the world around them unpredictable, chaotic and threatening. Accordingly, a form of this ontological insecurity is represented in schizophrenia, a special strategy an individual creates to endure difficulties of life.

Moreover, Laing introduces the notion of "the false-self system" which is the result of the individual experiencing ontological insecurity. The false-self system is a type of defence mechanism individuals tend to develop to protect their real self from a total annihilation. The annihilation of the self occurs when individuals feel that their real self might be completely destroyed due to the pressure from external forces and thus they create a false self to hide and protect their real self from obliteration. Laing contends that "[t]he false-self system to be described here exists as the complement of an 'inner' self which is occupied in maintaining its identity and freedom by being transcendent, unembodied, and thus never to be grasped,

pinpointed, trapped, possessed" (1960: 94-95). For that reason, this constructed false self provides protection for the individual against the outside world which might pose existential threats to the authentic, real self. Creating the false self is thus an important mechanism in coping with life-threatening moments such as traumatic experiences and protection from circumstances which could cause the self to disintegrate and shatter. An example of a person who has constructed a false-self system due to traumatic experiences is the schizoid individual. Laing explains the experience of a schizoid individual as follows:

> The term schizoid refers to an individual the totality of whose experience is split in two main ways: in the first place, there is a rent in his relation with his world and, in the second, there is a disruption of his relation with himself. Such a person is not able to experience himself ''together with'' others or 'at home in' the world, but, on the contrary, he experiences himself in despairing aloneness and isolation; moreover, he does not experience himself as a complete person but rather as ''split'' in various ways, perhaps as a mind more or less tenuously linked to a body, as two or more selves, and so on. (1960: 17)

In other words, individuals afflicted with schizoid personality disorder feel disconnected with the world they inhabit and thus this creates a split in their personality and self. Also, the way they preserve their surroundings is characterized by a sense of alienation and isolation. Laing compares the schizoid person's experience with that of others:

> The false self of the schizoid person is compulsively compliant to the will of others, it is partially autonomous and out of control, it is felt as alien; the unrealness, meaninglessness, purposelessness which permeate its perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and actions, and its overall deadness are not simply productions of secondary defences but are direct consequences of the basic dynamic structure of the individual's being. (1960: 96)

Laing emphasizes that the false-self system is the accumulation of an individual experiences in the world. Thus, the false-self system is a defence mechanism created compulsively to satisfy the wishes of other people.

Moreover, in *The Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise* (1967), Laing emphasizes that psychiatrists should focus on individuals' experiences rather than their behaviours. He contends that "we can see other people's behaviour, but not

their experience. This has led some people to insist that psychology has nothing to do with the other person's experience, but only with his behaviour" (1967: 15). He criticizes that psychiatrists in the 20th century stigmatize individuals with mental illness while only examining their behaviours without giving much thought to their past experiences which could have led them to reach that state. Thus, when analysing the behaviours of certain characters, we have to consider their past experiences and their current situation for a better and deeper analysis.

Additionally, Michel Foucault's theories play a pivotal role in challenging any authoritarian voice including that of the mental institution. Foucault analyses social structures and power dynamics within institutions to expose the dominant ideology and the methods which those in power use to control individuals. For him, mental illness is a social construct that has been created by the authoritative power to banish unwanted individuals. In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault contends that:

> The act which, by tracing the locus of confinement, conferred upon it its power of segregation and provided a new homeland for madness, though it may be coherent and concerted, is not simple. It organizes into a complex unity a new sensibility to poverty and to the duties of assistance, new forms of reaction to the economic problems of unemployment and idleness, a new ethic of work, and also the dream of a city where moral obligation was joined to civil law, within the authoritarian forms of constraint. (1988: 45-46)

Therefore, the act of confinement represents a shift in societal morals of the era.

The act of confinement at that time was utilized in order to fight poverty and idleness. Hence, they confine these individuals and label them as "mad". This act in turn will serves as a warning to prevent economic problems such as unemployment, laziness and poverty. Societal values might change over time but the act of confining and dehumanizing unwanted individuals still exists in the 20th century. Thus, the need for inventing new methods of treatment to legitimize the confinement of the so-called mad is a necessary step for the development of the science of psychiatry.

Furthermore, in *Discipline and Punish* (1995), Foucault discusses how disciplinary power has changed over time. To function, this power does not need to take a physical form. Foucault mentions two forms of power: sovereign power and disciplinary power. He describes the function of the sovereign power as follows:

In the seventeenth century, and even in the early eighteenth century, it was not, therefore, with all its theatre of terror, a lingering hang-over from an earlier age. Its ruthlessness, its spectacle, its physical violence, its unbalanced play of forces, its meticulous ceremonial, its entire apparatus were inscribed in the political functioning of the penal system. This enables us to understand some of the characteristics of the liturgy of torture and execution - above all, the importance of a ritual that was to deploy its pomp in public. (1995: 49)

Hence, the technique of displaying bodily torture to the public eye is done to generate fear in people, and the effect behind using such methods is to discourage them from committing any type of crime. On the other hand, disciplinary power is a hidden force that operates over the body and the psyche of the individual. It is much more effective because the disciplinary power becomes internalized by the individual. Thus, the authoritative power will gain control over the individual. As Foucault puts it, "an authority that is exercised continually around him and upon him, and which he must allow to function automatically in him" (1995: 129). This shows how the shift from sovereign power to disciplinary power is done to generate docile and obedient individuals. Furthermore, this power is implemented in every aspect of life via constant surveillance over individuals' lives whether at school, hospital or workplace. Foucault argues that "[t]he meticulousness of the regulations, the fussiness of the inspections, the supervision of the smallest fragment of life and of the body will soon provide, in the context of the school, the barracks, the hospital or the workshop, a laicized content, an economic or technical rationality for this mystical calculus of the infinitesimal and the infinite" (1995: 140). Therefore, every aspect of human life is being monitored and regulated through different institutions which work in the interest of the authoritative power and allow it to reach and control the tiniest detail in individuals' lives. The need to supervise and monitor every little detail becomes necessary for this power to function.

That being the case, the Panopticon has become the ideal surveillance system to apply disciplinary power over individuals and make them internalize it. The Panopticon is an architectural apparatus that was designed by Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century. It is a round building designed to be a prison with a watchtower at the center which is supervised by a guard. The brilliance of this design lies in the fact

that the guard of the prison can watch over all the inmates without any of them knowing that they are being watched at a particular moment. This is because of the lighting that shines from the central watchtower over the inmates' cells. As Foucault explains, "[t]he panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediate" (1995: 200). The idea that those inmates do not know if they are being watched or not creates this automatic functioning of power in them. They always behave as they assume that they are being watch by the guard. Foucault explicates that "[h]e who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (1995: 202-203). Hence, individuals who are being subjected to the constant surveillance of the Panopticon regulate themselves into following the rules as expected. In that case, the power becomes internalized by the individual. Foucault also stresses that the Panopticon does not only function in a prison setting, but it is also part of everyday life. As he puts it, "[t]he Panopticon, on the other hand, must be understood as a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men" (Foucault, 1995: 205). It is not necessarily exclusive to the prison model, but it functions as a power relation system that regulates and corrects behaviours and shape individuals into becoming obedient and docile. Thus, the application of this mechanism is beneficial to any totalitarian and authoritarian institutions including that of the mental institution to manufacture docile and obedient patients such as of the characters in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *The Bell Jar*.

B. What happens When self-consciousness Breaks?

Self-consciousness is a state where human beings have a complete awareness of themselves. This awareness is related to how individuals perceive themselves and their thoughts; it is connected to reflective awareness that includes aspects of thoughts and feelings. Self-conscious individuals are introspective, which is defined as a continual examination of one's thoughts and feelings. According to William James, "[i]ntrospective Observation is what we have to rely on first and foremost and

always. The word introspection need hardly be defined it means, of course, the looking into our own minds and reporting what we there discover" (1890: 185). To be able to accomplish introspective observation, an individual needs to be aware of the feelings and thoughts as their own and this in turn is called being self-conscious. Self-conscious experience is not a sharable one. Each person has their own unique experience. Moreover, each person has their own stream of consciousness which is the continuous flow of thoughts and feelings that characterize the individual consciousness. The term stream of consciousness was coined by William James in *The Principles of Psychology*: "[c]onsciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits . . . A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. *In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, of subjective life*" (1890: 239). Thus, the experience of stream of consciousness is subjective and occurs only in the psyche of the individual.

However, what if that is not the case for everyone? What if some individuals have the feeling that their stream of consciousness is not their own and they are not responsible for it? This is what G. Lynn Stephens and George Graham describe in *When Self-Consciousness Breaks: Alien Voices and Inserted Thoughts* (2000) as the breakdown of self-consciousness. According to Stephens and Graham, "sometimes, when self-consciousness breaks down or becomes disturbed, it appears to the self-conscious person as if *other* selves or agents are involved in his or her stream of consciousness" (2000: 2). This break or split in the psyche of the individual occurs at moments of trauma for example. One of these experiences is the authoritative measures and treatments applied by mental institutions which cause split and disintegration of the psyche. When the individual experiences a split in their psyche, they think that someone else is doing the act of thinking, which is occurring in their head. In other words, they attribute their own thoughts and feelings to external agents, hence a loss of the sense of agency. An example of this is when the individual hallucinates. They feel or believe that what they are hallucinating is, or emanates from, a real external agent. Therefore, they become convinced that another person or agent is in control and the author of their thoughts and feelings. Thus, they experience this feeling of the loss of agency and control over their own process of thinking. As Stephens and Graham argue, under certain circumstances "the subject

reports that another's thoughts occur in his mind or stream of consciousness. To persons undergoing delusions of thought insertion, the experience of thinking is not 'I think' but 'Someone else is putting their thoughts in my head'" (2000: 4). Subjecting a sane person in a mental institution where their body and mind become the site of unethical treatments such as lobotomy, electroconvulsive therapy and hydrotherapy will gradually develop what Stephens and Graham call "alienated self-consciousness" (2000: 4) which is exemplified in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *The Bell Jar*.

Alienated self-consciousness shows itself in different forms such as verbal hallucinations and thought insertion. As Stephens and Graham state, "[t]hought insertion and verbal hallucinations are examples of . . . alienated self-consciousness" (2000: 4). Auditory verbal hallucination (AVH) is defined as "the experience of hearing voices in the absence of any speaker, often associated with a schizophrenia diagnosis. Prominent cognitive models of AVHs suggest they may be the result of inner speech being misattributed to an external or non-self source, due to atypical self- or reality monitoring" (Moseley et al., 2013: 2794). Therefore, auditory verbal hallucination involves hearing voices that do not exist in reality or having a one-sided conversation with an alien subject. Stephens and Graham further argue that "the subject confuses his introspective or imagistic experience of his own speech with a perceptual experience of someone else's speech. Thus, in verbal hallucinations we confront an instance of the general problem of distinguishing what we imagine from what we really perceive" (2000: 33-34). This shows that the person who is experiencing verbal hallucinations misattributes the self-generated conversation or voices to alien agents and therefore loses a sense of agency.

The second form of alienated self-consciousness is thought insertion, which is the delusional belief that one's thoughts are not one's own and that other agents are the ones responsible for inserting these thoughts in their head. Matthew Ratcliffe and Sam Wilkinson define thought insertion as "experiencing one's own thoughts as someone else's. Some philosophers try to make sense of this by distinguishing between ownership and agency: one still experiences oneself as the owner of an inserted thought but attributes it to another agency" (2015: 1). Thought insertion is very similar to verbal hallucination as it is very common among schizophrenics as

they feel that their private mental processes are being controlled by outside agents. Stephens and Graham contend that:

> The subject regards the thoughts as alien not because she supposes that they occur outside her, but in spite of her awareness that they occur within her. Her distress arises not (as Freud or Sims would have it) from loss of ego boundaries and uncertainty about whether things are inside or outside the boundary, but from her sense that her ego boundary has been violated and that something alien has been placed within it. (2000: 127)

Therefore, the person knows that they are the subject of these thoughts and that these thoughts and feelings lie within their private mental processes. However, they fail to attribute them to their own psyche. This confusion of ego boundaries creates a split between subjectivity and agency and ultimately generates the loss of agency and authorship. Aryan explains the relationship between subjectivity and agency as follows:

> Subjectivity is a self-awareness of one's consciousness and its process, of the subjectivity of thoughts and voices (that is, the awareness that they occur in the subject). Agency, on the other hand, is a sense of controlling one's own thoughts, feelings and emotions . . . Consequently, authorship—to be the author of one's own thoughts, feelings, emotions, voices, etc.— might be defined with regard to a particular combination of subjectivity and agency. In the absence of any of the elements, authorship is lost. (2020: 123- 124)

Thus, when authorship is lost, it creates a disintegrated self and split psyche. This state could occur as a result of harsh mental treatments and measures that are exercised upon individuals in mental institutions. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest and The Bell Jar* indicates the disastrous and inevitable outcome of conventional psychotherapeutic measures on individuals: the breakdown of self-consciousness.

C. Metanarrative and Postmodernism

Defining postmodernism can be a daunting task as it is almost impossible to pin down a consensus over its definition. The prefix "post" indicates that it came out as a reaction against the mainstream tenets of modernism. As Linda Hutcheon states, "[t]he modernist concept of single and alienated otherness is challenged by the

postmodern questioning of binaries that conceal hierarchies (self/other) . . . Difference suggests multiplicity, heterogeneity, plurality, rather than binary opposition and exclusion" (2004: 61). Modernism is mainly associated with the concept of universal truth while postmodernist thinking challenges the acceptance of generalized universal truth through highlighting multiplicity and heterogeneity. As Aryan explains "notions of truth, reality, validity, originality, authenticity and depth have lost their traditionally attached values" in the postmodern era (2022: 12). Similarly, *The Bell Jar* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* demonstrate and challenge the legitimacy and authenticity of the mental health institution's procedures and measures as well as its science as a universal and generalized truth. In other words, both novels challenge and deconstruct the notion of mental illness as a constructed metanarrative.

Postmodernism roughly emerged at the end of the Second World war. After witnessing the cruelty of the war and especially the atrocities that were committed by the Nazi regime and the dropping of nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a more sceptical culture toward universalizing and totalizing notions which aim to legitimize practices developed. Everything came into question and people in general were far more sceptical toward any generalized truth that has been used to push over the agendas of the powerful. Moreover, in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984), Jean-François Lyotard defines postmodernism as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (1984: xxiv). Lyotard emphasizes that there should always be scepticism toward metanarratives or grand narratives which are constructed in discourse to serve the dominant ideology. Metanarratives are known for their universal notions and their role in interpreting the world around us. John Stephens and Robyn McCallum state that "a metanarrative is a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience" (1998: 6). Thus, metanarrative implies that there is only one definite interpretation of the world that we inhabit, and any other interpretation is immediately shunned and deemed to be unacceptable. An example of a metanarrative is fascism. According to Oliver Zimmer, there are different definitions of fascism, but they generally include three key elements: "an ultranationalism that emphasises the need for an organic rebirth of society; mass mobilisation around a charismatic leader; and, finally, the justification

of violence not just as a political means but its glorification as an end in itself" (2003: 81). Fascism is known for its extreme nationalism, authoritarianism and racism toward minorities. The movement promises a return to a former glory through societal restructuring, and this is done through the focus on a collective national identity at the expense of marginalized groups. Fascism as a metanarrative promotes a single monolithic view of truth and suppresses any notion that goes against it. Thus, to challenge and deconstruct any metanarrative, alternative narratives and discourses need to be created.

Another metanarrative with which many postmodernists and writers were preoccupied with in the 1960s is the notion of mental illness. As Thomas Szasz implies in the titles of his books *The Myth of Mental Illness* and *The Manufacture of Madness*, mental illness is a narrative and a myth. This entails that madness is a manmade and manufactured concept, rather than a universal phenomenon, and as such it can be deconstructed through the creation of other narratives which challenge the legitimacy of metanarratives. Furthermore, Aryan illustrates that:

> In this sense, postmodern criticism and theory is basically concerned with analysing a work of art in order to make its dominant totalising, naturalising and internalising discourses or metanarratives explicit; to de-centre, de-naturalise and de-totalise them; to regard the marginalized narratives; and to arrive at uncertainty concerning their validity, authenticity, legitimacy and possibility of any representational view of language that lay claims to an ultimate reality. (2022: 15)

Therefore, marginalized narratives are an important tool in challenging and deconstructing metanarratives. Metanarratives strip individuals of their freedom, agency, and power, and an effective way to challenge that is through the act of writing and storytelling. The act of writing allows individuals to gain back control, power and agency over their lives. This is simply due to the fact that any narrative constructs an idea, and that idea constitutes our reality. To challenge that narrative, another narrative needs to be created. Therefore, storytelling becomes a crucial part in shaping multiple understandings of the world as in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *The Bell Jar*. Postmodern theories grant marginalized narratives the opportunity to emerge through deconstructing any metanarrative that aims to

suppress them. Thus, storytellers such as McMurphy, Bromden and Esther gain power and agency through deconstructing the metanarrative of the mental illness that aims to deny them their freedom and agency via their storytelling

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III. *THE BELL JAR*: UNVEILING THE FEMALE SELF THROUGH MADNESS

A. Deconstruction of The False Self and Rebirth of the Female Author

Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1966) was first published in London under the pseudonym of Victoria Lucas in 1963 and later republished in America in 1966 under her real name. The novel tells the story of Esther Greenwood as she embarks on a journey of self-discovery and search for her real authentic self, using her own body as a tool to deconstruct the imposed false self. Plath's narrative delves into the complexities of finding an identity amidst the patriarchal imposed rules, mental health issues and societal expectations. Through Esther's intentional use of her body as a way of untangling the layers of her false selves, the novel becomes a milestone in which the body of Esther serves as a means of gaining liberation, freedom and agency. Moreover, during her quest to find her real self, Esther undergoes many hardships such as a suicide attempt, being hospitalized in a mental institution, insulin shock treatment and electroconvulsive therapy. Plath as well as Esther go through the same experiences to peel off the false self and construct a real female self. Thus, this chapter will discuss that the formation of a female self necessarily involves a process of self-destructive madness. Despite its outwardly destructive nature, this journey proves indispensable for attaining female liberation, as the reclaiming of women's bodies – historically the primary site of oppression – marks the foundational step toward emancipation.

The Bell Jar narrates the story of Esther Greenwood, a young passionate woman who dreams of becoming a famous poet. She finishes her college degree and is awarded an internship in *Ladies' Day* magazine as a guest editor in New York. During her time in New York, Esther struggles to find her footing where her choices are limited between either being a good and a virgin girl like her friend Betsy or a rebellious and a sexual woman like her friend Doreen. She is dating Buddy Willard,

a medical student whom Esther considers to be hypocrite. Buddy keeps trivializing Esther's love for poetry and literature. Later on, as her request to attend a writing course is rejected. This means that she has to spend her summer with her mother. She gradually falls into depression which is manifested in her inability to read or write or even sleep. Her mother advises her to meet Dr Gordon, a male psychiatrist whom she later despises for his patriarchal views. Dr Gordon prescribes electroshock therapy which makes her even more depressed and ultimately leads her to suicide attempts. After many suicidal attempts she is put into a state mental hospital and is later transferred to a private one where she meets Dr Nolan, a female psychiatrist with whom she develops a connection. She also meets a guy named Irwin and has intercourse with him resulting in her suffering from heavy haemorrhage. During her time in the emergency room, she receives help from her friend Joan. Later on, Esther finds out that her friend Joan is dead because she has committed suicide. The novel ends with Esther going into an examination room with the hospital board to find out if she can leave the psychiatrist institution.

The novel starts with Esther's expression of her dissatisfaction and emptiness. Her dissatisfaction in life perfectly matches Betty Friedan's elaboration on women's common problem as articulated in *The Feminine Mystique* (1979). Friedan calls it "The Problem that has no Name" which addresses women's situation in the 1950s and 1960s. This problem originates from societal expectations to which women are subjected. Women's happiness at that time is only associated with their roles as housewives, mothers and homemakers. Any time women articulate their contempt with their situation, they get criticized. As Friedan states: "[t]he problem was dismissed by telling the housewife she doesn't realize how lucky she is- her own boss, no time clock, no junior executive gunning for her job" (1979: 19). Freidan's notion of the nameless problem reveals that this issue is not just a personal one related only to one woman but a symptom of a widespread societal problem which affects all women. As Friedan puts it, "[a] number of educators suggested seriously that women no longer be admitted to the four-year colleges and universities: in the growing college crisis, the education which girls could not use as housewives was more urgently needed than ever by boys to do the work of the atomic age" (1979:

19). However, if women had the luxury of entering the university, they were mostly taught specific courses that would aid them in their role as housewives.

Moreover, this issue remained nameless for a long time because it was not openly discussed or recognized as a real problem; yet, as Friedan observes, "[w]e can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: 'I want something more than my husband and my children and my home'" (1979: 27). This resonates with Esther's situation as she seeks to gain from life more than a husband and a house. Esther begins by expressing her dissatisfaction during her time in New York and how most girls would be envious of her situation while deep down she feels suffocated about almost everything that exists in her life: "I felt very still and very empty, the way the eye of a tornado must feel, moving dully along in the middle of the surrounding hullabaloo'' (Plath, 1966: 3). *The Bell Jar* is a semi-autobiographical novel. As Claridge et al. contend, "[a]ll her [sylvia Plath's] writing is autobiographical; she can never escape from the subject of her own impressions, her own miseries, terrors and nightmares" (1990: 207). Thus, Esther's life closely mirrors Plath's own life including her time working for *Mademoiselle* magazine.

Similarly, Esther works in *Ladies' Day* magazine. While working there, Esther experiences the restricted and confining space that is allowed to women writers in the field of journalism. The magazine symbolizes the restrictions that are imposed on women writers, dictating them on what they should write, how they should behave in social gatherings and even how to pose for a picture. As Caroline J. Smith argues, the magazine's aim is "to provide readers with choices, *Mademoiselle* simultaneously limits those choices and, at times, seems to discourage women's navigation beyond the private sphere" (2010: 7). Esther contemplates the imposed limitations on women's autonomy and authorship as she is treated as a mere commodity during her posing for a photo in *Ladies' Day* magazine:

> But undressing in front of Buddy suddenly appealed to me about as much as having my Posture Picture taken at college, where you have to stand naked in front of a camera, knowing all the time that a picture of you stark naked, both full view and side view, is going into the college gym files to be marked A B C or D depending on how straight you are. (Plath, 1966: 71)

The language that Plath employs here shows the amount of suffering that women had to endure and their limited chances of gaining agency and autonomy. The dehumanization that she encounters in *Ladies' Day* magazine is also evident in her relationship with Buddy Willard. It manifests in the way that Buddy treats Esther, disregarding her passion for writing and always trying to teach her things because he sees himself superior to her. Esther discovers that "Buddy Willard was a hypocrite" (Plath, 1966: 54). This happens on the day when Buddy asks Esther to accompany him to the hospital where a woman is giving birth: "Buddy kissed me again in front of the house steps, and the next fall, when his scholarship to medical school came through, I went there to see him instead of to Yale and it was there I found out how he had fooled me all those years and what a hypocrite he was. I found out on the day we saw the baby born" (Plath, 1966: 64). Esther thinks Buddy is a hypocrite not because she finds out that Buddy slept with someone before. what bothers her is his manipulation. As she puts it, "[w]hat I couldn't stand was Buddy's pretending I was so sexy and he was so pure, when all the time he'd been having an affair with that tarty waitress and must have felt like laughing in my face" (Plath, 1966: 73-74).

She realizes the amount of dehumanization women are subject to while witnessing a woman giving birth. After Buddy tells her that the woman has been injected with a drug that will make her forget her pain, Esther remarks that "it sounded just like the sort of drug a man would invent" (Plath, 1966: 68). She describes the process of the woman giving birth saying that "I was so struck by the sight of the table where they were lifting the woman I didn't say a word. It looked like some *awful torture table*, with these *metal stirrups* sticking up in mid-air at one end and all sorts *of instruments and wires and tubes* I couldn't make out properly at the other" (Plath, 1966: 67 emphasis added). The choice of machine-like words is intentional and exemplifies the dehumanization of women within the medical institution. The process of giving birth is a symbol of how scientific institutions are patriarchal, reducing women to mere objects and tools with no space for individuality and authorship. The world in which Esther lives is a scientized, soulless world where the integration of the self, agency and identity are constantly shrunk and lost. Indeed, Plath writes at this post-war moment of "contestation of clear authorial agency and intention . . . [and] a dissolution of the humanist conceptualisation of authorship"

(Aryan, 2021: 108). Moreover, this dehumanization is also apparent with Esther's physics teacher Mr. Manzi who is trying to simplify physics to female students. She hates the idea of a book made only for girls based on the assumption that their mental capacities are inferior to men. Esther expresses her dissatisfaction saying:

> That's what gave me the idea of escaping the next semester of chemistry. I may have made a straight A in physics, but I was panic-struck. Physics made me sick the whole time I learned it. What I couldn't stand was this shrinking everything into letters and numbers. Instead of leaf shapes and enlarged diagrams of the holes the leaves breathe through and fascinating words like carotene and xanthophyll on the blackboard, there were these hideous, cramped, scorpion-lettered formulas in Mr. Manzi's special red chalk. I knew chemistry would be worse, because I'd seen a big chart of the ninety-odd elements hung up in the chemistry lab, and all the perfectly good words like gold and silver and cobalt and aluminum were shortened to ugly abbreviations with different decimal numbers after them. If I had to strain my brain with any more of that stuff I would go mad. I would fail outright. It was only by a horrible effort of will that I had dragged myself through the first half of the year. (Plath, 1966: 36-37)

This reflects Esther's growing feeling of alienation even in her academic life. She dislikes physics and chemistry because these subjects shrink everything to formulas and abbreviations. These subjects in fact represent the ways the society reduces women to abstract symbols. In "The Feminist Discourse of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*" (1987), E. Miller Budick argues that "Esther retreats from the language that abbreviates and shrinks and kills, to a language that, like the language of botany, breathes fascination and sustains life" (1987: 875). Thus, for Esther, the hideous formulas represent a lifeless and stiff approach that reduces and diminishes everything to mere symbols. Furthermore, the dehumanization that Esther undergoes indicates that she is being treated as a nonentity and an object-like figure. According to Laing, the experience of being treated as an object creates a sense of alienation and existential detachment from reality. As he argues, "[i]n the face of being treated as an 'it', his [*sic*] own subjectivity drains away from him like blood from the face. He essentially requires constant confirmation from others of his own existence as a person" (1960: 46–47). Esther's situation is very similar to Laing's description of a

person with a split personality or divided self as she is being treated as a nonentity in every aspect of her life.

Moreover, Esther regards the society that she inhabits as a place where she has no voice or autonomy. She considers the medical and the psychiatric field as a representation of the unjust treatment toward women. Hence, women should either conform to the societal expectations that are required of them or face extreme treatments such as incarceration in a mental hospital, electroconvulsive therapy and lobotomy. As Szasz argues, "[c]onformity was still demanded. The nonconformist, the objector, in short, all who denied or refused to affirm society's dominant values, were still the enemies of society. . . it was viewed in terms of Public Health. Its internal enemies were thus seen as mad" (1997: 13). This is why Esther is forced to undertake electroconvulsive therapy and why her friend Valerie has lobotomy surgery which turns her into a conforming object: "I looked at Valerie in awe, appreciating for the first time her perpetual marble calm" (Plath, 1966: 204). This shows that the main purpose behind conducting a lobotomy surgery and injecting the woman with medicine during her labor is to implement a state of numbness and forgetfulness upon women who deviate from societal norms. Toward the end of the novel, Esther contemplates the possibility of leaving the asylum and how her mother has decided to forgive her and tells her that this is all just a bad dream. However, for Esther this is not simply a bad dream; it is her life, and she remembers every detail that she encounters during that time. Esther says:

> I remembered the cadavers and Doreen and the story of the fig tree and Marco's diamond and the sailor on the Common and Doctor Gordon's wall-eyed nurse and the broken thermometers and the Negro with his two kinds of beans and the twenty pounds I gained on insulin and the rock that bulged between sky and sea like a gray skull. Maybe forgetfulness, like a kind snow, should numb and cover them. (Plath, 1966: 250)

Esther here mentions the weight she has gained on insulin treatment. At that time, insulin shock treatment was part of a normal psychiatry practice which was later criticized by the anti-psychiatrists. It is a repressive measure which results in removing agency and was mainly applied to non-conformists, especially women labelled as mad. Esther reflects on her past experiences and how a state of numbness

will make them disappear. Her choice of words in the last sentence implies that the patriarchal society prefers her to be numb and forgetful rather than to remember and challenge the restrictive rules that are imposed on her. Therefore, the patriarchal society exerts its power on women and makes them reach a state of numbness and forgetfulness to maintain the status quo. This will further reinforce the patriarchal grip on women and takes away their individuality and freedom.

Additionally, the way Esther describes ECT treatment is significant because it showcases the degrading nature of the procedure which represents how society reduces women to objects, simultaneously denying their autonomy and agency:

> Doctor Gordon was unlocking the closet. He dragged out a table on wheels with a machine on it and rolled it behind the head of the bed. The nurse started swabbing my temples with a smelly grease. As she leaned over to reach the side of my head nearest the wall, her fat breast muffled my face like a cloud or a pillow. A vague, medicinal stench emanated from her flesh. "Don't worry," the nurse grinned down at me. "Their first time everybody's scared to death." (Plath, 1966: 151)

Esther's subjection to the ECT procedure showcases the patriarchal society's suppression of women's individuality. The narrator here is in a passive position where she does not have any power or agency over the course of the procedure. Also, Plath's phrases such as "smelly grease" and "medicinal stench" portray the dehumanization that Esther is encountering as she is being treated and fixed as an object or a machine. The phrase "muffled my face like a cloud or a pillow" indicates that this procedure is suffocating her. The words "machine" and "grease" contribute to the mechanistic imagery suggesting that women are objects and tools and their body is similar to a car in a repair shop.

Moreover, the ECT procedure reminds Esther of when she was at her father's house and decided to move an old lamp from her mother's room to her own room. She got an electric shock during that, and her scream went into the air "like a violently disembodied spirit" (1966: 152). Similarly, Esther describes the intensity and violence of the ECT procedure stating that "[t]hen something bent down and took hold of me and shook me like the end of the world. Whee-ee-ee-ee-ee, it shrilled, through an air crackling with blue light, and with each flash a great jolt

drubbed me till I thought my bones would break and the sap fly out of me like a split plant" (1966: 151). Phrases such as "air crackling with blue light" and "great jolt drubbed me" reveal that Esther perceives the therapy as way of punishment rather than a healing process. Also, "Whee-ee-ee-ee-ee" indicates that for Esther electroconvulsive therapy is identical to the violence of being electrocuted. Budick suggests that "[i]n the context of international relations, electricity preserves social order by painfully punishing dissent" (1987: 878). Therefore, Esther's description exposes that women are treated like machines, stripping away their power and agency. This image also reminds us that as we charge our electric devices to function again, women need to be recharged to function properly without causing any trouble.

In a patriarchal society where Esther encounters all this dehumanization, she suffers from what Laing calls ontological insecurity. Laing states that "[i]f the individual cannot take the realness, aliveness, autonomy, and identity of himself [*sic*] and others for granted, then he has to become absorbed in contriving ways of trying to be real, of keeping himself or others alive, of preserving his identity, in efforts, as he will often put it, to prevent himself losing his self" (1960: 42). If a person lacks the basic sense of security in their lives, they feel the need to create new ways to affirm their own existence and identity. This is all done to protect their real self from a total annihilation. In the jar that Esther lives, she is deprived of the most fundamental human need, which is the possession of agency and control over the course of her own life. She is always feeling threatened by the outside world. Therefore, she tries to contrive new ways to assure herself that her real self is safe from any harm. What Laing is expressing aligns with what Esther is going through, specifically how societal pressures compel her to construct false selves to make living in an unliveable situation bearable. As an attempt to cope with her hostile environment, Esther is compelled into manufacturing a false self to protect her authentic self from annihilation. As these false selves are byproducts of the patriarchal society that Esther lives in, she finally needs to get rid of them to uncover her true self. Therefore, Esther's divided self is a mechanism that will help her to fragment, detect and peel off the imposed false self. This process is her first step towards constructing or finding out the true female self. Laing states that schizophrenia "is a special strategy that a person invents in order to live in an

unlivable situation" (1967: 95). The only choice that Esther is left with is to deconstruct the imposed false self and embrace the uncertainty that it might lead her into madness. Hence, Esther has to experience madness to uncover her true and genuine self. This experience of madness is an essential process for the emergence of her authentic self because it is only through madness that she is able to deconstruct the false self and construct or find her female self. Therefore, madness here serves as a breakthrough from the societal expectations and the imposed false selves leading to a rebirth of her genuine female self. Laing argues that "[m]adness need not be all breakdown. It may also be break-through. It is potentially liberation and renewal as well as enslavement and existential death" (1967: 110). In other words, female writers in the 20th century go through some kind of madness in order for them to be reborn with an authentic self. For that reason, Esther resorts to madness as a way of dissolving the fabricated self through her own body.

The female body is the place where patriarchy exerts its power upon; hence women need to free of their bodies from patriarchy's grip. For Esther the deconstruction of the false self involves dissolving her physical body to be able to be reborn. This process involves going back to a womb-like environment and that is why Esther chooses places like her bathtub where she feels safest. She states that "[t]here must be quite a few things a hot bath won't cure, but I don't know many of them. Whenever I'm sad I'm going to die, or so nervous I can't sleep. . . then I say: 'I'll go take a hot bath'" (Plath, 1966: 151). The bathtub for her represents a secure place where she can cleanse herself and be reborn again. She further adds:

> I lay in that tub on the seventeenth floor of this hotel for-women-only, high up over the jazz and push of New York, for near onto an hour, and I felt myself growing pure again. I don't believe in baptism or the waters of Jordan or anything like that, but I guess I feel about a hot bath the way those religious people feel about holy water. I said to myself: "Doreen is dissolving, Lenny Shepherd is dissolving, Frankie is dissolving, New York is dissolving, they are all dissolving away and none of them matter any more. I don't know them, I have never known them and I am very pure. All that liquor and those sticky kisses I saw and the dirt that settled on my skin on the way back is turning into something pure." The longer I lay there in the clear hot water the purer I felt, and when I stepped out at last and wrapped

myself in one of the big, soft white hotel bath towels I felt pure and sweet as a new baby. (Plath, 1966: 21-22)

This part illustrates Esther's desire to be reborn like a new baby. The bathtub and its hot water represent the womb. Also, the bathtub is a place where she can dissolve her past experiences and acquaintances especially because those experiences are associated with her false self. Her last sentence suggests that she does not merely cleanse herself, but she is reborn a new, as a child, with a new self. Hence, in dissolving including her false and psyche, she is able to construct her genuine, female self.

Similarly, the image of returning to a womb-like environment occurs when Esther attempts suicide in the bathtub: "the redness flower from my wrists, flush after flush through the clear water" (Plath, 1966: 156). This shows that for her the process of deconstructing the false self needs to be in the shape of a rebirth through utilizing her own body. As Aryan argues, "[c]onfronted with her own cultural lack of power, each time she is rendered overtly impotent, Esther feels impure and feels the need to rid herself of her impure body" (2020: 89). This is why Esther identifies with the babies in the jars that Buddy shows her when they go to the hospital. Later on, when she goes to the beach with her friend Judy, they talk about a play in which a mother considers killing her son because he is mad. Esther asks what method they would use if they wanted to commit suicide. She says that "I thought drowning must be the kindest way to die, and burning the worst. Some of those babies in the jars that Buddy Willard showed me had gills, he said. They went through a stage where they were just like fish" (Plath, 1966: 166). Esther here is contemplating methods of committing suicide. Her wish to die while drowning refers to her desire for a rebirth. In this context, drowning represent a symbolic cleansing or purification in order to get rid of her false self and be born again. Similarly, Esther's identification with the babies in the jars represents the way she feels locked up in a jar that has been forcibly placed on her, suffocating and enclosing her, denying her freedom. It also symbolizes her desire to be reborn, free from the grip of patriarchy.

Furthermore, Esther sees self-destructive measures as a means of escaping the constraints of the patriarchal control. After reading in a newspaper about a person attempting to commit suicide through jumping, she says while walking in the park:

"[m]y favorite tree was the Weeping Scholar Tree. I thought it must come from Japan. They understood things of the spirit in Japan. They disembowelled themselves when anything went wrong" (1966: 145). This reflects Esther's desire to dissolve and disembowel her body to free herself from the dirt of the patriarchy society. Therefore, Esther needs to get rid of her body as a means of liberating herself, as the female body is the site upon which patriarchy exerts its power and control. Hence, it seems that the only solution for the female author in the 50s is to eliminate the female body. Esther recognizes that reclaiming agency over her body is the only way to liberate herself. As she struggles in a society that keeps undermining her, she realizes that freedom lies in using her body as a metaphorical battlefield to be reborn again as a female author.

B. The Cold War as an Era of Madness

The Bell Jar offers a profound exploration of the effects of the Cold War on the psyche of the individual. Esther is a genuine embodiment of what it means to live in that era. The story takes place at a time of the Cold War tension where people were always afraid of the possibility of a Third World War. Esther's psyche reflects the turmoil of that period. The feeling of being under constant surveillance plays a significant role in intensifying the atmosphere of paranoid suspicion contributing to Esther's internal struggles. Through the protagonist's experience during that period, the novel explores the consequences of living under a constant gaze of surveillance. The era generated a feeling of suspicion that anyone could be a communist sympathizer or a leftist which ultimately led people to live in constant fear. Therefore, this chapter will contend that rather than a biological malady, madness is generated out of the broader socio-political context of the Cold War era and its constant surveillance culture. This is reflected in Esther's perception of electroconvulsive therapy which she considers not as a psychiatric treatment but as part of the political agenda of the time aiming to brainwash individuals into obedience and compliance.

The Cold War period roughly lasted from 1947 until 1991. It is characterized by the continual conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. This period of time is marked by its anxious atmosphere and the wide spread of fear and paranoia

among citizens. During this time, the US government implements anti-communist polices. These measures are established as precautions measures to prevent the expansion of communism. Thus, communism is perceived as a totalitarian system similar to Nazism and Fascism. As Steven Belletto and Daniel Grausam argue "[i]f Communism had once been imagined as a powerful alternative to fascism, midcentury history convinced some Western intellectuals that Communism and fascism were parallel forms of totalitarianism" (2012: 5). The idea that communism manifests great danger is mainly propagated by George E. Kennan, an American diplomat who worked at the American embassy in the Soviet Union. He publishes an article "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" in 1947. His main argument is that since America cannot defeat the Soviet Union because they have nuclear power, the US should simply control the expansion of communist ideas. The US later adopts the policy of containment whose main aim is to limit the expansion of communist ideas.

This policy also controls the cultural production of the time in the US which ultimately leads to intense surveillance on cultural productions. According to Belletto and Grausam, "'containment' has often functioned as a metaphor in literary studies, a way of registering anxiety about dissent, visibility, and surveillance" (2012: 9). Therefore, anxiety and fear start to rise out of the fear of communist sympathizers. The writings of that period represent what it is like to live under the paranoia and fear of the Cold War. The era generates paranoia simply because of the continuous surveillance and suspicion that anyone could be a Soviet agent.

The Bell Jar illustrates how paranoia evolves into a broader social atmosphere during the Cold War era. The novel begins with Esther drawing parallels between the electrocution of the Rosenbergs and her own electrotherapy. The American couple Julius Rosenberg and Ethel Rosenberg were accused and convicted of espionage by passing secret information about an atomic bomb to the Soviet Union. In 1951, the couple were found guilty of espionage and were sentenced to death by electrocution. The Rosenberg case is controversial as to whether their trial was fair. Some commentators believe that their conviction was because of the anti-communists hysteria that was spreading in the United States. As Michael E. Parrish states, "[o]n the one hand, there are those who believe that the Rosenbergs were innocent of spying, the hapless victims of anti-Communist hysteria, lying relatives, a

vindictive trial judge, and perhaps a conspiracy manufactured by government officials anxious to soothe the public's fears of domestic sub-version and the Russian atomic bomb" (1977: 806). Despite the controversy, the Rosenbergs were executed by electrocution in 1953. The similarity between Esther's situation and the Rosenbergs is that they are both considered as non-conformists. Hence, both electrocution and ECT are used as a way to brainwash, control or if necessary to eliminate them. As Esther comments on the incident:

> It was a queer, sultry summer, the summer they electrocuted the Rosenbergs, and I didn't know what I was doing in New York. I'm stupid about executions. The idea of being electrocuted makes me *sick*, and that's all here was to read about in the papers–*goggle-eyed* headlines staring up at me on every street corner and at the fusty, peanut-smelling mouth of every subway. It had nothing to do with me, but I couldn't help wondering what it would be like, being burned alive all along your nerves. (Plath, 1966: 1, emphasis added)

Esther identifies with Ethel Rosenberg as both are electrocuted for their non-conformism and gender. They are both women suffering from the same scrutiny and living in the same society where females should either conform to the rules or simply be eliminated. This elimination could take a physical form like the Rosenbergs that ends with their death, or to suffer from the consequences of disobedience through electroconvulsive therapy like Esther case. As Robin Peel states "[i]n 1953 the fate of Ethel Rosenberg, who before her arrest had seemed to be a conventional 1950s wife and mother, suggested the terrible fate of those who heroically refused to conform" (2019: 203). Hence, the aim behind the electrocution of the Rosenbergs was to send a clear message to all that individuals should either conform or face similar consequences. Esther perceives electroconvulsive therapy as part of the political agenda that aims to brainwash individuals and enforce conformity, depriving them of their free will and identity. By implication, her words also reflect the second-wave feminists' main argument that mental illness does not have a female biological cause; it is rather the society which drives women mad or "sick."

Later on, Esther is having a conversation with her friend Hilda who is also a guest editor in *Ladies' Day* magazine. Esther asks her about the Rosenbergs:

> So I said, "Isn't it awful about the Rosenbergs?" The Rosenbergs were to be electrocuted late that night. "Yes!" Hilda said, and at last I felt I had touched a human string in the cat's cradle of her heart. It was only as the two of us waited for the others in the tomb-like morning gloom of the conference room that Hilda amplified that Yes of hers. "It's awful such people should be alive." She yawned then, and her pale orange mouth opened on a large darkness. Fascinated, I stared at the blind cave behind her face until the two lips met and moved and the dybbuk spoke out of its hiding place, "I'm so glad they're going to die" (Plath, 1966: 1)

Hilda's opinion on the electrocution of the Rosenbergs showcases the extent to which she has been brainwashed. In *Reflecting on The bell jar*, Pat Macpherson views Hilda as "Plath's creature born from the unlikely marriage of McCarthyism and Mlle" (1991: 36). McCarthyism refers to Senator Jospeh McCarthy's campaign against communists. The McCarthy campaign mainly focused on finding and identifying individuals who were allegedly communist sympathizers or simply leftists. As a result, many people lost their jobs based on false allegations. As Ellen Schrecker puts it, "most of the men and women affected by the McCarthy era political repression were . . . ordinary workers who found themselves unemployed and often blacklisted because they had associated with the Communist party or the many so-called 'front groups' within its penumbra" (2004: 1045). This period is characterized by its extreme censorship, oppression and surveillance. Everyone was concerned about the possibility of being watched or spied upon. Pat Macpherson contends that:

> All McCarthyist tribunals depended on secret surveillance of citizenry and public exposure through the mass media. Fear of such surveillance, and such prosecution-by-public-accusation, created a paranoia in dissenting and neutral citizens alike, a paranoia about the lengths to which Their paranoia was undermining Our democratic institutions and Our basic civil rights. (1991: 2)

Therefore, the main aim of the campaign was just to monitor and expose communists' sympathizers. Thus, Hilda's statement foregrounds how much she has internalized the propaganda of the American ideology against alleged communists.

The novel sets a gloomy tone in describing the world that Esther inhabits:

> New York was bad enough. By nine in the morning the fake, country-wet freshness that somehow seeped in overnight evaporated like the tail end of a sweet dream. Mirage-grey at the bottom of their granite canyons, the hot streets wavered in the sun, the car tops sizzled and glittered, and the dry, cindery dust blew into my eyes and down my throat. (Plath, 1966: 1)

This passage takes us to New York during a time where the country is devoid of any sense of security or stability. The "Mirage-grey" symbolizes lifelessness and colourless of the city and the "dry, cindery dust" represents the constant feeling of fear and uncertainty that suffocates Esther. Moreover, "fake" and "mirage grey" represent the illusion of any democracy and freedom in America. For Esther, this illusion underlines the hypocrisy of the country which suffocates and sickens her. America which claims to be democratic and is resisting against the expansion of non-democratic regimes like the Soviet Union is ironically supressing women and non-conformists. Plath here perfectly describes what it is like to live in a period where uncertainty and tensions of the Cold War govern everything around it.

Moreover, the idea of marriage for Esther is associated with the Cold War era and its brainwashing agenda. As she states, "I began to think maybe it was true that when you were married and had children it was like being *brainwashed*, and afterwards you went about numb as a slave in some private, totalitarian state" (Plath, 1966: 89 emphasis added). Marriage for Esther means that she cannot pursue her career as a writer and that is the last thing that she wants. The fig tree symbolizes her making a choice:

> I saw myself sitting in the crotch of this fig tree, starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my mind which of the figs I would choose. I wanted each and every one of them, but choosing one meant losing all the rest, and, as I sat there, unable to decide, the figs began to wrinkle and go black, and, one by one, they plopped to the ground at my feet. (Plath, 1966: 80)

Esther's struggle to make a choice can be interpreted as a rebellious act against the societal norms of the era where marriage is considered as a fundamental part of every woman's life. She does not wish to be brainwashed like her friend Hilda, and the last thing that she wants is "infinite security and to be the place an arrow shoots off from.

I wanted change and excitement and to shoot off in all directions myself, like the coloured arrows from a Fourth of July rocket" (Plath, 1966: 87). Esther refuses to be a static and passive object and gain stability only through marriage. She decides to create her own life-story and journey where she constructs and maintains her freedom and agency. Also, when Esther meets Constantin, she sees a Russian girl who is a simultaneous interpreter. At that moment, Esther contemplates on how unhappy she is, and how much she wishes to be that girl: "I wished with all my heart I could crawl into her and spend the rest of my life barking out one idiom after another. It mightn't make me any happier, but it would be one more little pebble of efficiency among all the other pebbles" (Plath, 1966: 78). Her desire to crawl into that girl represents Esther's rejection of the American values to regain her agency. She simply does not want to be someone's wife. On the contrary, she wants to learn languages and be a writer and shoot off in all directions.

Therefore, Esther's rejection of the societal norms is the reason why she has to undergo electroconvulsive therapy. After her first ECT experience, Esther expresses that "I wondered what terrible thing it was that I had done" (Plath, 1966: 152). Her resistance to conformity including conventional expectations for women is the reason behind her incarceration in a mental hospital and receiving ECT treatment. The exclusion and suppression of non-conformists like Esther and the Rosenbergs' has created a kind of mad atmosphere where everyone is afraid of being labelled a communist sympathizer or simply a deviant individual. Plath shares a similar sentiment in her journals concerning anyone who was accused of espionage or even showing sympathy for the left:

> Why do we electrocute men for murdering an individual and then pin a purple heart on them for mass slaughter of someone arbitrarily labelled "enemy?" Weren't the Russians communists when they helped us slap down the Germans? And now. What could we do with the Russian nation if we bombed it to bits? How could we "rule" such a mass of foreign people – we, who don't even speak the Russian language? How could we control them under our "democratic" system, we, who even now are losing that precious commodity, freedom of speech? (2000: 40).

This demonstrates Plath's disappointment as she witnesses the country entering a state of paranoia and fear. The American government functions on the discipline or punish logic, punishing anyone that might deviate from the country's predefined standards. Hence, Plath's portrayal of Esther's mental health is significant as it showcases the effects of the Cold War era on Esther's psyche and mental health. Thus, Esther's psyche and inner struggles reflect the broader social and political atmosphere of the time, exemplifying what it is like to live in an era of fear and paranoia.

IV. *ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST*: THE MANUFACTURER OF MADNESS AND THE POWER OF COUNTERNARRATIVES

A. The Manufacturer of Madness and the Mental Institution

While *The Bell Jar* gives us the chance to know what is like to be incarcerated in a psychiatric asylum, Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) is set in its entirety in a psychiatric hospital. The novel tells the story of a mental hospital patients and focuses on their struggles within a merciless system. It is narrated by Chief Bromden, a native American who feigns his deafness to avoid interactions with anyone. It masterfully deals with inhumane treatments, involuntarily hospitalization and the role of the mental hospital in manufacturing docile bodies. Kesey showcases how the mental hospital relies on common medical treatments such as electroconvulsive therapy, hydrotherapy, lobotomy and medical drugs as a means of controlling patients and shaping them into obedient objects. This chapter will explore how the mental institution's treatments and procedures contribute to the construction of deteriorated split psyche as presented in the novel. It will examine the effects of the mental institutions on the psyche of the patients. It will also demonstrate how common psychiatric measures exacerbate and contribute to the fragmentation of the self, leading to a loss of agency. To that aim, this part will examine the effects of mental hospital procedures and measures on Bromden's and McMurphy's psyche and in relation to Foucault's concept of docile bodies.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest takes place in a psychiatric hospital. The novel is narrated by Chief Bromden whom everyone at the mental institution assumes to be deaf. Bromden introduces us to Randle McMurphy who feigns his mental illness to avoid a 6-month imprisonment. McMurphy introduces himself as a gambler and a womanizer. Furthermore, Nurse Ratched runs the ward with an iron fist and the patients have their own nickname: the Big Nurse. She enforces her rules

upon the patients and anyone who dares to break them is ultimately met with utmost monstrosity and cruelty. She has the power to send them to get electroconvulsive therapy or even a lobotomy surgery. McMurphy undermines her power and tries to challenge her authority. For example, to Nurse Ratched's total dissatisfaction, he encourages the other patients to go on a fishing trip with him. Despite all the pressures from the Big Nurse, they manage to go on their fishing trip and experience what it is like to be away from her constant gaze and grip. After their return, Nurse Ratched tries to convince them that McMurphy is manipulating them to get money out of them. She asks the attendants to check all the patients that went to the fishing trip for bugs. George, one of the patients, refuses to be checked because of his fear of physical contact and the attendants force him to it. During that time, McMurphy and Bromden defend George but face the punishment of being sent to the disturbed ward to receive electroconvulsive therapy. On McMurphy's return, the patients discuss how they are going to help him escape. They throw a party in the ward at night and McMurphy brings two prostitutes to the party. During the party, McMurphy arranges for Billy Bibbit to have his first intercourse with one of the girls. The day after, when Nurse Ratched understands the situation, she threatens Billy that she will let his mother know what he did. Billy commits suicide in fear of his mother's reaction. McMurphy attacks Nurse Ratched. Later he is sent to receive his lobotomy. Upon McMurphy's return, Bromden cannot handle to see McMurphy as a prisoner in his own body. Hence, he smothers McMurphy with a pillow and manages to escape the institution to Canada.

The novel starts with Chief Bromden introducing us to the asylum and what it is like to be incarcerated in a mental institution. Bromden describes Nurse Ratched as:

> Her face is smooth, *calculated*, and precision-made, like an expensive *baby doll*, skin like flesh-colored *enamel*, blend of white and cream and baby-blue eyes, small nose, pink little nostrils—everything working together except the color on her lips and fingernails, and the size of her bosom. A mistake was made somehow in *manufacturing*, putting those big, womanly breasts on what would of otherwise been a perfect work. (Kesey, 1990: 5-6 emphasis added)

Bromden describes Nurse Ratched using terms which typically are used for manufacturing toys or machines, suggesting that the patients are dehumanized in the hospital. They are treated as machines, taking away their individuality and freedom. In other words, mental patients and mental illnesses are manufactured through the mechanics of psychiatric hospitals. Hence, by incarnating individuals in mental institutions, patients are treated not as individuals with their own unique characteristics but merely as objects. This kind of dehumanization is established through the use of pseudo-scientific psychiatric labels which could ultimately lead to a loss of agency and autonomy. As Szasz articulates that:

> [P]sychiatric training is, above all else, a ritualized indoctrination into the theory and practice of psychiatric violence. The disastrous effects of this process on the patient are obvious enough; though less evident, its consequences for the physician are often equally tragic. It is one of the few "laws" of human relations that not only those who suffer from arbitrary authority, but also those who wield it, become alienated from others and thus dehumanized. The oppressed tends to become a passive, thinglike object, and the oppressor a megalomaniacal, godlike figure. (1997: 41)

Thus, the mental institution employs this kind of dehumanizing language and rhetoric to reduce patients to objects like figures which in turn allow the physicians to administer treatments which would contribute to the patient's disintegration of the self, autonomy and individuality. As the ward in the novel is run by Nurse Ratched, she is responsible for the dehumanization of the patients. This is why Bromden describes her with phrases associated with machines: "She's carrying her *woven wicker bag* like the ones the Umpqua tribe sells out along the hot August highway, a *bag shape of a tool box with a hemp handle*" (Kesey, 1990: 4 emphasis added). Bromden's terminology indicates that the patients are the ones who are being dehumanized by this merciless system.

The process of dehumanization starts from the moment a patient steps into the mental hospital. Chief Bromden describes the arrival of McMurphy and how the attendants are after him with a thermometer to take his temperature: "Then I see two, maybe all three of them in there, in that shower room with the Admission, running that thermometer around in the grease till it's coated the size of your finger,

crooning, . . . and then shut the door and turn all the showers up to where you can't hear anything but the vicious hiss of water on the green tile" (Kesey, 1990: 10). The act of forcibly taking the patients temperature with a thermometer strips them of their autonomy, treating them as objects for medical procedures. The fact that one cannot hear anything that goes in the shower symbolizes the broader suppression of their identities, autonomy and agency within the mental institution which in turn serve to show that the mental institution reinforces the dehumanization and marginalization of the patients. As Daniel J. Vitkus argues, "[t]he ward is run by Nurse Ratched, who controls the process of turning men into machines. This process of transforming the patients into obedient automatons involves the loss of their sexuality, their masculinity, and their individuality" (1994: 65). For example, Bromden narrates what happens to Mr. Taber in the hospital when he does not accept to take the pills unless they tell him what those pills are, and Nurse Ratched says that he is just being hostile simply because he wants to know what those pills are: "[t]he two big black boys catch Taber in the latrine and drag him to the mattress room. He gets one a good kick in the shins. He's yelling bloody murder. I'm surprised how helpless he looks when they hold him, like he was wrapped with bands of black iron" (Kesey, 1990: 33-34). This part demonstrates physical force is used against Taber and he is dragged against his will to the mattress by the two attendants. This act exemplifies the psychiatric institution's coercion and force exerted upon those who do not conform. It also indicates the dehumanization of Taber to a state of helplessness. Therefore, ironically medical treatments which are supposed to be therapeutic are forced onto the patients very punitively, resulting in stripping away the individual's autonomy and integrity.

The ward in the novel functions as the Panoptic to ensure that the patients will adhere to the rules and orders. The glass window of Nurses' Station represents the central watchtower of the Panopticon. As Bromden puts it, "she's [Nurse Ratched] down the hall about to turn into the glass Nurses' Station where she'll spend the day sitting at her desk and looking out her window and making notes on what goes on out in front of her in the day room during the next eight hours" (Kesey, 1990: 4). Nurse Ratched observes and monitors every little move in the hospital in a way that nothing goes on without her prior knowledge about it. Foucault contends

that, "[a]ll that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy" (1995: 200). The idea of placing a supervisor in a central tower seems to suggest a system of surveillance and control. The supervisor in this case is Nurse Ratched since she is always watching over the patients from her glass station, and it represents a Panoptic structure where she is in position of having complete visibility and control over them. Nurse Ratched tells Sefelt and Fredrickson that she is aware of the alteration they have made to their medication. She states that "it's been brought to my attention that you two have made some arrangement with your medication—you are letting Bruce have your medication, aren't you, Mr. Sefelt? We'll discuss that later" (Kesey, 1990: 97). At that moment, Nurse Ratched makes the patients aware of her presence at every single second. She constantly reminds them that her gaze never fails and any attempt by the patients to transgress the institution's rules is immediately known and is faced with consequences. Thus, this automatically generates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation among the patients. For example, Nurse Ratched leads group meetings that she claims to be therapeutic. However, in fact they are a way of installing fear and paranoia among the patients. As Bromden puts it:

> They spy on each other. Sometimes one man says something about himself that he didn't aim to let slip, and one of his buddies at the table where he said it yawns and gets up and sidles over to the big log book by the Nurses' Station and writes down the piece of information he heard—of therapeutic interest to the whole ward, is what the Big Nurse says the book is for, but I know she's just waiting to get enough evidence to have some guy reconditioned at the Main Building, overhauled in the head to straighten out the trouble. The guy that wrote the piece of information in the log book, he gets a star by his name on the roll and gets to sleep late the next day. (Kesey, 1990: 14)

Through encouraging the patients to spy on each other, Nurse Ratched creates an environment filled with paranoia and fear where patients cannot trust one another and live in a constant fear of the other. This in turn make them internalize the power relation and ultimately they become their own police and guard. Foucault argues that:

[T]he major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves *the bearers*." (1995: 201 emphasis added)

The Panopticon's main psychological effect is to make individuals feel that they are constantly visible and always subject to control. Similarly, the ward in the novel ensures that the patients always regulate their behaviour in fear of being observed and punished. Hence, the hospital Panopticon transforms the patients into a means of their own suppression and control through internalizing this power mechanism as they monitor their own behaviours and become their own guard. The mechanism of the Panopticon in the hospital functions to induce "a state of conscious and permanent visibility" (Foucault, 1995: 201). This leads the patients to regulate their own behaviours in fear of Nurse Ratched's ever-present gaze. Thus, the patients become part of this power structure. This is evident Bromden's description of Nurse Ratched:

What she dreams of there in the center of those wires is a world of precision efficiency and tidiness like a pocket watch with a glass back, a place where the schedule is unbreakable and all the patients who aren't Outside, obedient under her beam, are wheelchair Chronics with catheter tubes run direct from every pantleg to the sewer under the floor. (Kesey, 1990: 27).

The way that Bromden describes Nurse Ratched showcases how she dreams of "a world of precision" and all the patients are placed "under her beam". This symbolizes the omnipresent power that she possesses, and it also reflects that Nurse Ratched dreams of a Panopticon-like environment which reduces patients to mere components of that power relation system.

Foucault contends that producing docile bodies can be achieved through adapting numerous mechanisms of discipline and control. One of those mechanisms is "[*t*]*he art of distributions*" (Foucault, 1995: 141). This mechanism focuses on spatial division of individuals by putting them into specific categories which in turn

makes it easier to monitor and control. The main aim of adapting this mechanism is to "establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able at each moment to supervise the conduct, of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits" (Foucault, 1995: 143). Dividing patients based on their mental health problem helps simplify the process of monitoring and controlling them. In the novel, the mental hospital constructs a dubious category which divides the Acutes from the Chronics. As Bromden states, "[t]he Chronics and the Acutes don't generally mingle. Each stays on his own side of the day room the way the black boys want it. The black boys say it's more orderly that way and let everybody know that's the way they'd like it to stay" (Kesey, 1990: 16). The Chronics are also divided in two categories, the Walkers and the Vegetables. The Walkers are those who can still move and engage in basic daily activities without needing extensive assistance. On the other hand, the Vegetables are those who will never recover, and their state is considered hopeless. By dividing the patients, the institution extends its control mechanism to each group specific needs and capabilities. For example, since the Walkers can move and are more aware of their surroundings, they can pose more danger to the authority of Nurse Ratched as they are able to resist and rebel against the rules. On the other hand, the Vegetables require less surveillance since they are reduced to mere objects through procedures such as lobotomy, electroconvulsive therapy and hydrotherapy. This strategy is beneficial for two reasons. Firstly, it becomes easy to monitor and control the patients since they are aware of every move they make. Secondly, the separation of the Chronics from the Acutes generates fear and paranoia among the Acutes as they know that if they do not behave as per the institution's will, they can easily become a Chronic.

The second mechanism of discipline and control in creating docile bodies is "[*t*]*he control of activity*" (Foucault, 1995: 149). This mechanism is related to controlling and regulating every detail in individuals' lives. Through the application of control of activity, the institution can control the patients' moves and dictate the exact time of their actions; thus, it can shape their behaviours and ensure their compliance according to the timetable that is provided to them. Foucault argues that "the time-table is an old inheritance. The strict model was no doubt suggested by the

monastic communities. It soon spread. Its three great methods - establish rhythms, impose particular occupations, regulate the cycles of repetition - were soon to be found in schools, workshops and hospitals" (1995: 149). Similarly, Nurse Ratched constantly monitors the patients from her glass window. Moreover, Foucault stress the importance of eliminating any distractions that might disturb the timetable for the inmates. As he puts it, "an attempt is also made to assure the quality of the time used: constant supervision, the pressure of supervisors, the elimination of anything that might disturb or distract" (1995: 150). That is why Nurse Ratched frowns at McMurphy's idea of playing cards with the other patients in the tub room as it will ultimately distract them from following the timetable that has been set up for them. McMurphy and Harding are talking about ways of challenging Nurse Ratched's authority. All the patients at that moment turn to check her: "She's in there, looking out through her window, got a tape recorder hid out of sight somewhere, getting all this down—already planning how to work it into the schedule" (Kesey, 1990: 69). The fact that Nurse Ratched "is planning how to work it [The information] into the schedule" (1990: 69) indicates that through documenting and integrating information into strict schedule, she exerts her power over the patients. It also shows that eliminating distractions means ensuring that all the patients' actions align with her strict timetable. Later on, McMurphy disagrees with one of the attendants as to when he can brush his teeth. McMurphy believes that he has the freedom to decide the timing for such personal activity while the attendant insists that he does not have the liberty to do this. The attendant says that "[i]t's ward policy, Mr. McMurphy, tha's the reason" (Kesey, 1990: 90). When the attendant notices that McMurphy ignores his statement, he adds that, "[w]hat you s'pose it'd be like if evahbody was to brush their teeth whenever they took a notion to brush?" (1990: 90). Hence, setting a timetable functions to produces docile bodies that are easily monitored and controlled.

All these medical measures and treatments have repercussions that affect the psyche of the patients and their sense of self with an ultimate consequence of the loss of agency. The effects of the intense surveillance and the mental institution treatments are apparent in Bromden's hallucinations. Bromden refers to "The Combine," a hidden group in control of everything. This shows his paranoid delusion

about the existence of a hidden force that controls and plans everything. As he puts it, "[t]he ward is a factory for the Combine. It's for fixing up mistakes made in the neighborhoods. . . When a completed product goes back out into society, all fixed up good as new, better than new sometimes, it brings joy to the Big Nurse's heart; something that came in all twisted different is now a functioning, adjusted component" (Kesey, 1990: 38). Bromden's belief in the existence of a hidden power reveals his loss of agency as he is delusional and feels like a passive object in the hands of a powerful, authoritative and dangerous hidden force. Indeed, Bromden is projecting his own anxieties and delusions onto non-existing external agents, the Combine. Therefore, he has lost control and agency over his life.

Furthermore, the word Combine signifies a factory-like setting that manufactures components to be distributed in the outside world. As Daniel J. Vitkus states that "[t]he Combine is described as a vast system of machines and robots, engaged in a process of converting human flesh, imagination, and individuality to a machine-world of freedomless conformity" (1994: 73). The effect of the mental institution's psychiatric treatments on Bromden's psyche is illustrated in the way he perceives the Combine as a vast mechanized system. Bromden believes that the Combine is not just controlling the patients in the hospital, but its power is also affecting the outside world. Stephen and Graham describe this type of delusion of thought as the breakdown of self-consciousness:

> No doubt, hallucinators have the impression that certain things exist in their external environments that cannot really be found there. . . A more charitable reading is that the subject mistakes one sort of mental event or activity for another. Specifically, he mistakes an "imaginative" or merely introspective experience for a perceptual one. (2000: 37-38)

For Bromden the Combine undoubtedly exists, and it is not just a metaphor to describe the injustices of the mental hospital. His paranoia and fear of an intimidating hidden force are heightened as a result of the treatments he gets at the hospital. This is also evident in the way he prefers to stay invisible and avoids interactions with the other patients and the staff. The treatments have contributed to his split psyche to the point that he cannot differentiate between his internal mental state and the external reality. Thus, Bromden's experiences are subjective and

authentic only to him. As he puts it in the beginning of the novel, "[i]t's still hard for me to have a clear mind thinking on it. *But it's the truth even if it didn't happen*" (Kesey, 1990: 8 emphasis added). This shows that much of what he experiences holds a subjective reality for himself and is therefore a projection of his own split psyche.

The psychiatric hospital's treatments have led to the patients' split psyche. It is quite clear that McMurphy is not mentally ill at all and only feigns his insanity to avoid prison. However, toward the end of the novel, he has completely changed. He no longer can feel anything. Bromden describes McMurphy's entering the ward after lobotomy as:

> They pushed it into the day room and left it standing against the wall, along next to the Vegetables. We stood at the foot of the Gurney, reading the chart, then looked up to the other end at the head dented into the pillow, a swirl of red hair over a face milk-white except for the heavy purple bruises around the eyes. (Kesey, 1990: 307)

Bromden's description of McMurphy is a metaphor for his psychological state. It is not just McMurphy's body that is affected but also his psyche. It is clear that the hospital's main function is not to cure or treat mental illnesses but to discipline and punish, turning sane people into psychologically damaged passive patients if necessary. Therefore, the mental institution becomes a place where mental illness is manufactured and produced.

B. The Importance of Counternarratives in Deconstructing Metanarratives

Inspired by Kesey's own experience of working at a mental hospital, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* reflects some of the concerns of the anti-psychiatry movement of the 1960s. This part argues that through McMurphy, the novel demonstrates the importance of storytelling which challenges the institution of psychiatry and its harsh medical treatments and helps some patients regain their autonomy and agency. It also contends that McMurphy's stories defy those of the mental institution and Nurse Ratched's abusive authority and have a therapeutic impact on Bromden's mental health.

From the moment that McMurphy enters the mental hospital, it becomes clear that he is different from everyone else in the there. Bromden comments on how different McMurphy is: "I know he's no ordinary Admission. I don't hear him slide scared along the wall, and when they tell him about the shower he don't just submit with a weak little yes, he tells them right back in a loud, brassy voice that he's already plenty damn clean, thank you" (Kesey, 1990: 10). This difference is due is to the way he narrates stories about him and others around him. From the beginning, he challenges the hospital's grand-narratives and offers an alternative narrative that delegitimizes that of the mental hospital. This is exemplified in McMurphy's attempts to convince Nurse Ratched to let them watch the world series on the television. Nurse Ratched refuses his request, saying that it will disrupt the patients' schedule. Later on, McMurphy asks for a permission for voting on that matter; however, none of the patients are brave enough to raise their hands against her authority. McMurphy manages to convince them and on the second voting almost everyone raises their hands including Bromden. However, she rejects the result arguing that the Chronics should be included in the voting process, which is impossible since most of them are unable to move. Then, McMurphy sits in front of the television although it is off and after a while all the Acutes come to join him ignoring Nurse Ratched's orders to get back to their tasks: "[t]hen Cheswick goes and gets him a chair, and then Billy Bibbit goes, and then Scanlon and then Fredrickson and Sefelt, and then we all put down our mops and brooms and scouring rags and we all go pull us chairs up" (Kesey, 1990: 138). This shows the positive and transformative impact of McMurphy's move on the patients specifically in creating a counter discourse that challenges Nurse Ratched's narrative. At the time of the baseball game all the patients gathered in front of the television and listen to McMurphy's imaginary report of the match. As Bromden states:

> As soon as it came time in the afternoon when the schedule called for house duties, it was also time for the baseball games to be on TV, and everybody went and lined the chairs up in front of the set and they didn't move out of them until dinner. It didn't make any difference that the power was shut off in the Nurses' Station and we couldn't see a thing but that blank gray screen, because McMurphy'd entertain us for hours, sit and talk and tell all kinds of stories. (Kesey, 1990: 301)

51

The act lining chairs in front of a powered off TV symbolizes the patients' attempt to regain their autonomy and agency. Through McMurphy's stories, the patients now gain the ability to envision a reality beyond what the hospital offers. Similar to anti-psychiatrists' argument, McMurphy's storytelling implies that mental illness is a narrative constructed in a discourse. It also showcases the importance of counternarrative as a means of resistance to the metanarrative of the mental hospital. Moreover, the act of voting represents the struggle to create a counter discourse and narrative which has been undermined by Nurse Ratched's authority. Lundholt et al. emphasize the importance of counternarratives:

> Counternarratives reveal individual or collective experiences that master narratives suppress, silence, or exclude. They fill a need for stories that match one's own experiences of self, particularly those that are at odds with socially constrained master narratives. They are a resource for sensemaking in the absence of other available narratives. (2018: 3)

Hence, the collective voting of the patients represents their resistance and functions as a counternarrative against the mental institution's metanarrative which deem them to be incapable of making choices on their own. It also questions the legitimacy of Nurse Ratched's narrative.

Furthermore, McMurphy's counternarratives significantly transforms the patients, empowering them to reclaim their agency and resist the imposed metanarrative of the mental hospital. As Andrews contends, counternarratives are "the stories which people tell and live which offer resistance, either implicitly or explicitly, to dominant cultural narratives" (2004: 1). This is clear during the so-called therapeutic meetings that Nurse Ratched holds for the patients. During those meetings, Nurse Ratched always picks one of the patients and roasts him in front of everyone by choosing an embarrassing subject to discuss about that person. As Bromden says, this time it is Billy's turn, "I can hear them out there, trying to go on with the meeting, talking some nonsense about Billy Bibbit's stutter and how it came about. . . I recognize Billy's voice, stuttering worse than ever because he's nervous" (Kesey, 1990: 127). Bromden further states "as far as the nurse riding you like this, rubbing your nose in your weakness till what little dignity you got left is gone and you shrink up to nothing from humiliation, I can't do anything about that, either"

(1990: 131). Nurse Ratched's main intention behind using such narrative, where she constantly criticizes and humiliates the patients, is to worsen and exploit Billy's vulnerability and undermine his agency. Nurse Ratched makes sure that the patients always feel helpless and inadequate to achieve anything outside the mental ward. However, McMurphy creates a counternarrative which helps Billy see himself as someone capable of taking control of his own life. As Michael Bamberg contends, "narratives provide the possibility of a format that has become the privileged way of fashioning self and identity, at least in 'modern times,' which is open to a certain fluidity, to improvisation, and to the design of alternatives" (2004: 354). Therefore, McMurphy's counternarratives and storytelling enlighten Billy to the possibility of fashioning a new self that is capable of resisting the metanarrative of the mental hospital. Moreover, at the breakfast, McMurphy starts to tell a fabricated story about Billy:

> "Hey, Billy boy, you remember that time in Seattle you and me picked up those two twitches? One of the best rolls I ever had." Billy's eyes bob up from his plate. He opens his mouth but can't say a thing. McMurphy turns to Harding. "We'd never have brought it off, neither, picking them up on the spur of the moment that way, except that they'd heard tell of Billy Bibbit. Billy 'Club' Bibbit, he was known as in them days. Those girls were about to take off when one looked at him and says 'Are you the renowned Billy Club Bibbit? (Kesey, 1990: 98-99)

The stories that McMurphy creates empowers Billy to construct a new self. McMurphy's story here portrays Billy as "Billy 'Club' Bibbit" which alters Billy's and others' way of perceiving him. This demonstrates the importance of reshaping one's own self through creating narratives and counternarratives. McMurphy's storytelling enormously helps Billy feel confident about himself. This enables Billy to move beyond the limitations that are imposed on him by Nurse Ratched's narrative.

For example, Billy normally feels ashamed of himself as he stutters and is not brave enough to have a relationship with any girl. However, his shame disappears after McMurphy's storytelling. This happens on the night that McMurphy arranges for Billy to have an intercourse with Candy whom he has previously met during the

fishing trip. Billy's sexual experience with Candy enables him to see himself differently, more capable away from the vulnerable self that Nurse Ratched has portrayed for him. After this experience, Billy is expressing himself for the first time without stuttering: "'Good morning, Miss Ratched,' Billy said, not even making any move to get up and button his pajamas. He took the girl's hand in his and grinned. 'This is Candy'" (Kesey, 1990: 301). Nonetheless, Billy's shame soon returns after Nurse Ratched intimidates him. This is clear in his stuttering: "'Duh-duh-don't t-tell, M-M-M-Miss Ratched. Duh-duh-duh—'" (Kesey, 1990: 301). This moment highlights the clash between McMurphy's narrative and Nurse Ratched's metanarrative. Nurse Ratched's threat to tell Billy's mother is her attempt to reinforce the metanarrative of control and power over the patients. Hence, the counternarrative has a crucial role in deconstructing the metanarrative of Nurse Ratched and showcasing alternatives to individuals like Billy. Martyn and Thompson argue about the importance of personal narrative against master narratives stating that "it becomes increasingly evident that the metanarrative of mental illness is defined by stigma and shame, against which the individual must work hard to ensure the more authentic personal narrative is voiced" (2021: 79). Therefore, McMurphy's counternarrative becomes an important step toward deconstructing the metanarrative of the mental institution which is designed to control its patients. Through voicing a counternarrative, McMurphy does not only challenge Nurse Ratched authority but creates a new safe space that allows the patients to create their own individualistic narratives.

Additionally, McMurphy's narrative significantly helps Bromden to work out his fragmented psyche which is significantly the result of the hospital's treatments and regulations. Bromden starts to navigate his way outside his hallucinations including the fog. For Bromden, the fog symbolizes a safe place where he can hide and protect himself from the painful realities that surrounds him both from within and from outside the hospital. From the very beginning of the novel, Bromden talks about the positive effect of McMurphy presence in the ward:

> About the only time we get any let-up from this time control is in the fog; then time doesn't mean anything. It's lost in the fog, like everything else. (They haven't really fogged the place full force all day today, not since

McMurphy came in. I bet he'd yell like a bull if they fogged it.) When nothing else is going on, you usually got the fog or the time control to contend with, but today something's happened: there hasn't been any of these things worked on us all. (Kesey, 1990: 75)

For Bromden, the fog is the safe place where he can take shelter whenever he feels suffocated in the ward. However, since the arrival of McMurphy in the hospital, Bromden starts to feel differently that he no longer needs to hide himself in the fog. Later on, Bromden describes how McMurphy has managed to drag all the patients outside the fog during the voting to watch the world series:

The first hand that comes up, I can tell, is McMurphy's, because of the bandage where that control panel cut into him when he tried to lift it. And then off down the slope I see them, other hands coming up *out of the fog*. It's like ... that big red hand of McMurphy's is reaching into the fog and dropping down and dragging the men up by their hands, dragging them blinking into the open. First one, then another, then the next. Right on down the line of Acutes, dragging them out of the fog till there they stand, all twenty of them, raising not just for watching TV, but against the Big Nurse, against her trying to send McMurphy to Disturbed, against the way she's talked and acted and beat them down for years. (Kesey, 1990: 134 emphasis added)

McMurphy's hand with the bandage on it symbolizes his influence on the patients, as it represents both his physical sacrifice and his leadership in rallying the patients against Nurse Ratched's authority. Also, McMurphy's success in rallying the patients against Nurse Ratched's authority signify the power of his counternarrative in deconstructing the institution's metanarrative. Moreover, the fog represents the fear and oppression that they have endured during their time in the mental hospital under Nurse Ratched's authority. Due to the power of his counternarrative, McMurphy manages to drag them out of the numbing fog. This also symbolizes their rebirth and awakening from the state of numbness. Hence, it is evident that McMurphy's counternarrative successfully surpasses and overthrows the metanarrative of the mental institution.

Moreover, McMurphy's storytelling is a vehicle to transmit his power of storytelling to Bromden. McMurphy's narrative mostly affects Bromden as he moves

from a state of invisibility to become the central figure in the novel. The first time that Bromden uttered a word is when he is with McMurphy: "[a]nd before I realized what I was doing, I told him Thank you" (Kesey, 1990: 205). This happens following Bromden losing his gum that he has stashed under his bed and McMurphy gifts him a new one. McMurphy then encourages Bromden to speak. As Bromden states, "[h]e told me not to hurry, that he had till six-thirty in the morning to listen if I wanted to practice" (Kesey, 1990: 206). McMurphy then helps Bromden by telling him a story of when he was a kid working in a bean field. During that time, McMurphy attempts to engage in a conversation with the adults around him, but they always ignore him which led him to remain silent for four weeks. As he stats "[f]our weeks and not a peep out of me. Till I think by God they forgot I could talk" (Kesey, 1990: 206). McMurphy breaks his silence and confront them about how petty they all are. Through McMurphy's storytelling, Bromden gradually finds his own narrative and voice, changing from a marginalized and oppressed individual into the central storyteller. As Thomas H. Fick argues, "McMurphy has not only made Bromden big again, he has shown him how to tell a story" (1989: 29). As Bromden states, "McMurphy was teaching me. I was feeling better than I'd remembered feeling since I was a kid, when everything was good and the land was still singing kids' poetry to me" (Kesey, 1990: 243). Hence, McMurphy has successfully transferred his power of storytelling to Bromden which ultimately enables him to articulate his own story and that of the other patients.

Toward the end of the novel, Bromden manages to free himself completely from the mental institution authority. As he states, "I wanted to be by myself. I caught a look at myself in the mirror. He'd done what he said; my arms were big again, big as they were back in high school, back at the village, and my chest and shoulders were broad and hard" (Kesey, 1990: 257). Therefore, McMurphy's narratives and storytelling actually have succeeded in helping Bromden feel big again. Bromden finally decides to end McMurphy's agony after his lobotomy. This is the moment when Bromden becomes the master storyteller as he escapes from the institution and is now able to fully articulate his own narrative. Bromden describes the moment where he finally manages to escape from the claws of the mental hospital as: "[n]obody bothers coming after an AWOL, I knew, and Scanlon could

handle any questions about the dead man—no need to be running like this. But I didn't stop. I ran for miles before I stopped and walked up the embankment onto the highway" (Kesey, 1990: 310-311). Therefore, Bromden's successful escape from the institution signifies that he is now the master storyteller of his life-story. Hence, Bromden not only continues McMurphy's legacy of storytelling, but he has now become the embodiment of the power of storytelling as a way of resisting metanarrative of the merciless mental institution.

V.   CONCLUSION

This thesis examined the intricate relationship between mental health interventions and their disastrous impact on the psyche of the characters in *The Bell Jar* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.* It also explored the effects of the psychiatric intervention which leads patients to suffer split psyche. This work has revealed that treatments such as insulin shots, electroconvulsive therapy and lobotomy have worsened the characters' mental health state. Moreover, it highlighted the importance of storytelling and the act of writing in deconstructing the metanarrative of the mental institution. It examined how the marginalized narratives manage to surpass and overthrow the metanarrative of mental illness which has been a tool to control individuals.

The first chapter of this study introduced the main concepts and delved into the lives and the literary accomplishments of Syliva Plath and Ken Kesey. The biography of each author aimed to provide a comprehensive examination of their contributions to literature. The chapter then moved to identify the gap in the existing literature on The Bell Jar and One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. The literary review revealed that within existing studies, the subject of how psychiatry and its treatments contributed to the construction of deteriorated, split psyche is still fairly underexamined. Moreover, this part introduced the methodology of the thesis. The thesis drew on the anti-psychiatrists' theories such as R.D. Laing's, Thomas Szasz's and Foucault's. It also gave a special significance to Foucault's notions of the Panopticon and the disciplinary methods in creating docile bodies. In examining these works through the anti-psychiatry lens, the study exposed the practices of mental health institutions in the 1960s. Hence, this chapter showed how Plath and Kesey create narratives to challenge not just the imposed treatments of the psychiatric hospitals but also the broader implications on the individual agency and power.

The second chapter of this study begun by delving into the history of mental illness and discussed how the concept of madness and mental illness are always under the influence of the dominant discourse at any given era. For example, during the Middle Ages, women were the scapegoat and were imprisoned and labelled as mad. As Szasz argues that "[t]he concept of mental illness is analogous to that of witchcraft. In the fifteenth century, men believed that some persons were witches, and that some acts were due to witchcraft. In the twentieth century, men believe that some people are insane, and that some acts are due to mental illness" (1997: xxiii). Indeed, soon enough the concept of mental illness and madness evolved to stigmatize all. This has happened at the time of establishing the first psychiatric hospital in the seventeenth century. The main function of these hospitals was to imprison individuals who were characterized as deviants.

Then, the study focused on the development of the anti-psychiatry movement which includes Thomas Szasz, R. D. Laing and Foucault. The chapter set a theoretical background for the analysis of the novels. This part began by introducing Szasz's central notions in his critique of psychiatry. Szasz is one of the most influential figures famous for his progressive ideas concerning mental illness. In his book *The Myth of Mental illness* (1974), Szasz argues that illnesses are physical whereas mental illnesses are social constructs that aim to control certain individuals. As he puts it:

> It is important to understand clearly that modern psychiatry—and the identification of new psychiatric diseases—began not by identifying such diseases by means of the established methods of pathology, but by creating a new criterion of what constitutes disease . . . was now added the fresh criterion of alteration of bodily function. (1974: 12)

Thus, Szasz aims to unmask the ugliness behind the power of the institution of psychiatry. He uses a similar tone in *The Manufacturer of Madness* (1997) which starts by presenting an analogy between the authoritative power of the Middle Ages inquisitions and the authoritative power of psychiatry. As he states, "we now live in a Therapeutic State whose relentless invasion of our privacy, deprivation of our liberty, and undermining of our responsibility we stubbornly conceal from ourselves as the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of 'disease'" (1997: xiii). The therapeutic state's

main aim is to deprive individuals of their liberty and rights, and this is done through the power of psychiatry upon individuals who are deemed to be troublesome.

Furthermore, the study focused on Foucault's analysis of the Panopticon which is a surveillance system whose function is to discipline individuals. Foucault argues that "[t]he Panopticon is a marvellous machine which, whatever use one may wish to put it to, produces homogeneous effects of power" (1995: 202). The Panopticon is part of everyone's life since it can be applied at any time or any setting. Moreover, the research examined the results of being incarcerated in a mental hospital and experiencing harsh treatments and procedures. The result is the breakdown of self-consciousness and disintegrated self and split psyche.

Lastly, the study explored the context of postmodernism and the importance of storytelling in deconstructing the metanarrative of mental illness. As Selden et al. argue, "art – with philosophy – was the only theatre of resistance to 'the administered universe' of the twentieth century" (2005: 92). It was argued that the novels offer marginalized and alternative narratives to deconstruct metanarratives.

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The third chapter of the thesis showcased detailed examination of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*. It delved into the story of Esther Greenwood and her self-destructive madness as a means of deconstructing the false self and constructing a new female self. In a patriarchal society where Esther lives, the oppression takes

place on women bodies. Hence, she has to get rid of her body to liberate herself from the patriarchal grip. This in turn allows her to create her own narrative. In the society that Esther lives in, she is continuously oppressed due to the imposition of patriarchal rules. Therefore, Esther adopts a false self to protect her real self from getting annihilated. Since she is deprived of her rights, agency and the basic fundamental needs, she has to create new ways to endure the struggles that she is facing. According to Laing, the authentic self is "a self-acting agent" (1960: 22). Therefore, the personality of individuals who suffer from pressure from the outside world are not an authentic one but rather multiple sequences of impersonations. This also entails that the real self is capable of making choices on its own. This is what Esther does. She tries to reach her authentic self through deconstructing the patriarchal imposed ones. Therefore, to be an active agent and author of her life-story, she has to be reborn again which requires a suicide.

The second part of the analysis delved into the effects of the Cold War on Esther's psyche. This part placed the novel within the socio-political context of the Cold War era. This era generated paranoia and fear and led Esther to suffer from severe existential anxiety. This section also discussed how the generated paranoia of this era due to the Cold War rhetoric mirrors Esther's internal struggles. As Nancy Walker states:

> World War II made Americans acutely conscious of involvement with the rest of the world, while the Cold War that immediately followed fostered insularity, both politically and within the family. Attitudes toward proper gender roles changed dramatically in some parts of the population during the war, and that change continued to affect women's lives into the 1950s. ... Increased postwar prosperity focused the attention of white America on social-class mobility, while the civil rights movement forced recognition of politically sanctioned inequality. New appliances and convenience foods flooded the market (2000: 29)

The Cold War period created an environment where there was always fear of unknown dangers such as nuclear annihilation or communists' infiltration in the United States. This ultimately generated paranoia due to the fear of an invisible threat.

Moreover, Walker talks about the shifting attitudes toward gender roles. This tension is evident in Esther as she always feels the pressure to conform to traditional gender expectations which are manifested in motherhood and domesticity, while Esther only desires to be a writer and achieve professional success. Furthermore, Esther perceives ECT treatment. The ECT treatment is administrated on Esther in a very dehumanizing manner which also mirrors the broader practices of control and conformity enforced by the US. Therefore, ECT's function reflects America's insistence on normativity and its inclination to eliminate unwanted behaviours. Hence, the psychiatric facility is an extension of the political agenda employing medical interventions as a means of achieving conformity.

The fourth chapter focused on the analysis of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. It explored the effects of mental illness treatments on the psyche of the patients. It also argued that these treatments have contributed to the fragmentation of their psyche. This part drew on Foucault's concept of power relation to demonstrate how the mental hospital, as the representative of the institution of psychiatry in the 1960s, aims to create docile bodies. Moreover, the ward in the hospital functions as the Panopticon to ensure that the patients internalize the power relation mechanism and ultimately become their own guard. In the hospital, Nurse Ratched represents the central authorial figure sitting behind her glass window and observing the smallest detail about the patients. If anyone in the hospital attempts to transgress her rules, they will immediately face a medical treatment, that is punishment. She sends the patients to the disturbed ward, electroconvulsive therapy and the forced use of heavy drugs. If none of these works to discipline them, she sends them for a lobotomy.

McMurphy is the embodiment of resistance against Nurse Ratched' authority. Nurse Ratched punishes him with medical treatments for his defying acts and finally sends him to receive lobotomy. Fick argues that "McMurphy pays the steep but unavoidable price of monolithic heroism on the modern frontier" (1989: 30). Hence, Nurse Ratched's main aim is to make McMurphy an example and prevent the patients' transgression of the institutional rules. The part further highlighted the repercussions of the mental hospital's treatments on Bromden's psyche concerning his hallucinations. The institute of psychiatry has become the site of producing and manufacturing mental illness and the outcome of the enforced treatments and

procedures are individuals, such as Bromden, who now suffer from disoriented split psyche.

The second part of the chapter examined the power of storytelling in deconstructing the metanarrative of the mental institution and empowering the patients to regain agency. McMurphy's stories introduce a counternarrative to the patients allowing them to gain back their agency and power. They function to manifest a form of therapy for the patients within the hospital. McMurphy's stories help Bromden to construct his own personal narrative which untimely leads him to liberation. Bromden has been deeply affected by the mental institution treatments as evident in his recurring hallucinations. For that reason, Bromden prefers to stay invisible to protect himself from further harm. Through McMurphy's narrative, Bromden is able to confront his fragmented self and hallucinations. Therefore, McMurphy has successfully transmitted the power of storytelling to Bromden. In doing so, McMurphy manages to deconstruct the metanarrative of the mental institution and facilitates Bromden's rebirth as a functional storyteller.

In conclusion, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* demonstrate that mental illnesses are actually manufactured and produced within psychiatric facilities whose function is supposed to be treating and healing. The novels also explore the effects of psychiatric institutions measures, treatments and procedures on the psyche of the characters. Moreover, both novels highlight the dehumanization and marginalization of individuals who are labelled as mentally ill. Plath's and Kesey's narratives emphasize the punitive treatments that are exerted by the mental institution and showcase the disastrous effects of being incarnated in a psychiatric hospital. Lastly, through McMurphy's and Esther's journeys, the novels illustrate the importance of storytelling in empowering, gaining agency and deconstruing the imposed societal values onto individuals.

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RESUME

Alaa Gazairi

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Dedicated and analytical professional with a passion for enhancing operational efficiency within office environments. Equipped with over two years of hands-on administrative experience, I possess a demonstrated track record of streamlining workflows and optimizing productivity.

EXPERIENCE

HR Coordinator: Recruitment

01/2021- 06/2021

MTN Telecommunication Company, Damascus, Syria

- Coordinate and help requesters to fill vacancies with qualified candidates.
- Stay informed about relevant employment laws and regulations to ensure compliance throughout the recruitment process.
- Collaborate with other HR team members to continuously improve recruitment processes and strategies.
- Screen resumes and applications to identify qualified candidates for open positions.
- Collaborate with hiring managers to understand staffing requirements and develop comprehensive job descriptions.

Credit & Collection Representative

06/2019 – 01/2021

MTN Telecommunication Company, Damascus, Syria

- Generate & execute periodic unpaid reports to take proper action on specific due dates.
- Review accounts and assists in report preparation.

- Research disputed overdue account balances.

- Correct any errors, including misapplied payment, reversed late charges, direct deposit errors, and overpayment from billing errors.

EDUCATION

2013 - 2017

Bachelor Degree of English Literature, (Damascus University).

2020 - 2022

Master of Business Administration, MBA, **HR,** (Higher Institute of Business Administration, "HIBA").

2021-2024

Master of English Language and Literature (With Thesis), (Istanbul Aydin University).

PUPLICATIONS

Articles:
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SKILLS

Time Management, Adaptability and Flexibility, Attention to Detail and

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