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ISTANBUL YENI YUZYIL UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE PROGRAMME



READING SUICIDE BEYOND THE ENDING: *THE AWAKENING*
AND *THE BELL JAR*
MA THESIS

İBTİSAM AL- GBURİ

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İSTANBUL, JUNE 2024

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ETHICAL STATEMENT

I prepared my project following the thesis writing rules of the Institute of Social Sciences at Istanbul Yeni Yüzyıl University, and I hereby declare that;

- I have obtained the data, information, and documents provided within the thesis according to academic and ethical rules,
- I have submitted all information, documents, evaluations, and results under the requirements of scientific ethics and moral rules,
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- I have not made any changes to the data used,
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IBTISAM AL-GBURI

PREFACE

My deep gratitude to Prof. Dr. Günseli Sönmez İşçi, for accepting to supervise me, for being patient with me, and for her great help and support. Without her, this work would not be possible.

ISTANBUL, 2024

IBTISAM AL-GBURI



ÖZET

READING SUICIDE BEYOND THE ENDING: *THE AWAKENING* AND *THE BELL JAR*

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Bu çalışmanın amacı farklı dönemlerde geçen iki eseri, Kate Chopen'in *The Awakening* (1899) ve Sylvia Plath'in *The Bell Jar* (1963) başlıklı romanlarını kadınların yaşadıkları travma bağlamında incelemektir. Bu romanların kahramanların toplumsal normlara hangi açıdan bağlı oldukları ve hangi yönlerden bu normlardan saptıkları analiz edilecektir. Viktorya döneminden savaş sonrası döneme kadar kadına yönelik algılar, kadınların bireysel deneyimi ve bunların cinsiyetçi normlar tarafından nasıl şekillendirildiği tartışılacaktır. Kadınların hayattaki nihai amaç olarak evde mutluluktan başka bir şey istememesi gerektiği düşüncesinin yarattığı sonuç araştırılacaktır. Her iki romanın kadın kahramanları farklı dönemlere ve farklı sosyal sınıflara mensup olmalarına rağmen benzer durumlarla hem başa çıkmak hem de hayatta kalmaya çalışmak zorunda oldukları için benzer sosyal ve psikolojik sorunlar yaşıyor. Bu tezin amacı farklı zaman ve toplumlardan iki farklı kadının aynı travmatik durumda kalmalarının nedenlerini ve Chopin ile Plath'in eserlerini neden bu şekilde sonlandırdıklarını sorgulamaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: intihar , kadın kahraman, *The Awakening*, *The Bell Jar*, toplumsal beklentiler, travma.

ABSTRACT

READING SUICIDE BEYOND THE ENDING: *THE AWAKENING* AND *THE BELL JAR*

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The purpose of this study is to compare and discuss two novels set in different periods, *The Awakening* (1899) by Kate Chopin, and *The Bell Jar* (1963) by Sylvia Plath. The protagonists of these novels will be scrutinised in order to see the ways in which they adhere or deviate from the prevailing societal norms. The conceptions of femininity and the development of the female experience from the Victorian to post-war American eras will also be explored in order to see how they are shaped by sexist norms. The idea that women should strive for nothing but happiness at home as the ultimate aim in life will be analysed. Although the women protagonists of both novels belong to different eras and different social classes, they have similar social and psychological problems because they both have to cope with and try to survive in similar situations. Hence, the objective of this thesis is to analyse the reasons why two different women from different time and society converge in the same traumatic situation and why Chopin and Plath end their works in the ways that they do.

Keywords: female protagonists, mothers, societal expectations, suicide, *The Awakening*, *The Bell Jar*, trauma.

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INTRODUCTION

Women have often been portrayed as ‘deviant’ and ‘uncontrollable’ throughout history. Both in literature and in the world’s main faiths and spiritual traditions, women have been represented as having irrational tendencies either directly, or by implications. Notable female characters in literature, such as Juliet, Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra, and Edna Pontellier, have all taken their own lives. Suicidal women, according to critics, show their own kind of bravery and rebellion by taking charge of their own lives and going where no reasonable person would. This may be one explanation for the long-standing practice of constructing stories about women who have attempted suicide. In addition to reflecting a sad societal reality, it shows how women might resort to extreme tactics when faced with certain challenges.

Writing on women and their societal roles is common among authors who identify as feminine. A variety of women with varying lifestyles are shown to the reader in these depictions. These women share similar struggles and tragedies. Women in patriarchal civilizations across the world share the experience of being subjugated by the patriarchal male authority. It is usual for dominant male organizations to want power and control in order to limit women and prevent them from gaining power and controlling males. This stifling presence exists in many parts of life, including the workplace, the classroom, and so on. If a woman wants to further her career in a male-dominated field, she will probably face sexism and other forms of oppression. A man whose philosophy promotes male dominance has her confined to a certain area. This has been going on for a long time in various nations, and women are aware of it.

The American public did not embrace women for who they were in the 1950s. On the other hand, women holding positions of power were frowned upon. Even before they were married, women were subject to rigid social norms. However, patriarchal ideology does not rest on any stronger foundation than the institution of marriage. It is often believed to be the primary motivator for taking advantage of women. The women here are expected to work nonstop, which leaves them little time to think about who they are as unique individuals. Their rights and legitimate requirements are completely disregarded as they are compelled to focus only on household matters.

Therefore, women have started to fight back against this confinement, as explored in works like *The Awakening* (1899) by Kate Chopin and *The Bell Jar* (1963) by Sylvia Plath. These two authors show how male dominance has confined women to certain spaces and how they have fought back. Chopin and Plath illuminate the ways in which men occupy and control space through power relations that are aligned with their ideologies, and how women resist and overcome this confinement and barrier in the previous and present centuries, which are significant epochs in women's rebellion and resistance.

Famous nineteenth-century American female writer Kate Chopin is best represented by her masterpiece, *The Awakening*. Many consider it a seminal piece of feminist literature. Many studies have lauded the heroine, comparing her to a moth drawn into a fire, and have focused on the ways in which the heroine's insecurity affects subsequent generations. The majority of readers draw conclusions about Edna's demise from the novel's denouement, attributing it to the heroine's distorted thoughts and feelings or her inability to pursue love. Yet, some critics have gone beyond surface-level textual analysis to determine Edna's cause of death and its implications. So, we should dig further into Edna's demise. She acquires a spiritual and bodily awakening just before she passes away. Kate Chopin's masterful use of symbolic imagery and her fearless exploration of women's vulnerable emotional and psychological states are two of the main reasons why *The Awakening* deserves its status as a seminal feminist text. In the five years after the novel's publication, Chopin produced very few short tales due to the profound pain she felt from the response. Unfortunately, with the release of *The Awakening*, she gained a "bad name" and had very few of her subsequent novels published.

Towards the conclusion of *The Awakening*, the protagonist Edna accepts her own mortality while in the water. Edna had been through the raging and bewildering adventure inside herself before she threw herself into the water. Scrutinizing Edna's battle for self-realization, the moral/ ethical constraints of patriarchal culture, and analysing the reasons behind her death may unearth significant problems in the novel. Beginning with the textual specifics, this study seeks to get a deeper understanding of Edna's character image via an analysis of her death. By doing so, I hope to uncover the profound meaning of the author's choice in crafting this conclusion and, ultimately, the relevance of Edna's death to both herself and society at that period.

In her novel *The Bell Jar*, Sylvia Plath highlights the oppression of women by the patriarchal institution of marriage. According to the male members, this organization was established with the purpose of protecting women. The plan's objective is to eliminate their need to work outside the home. The truth is that it was created to make males feel safe and to keep women confined to the home. According to this ideology, males should be in positions of authority and women should be subordinate. They were anticipated to act in accordance with the predetermined duties and procreate. Carrying children is another kind of enslavement for women. Men benefit more from marriage as a result of this. Children are raised by women. Because males are responsible for running the household and making money; they are relieved of the duty of caring for the kids. Plath argues that marriage is a strategy for the exploitation of women via her heroine Esther Greenwood, who has become disillusioned with these oppressive social norms.

The Bell Jar takes place in 1950s America and exposes the protagonist, Esther Greenwood, as she struggles to forget her own unique identity in the face of constraints imposed by societal norms of domestication, traditionalism, and conformity. Drawing on her own experiences and observations, Sylvia Plath builds her narrative around the medical profession and psychiatric medicine in particular. She criticizes the doctors and the state of the medical profession for their role in perpetuating particular ideologies through their categorizations, labels, and overall attitude toward female patients. *The Bell Jar* has been feminized, although the patriarchal orientation of the medical profession as shown in the novel—which is similar to Betty Friedan's claims in *The Feminine Mystique*—has received very little attention from scholars.

The main character, Esther, faces social pressures throughout the novel as she grows into a strong woman and artist, prepared to fight patriarchy and remain active in the public eye. Esther would be oppressed by Buddy Willard and Doctor Gordon, who are patriarchal proxies, if her desire were to come true. Esther may only begin to heal and progress toward her goals with the help of a female doctor whose practices are gynocentric. In stark contrast to her male-dominated first psychotherapist Dr. Gordon and her lover Buddy, she forms a strong bond with Doctor Nolan as a woman. Hence, two novels—*The Awakening* by Kate Chopin and *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath—are used to examine trauma and suicide from a feminist perspective in this

research. Because of this, the theoretical chapter will begin with a brief overview of trauma. Secondly, I will talk about female suicide as a whole.

It is vital to remember the victories and setbacks of the women's suffrage movement, which has continued for over two centuries, while debating whether or not women should continue to struggle for equality. By comparing these limiting principles, which are often thought to be relics of a bygone era, we may see that they persist even in the modern world. For the purpose of this thesis. Two novels written by women from different time periods will be analyzed to determine how the ideals of domesticity impact one's sense of womanhood.

Hence, this thesis seeks to examine the ways in which two female characters either comply to or reject the standards of motherhood and wifedom as imposed by Victorian, and post-war society. The female authors of these works want to use literature as a means of expressing the inner turmoil they have endured as a result of these beliefs. *The Awakening* contains the most foundational principles. No matter where the heroine Edna Pontellier goes in this literary work-to New Orleans or Grand Isle-the Angel in the house follows her. The title of the novel implies the waking up of Edna. She discovers that her current existence is not what she wants or enjoys; rather, it is what she is meant to value. In addition to the weight of Victorian-era ideals, Chopin also wants to break free of the rigid structure of the literary tradition!

At the beginning of the twentieth century, things changed, and Sylvia Plath was able to go to college on her own. But like many other women of her age, she had the impression that going to college was the last step before returning to home. Esther Greenwood, like Edna Pontellier, has an identity dilemma; she cannot decide whether she is an artist or a perfect housekeeper. Halfway through the novel, Esther is stuck in a rut at her summer editorship in New York, trying to figure out if she can be a mother and a poet simultaneously. The other half delves into the details of her mental illness treatment, including her hospitalization and electric shock therapy.

The persistent problem of women's under-representation in society is an issue that is evident in both works. The presentation of the characters' emotional well-being and professional goals is particularly indicative of this. When Edna begins to behave inappropriately, her husband avoids talking to her in favor of seeking medical advice, which raises questions about her mental health. Yet, Edna never gets any kind of therapy, like Esther.

When it comes to their careers, women also feel that males do not take them seriously. Edna has to teach herself painting when she decides to pursue it, and her husband is horrified that she neglects her social responsibilities in favour of her studio. While serving as a guest editor for a magazine, Esther is requested to pose with a beautiful flower, smile, and talk about how happy poetry makes her. However, no one takes her seriously as a poet. She may put it on the back burner until she marries and can focus on creating a happy home for her husband and children.

During Chopin's era, the heroine of Gustave Flaubert's 1857 novel *Madame Bovary*, Emma, commits suicide after a tale very similar to Edna's. This was a common and anticipated finale for Victorian-era novels. There are several works with comparable storylines and ends. 'Creole Bovary' is another name given to *The Awakening* by some viewers. After her relationship ends, *Anna Karenina*, portrayed by Leo Tolstoy and published in 1875, commits suicide by jumping under a train. In George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* (1860) the protagonist Maggie Tulliver kills herself by drowning.

Many theories and discussions surround Edna's suicide. One theory holds that she intends to drown herself while another holds that it is an accident because she has an inflated opinion of her swimming abilities and is unable to return to shore. Another important topic to consider is whether her death represents the culmination of her awakening, when she acts in accordance with her newly acquired freedom and independence from convention, or whether it is a failure due to her realization that she has woken to a world that does not belong to her. All these issues will be discussed in chapter two. Each of the seven parts that make up this chapter explores a separate theme from the work: Creole social mores and daily life, family, marriage, personal liberty, love, and physical intimacy. In-depth discussion of Edna's choice to end her life and the factors that contributed to it will also be analysed in this chapter.

Chapter three deals with *The Bell Jar*. The idea of insanity has always been associated with females and defined by males. Conventional wisdom holds that women's delicate mental health is to blame for the prevalence of mental illness among women. There was still a clear gender divide between the sexes, even after psychiatrists started looking into their patients' cases. Also, women who were artistic or smart were stereotyped as flawed as the creative sphere was considered to be a man's domain. As a consequence, female authors had to resort to men's vocabulary

when depicting female madness as a product of environmental factors. By recognizing patriarchal oppression and the societal construction of madness in *The Bell Jar*, Sylvia Plath demonstrates her knowledge of both in her writings. Esther Greenwood's mental breakdown in *The Bell Jar* is portrayed by Plath as stemming from her struggle to reconcile traditional ideas of femininity with her own inventiveness. To illustrate this point, the author uses both existing and newly developed metaphors.

This study proposes that, in order to portray female madness as an outcome of patriarchal oppression, Plath invents new languages of madness. These vocabularies are also an effort to resist patriarchal portrayals of mental problems. This autobiographical work has quickly become a feminist manifesto. Neither the presence of a female protagonist nor the depiction of a heroine's internal conflicts is unique to Plath's work. However, it achieves its complicated interpersonal or universal level of communication via a statement about the feminine situation that filters specific emotions and experiences material through symbolic speech. The author skilfully weaves together the heroine's historical past, focusing on her present world with a synchronic, timeless, mythical structure -the descent-ascent pattern- that allows the heroine to mediate the passage from one world or state of being to another, which is a key component of its success and forcefulness. Esther becomes a cultural hero as we see the story's underlying theme of rebirth and her journey to self-awareness and independence.

The events of Esther's journey – from her plummet into the pit of self-destruction to her resurrection and subsequent rise to freedom and unity – are chronicled in *The Bell Jar*. Despite the fact that she moves through several physical areas from one place to another, the voyage is mostly internal, exploring both the self and the environment. So, it is structured similarly to psychoanalytic works. Sylvia Plath tackles the significant realities of American women in the 1950s, and Esther's mental and social difficulties, as well as her time in psychiatric hospitals, are emblematic of this. Hence, in chapter three, Esther's falling into madness, and her maternal crisis, will be scrutinized, seeking to shed clearer light on the problem.

1. TRACING VARIOUS INDICATIONS OF TRAUMA

1.1. Trauma and Death

The field of trauma studies offers an ethical reaction to the many ways in which people's traumatic experiences are portrayed in art, literature, and cinema. As Freud states, "We describe as 'traumatic any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield'" (Freud, 2015, p. 23). Trauma is defined as an external stimulus that is too strong to penetrate an individual's defence mechanisms. The term "repression" (Mohammed, 2023, p. 91) today describes what Freud calls "the state in which the ideas existed before being made conscious" (Freud, 2019, p. 5), but it was once known as "the subconscious" (Mohammed, 2023, p. 91) and this is where powerful effects are kept. As a defence mechanism, the mind tries to erase the initial traumatic event. For any individual, their formative years are a time of both happy and sad memories.

Sylvia Plath's own life may be a relevant example of demonstrating the effects of trauma in the mind. Because the most formative experience of Plath's life occurred while she was a youngster and she vividly remember these experiences. The formative years of her life provide a rich and meaningful area to investigate. Trauma in Plath's life occurs in two stages; the first stage serves to expose the second. The first trauma that passed without experiencing any pain was her father's death. A dark cloud descended upon the awful occurrence in her thoughts. After Plath suffered the first shock-the death of her unborn child-in 1961, she began to feel it.

Death reinforces the constraints on women's conduct when societal, family, and internalised limits lose their potency, when the character has been marginalised for often subtle reasons or when she herself decides to experiment with stepping beyond her responsibilities. Thus, in stories, death serves as a secondary barrier against the release of feminine anger, disgust, or danger. As Du Plessis mentions "Death is the price exacted for female critique" (Du Plessis, 1885, p. 16). In accepting a bad man, a non-hero, or in not accepting a suitable one, the character pays the ultimate price for upsetting the delicate balance of socially acceptable feminine behaviour. The female hero perishes because she has nowhere to turn where her stain of energy (whether sexual or, in more general terms, passionate) would be ignored or accepted. For this reason, the goal of the feminine journey is not death but rather a sense of belonging in

twentieth-century criticism. In contrast, when a woman pushes the bounds of what is considered acceptable in terms of her ambitions, death is depicted as a “cosmic” (Du Plessis, 1985, p. 16) or essentialist conclusion in works from the nineteenth century. But many people celebrate her downfall as if it were a victory. The very act of dying becomes a protest against the creation of a respectable woman and the collusion of a respectable society. Just as the protest in the marriage ending is autonomy or vocation, so too in texts ending with death; there is frequently a moment of protest, social activity or a wanting of life. The cliché of “more” (Du Plessis, 1985, p. 16) describes a situation in which the protagonist wants more and more, surely more than she is permitted, yet may get less and less. This can be seen in the writings of Kate Chopin.

As Du Plessis remarks, “Death for the female protagonist in many nineteenth-century texts are the negative print of marriage” (Du Plessis, 1985, p. 15). Several works make it very evident that the norms of heterosexual courtship have a direct bearing on the final curtain. When a female protagonist’s relationship becomes muddled, misunderstood, or unsuitable in light of the “social script” (Du Plessis, 1985, p. 15) or storyline devised to limit her legally, economically, and sexually, she meets an untimely end. When a woman’s sexual energies are released outside the “couvert” (Du Plessis, 1985, p. 15) of marriage or valid romance, as in the cases of adultery (Mme. Bovary and Edna Pontellier), death is the result. Even if a character protests the societal constraints that define her place, which leave her underfed and unemployed, she may be doomed for her efforts. Sometimes the novel’s female protagonist dies because she is unable to reach a suitable ending through teleological love relationships. Her marginalisation increases linearly as the story progresses. Death is more than just a monetary transaction, since it is the final result of punishing a single desire.

The parallels to *The Awakening* are undeniable. Real power can destroy the rules created by a newly enlightened but socially weak individual. As Du Plessis mentions “When, at the end of Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* (1899), Edna swims out to sea to commit suicide, she returns thereby to the scene of her double awakening into sexuality and autonomy” (Du Plessis, 1985, p. 17). Edna’s suicide is her response to the various forms of ownership she has experienced, including those at the hands of her husband, her lovers, and her children: “They need not have thought that they could possess her, body and soul” (Chopin, 2015, p. 89). By doing so, she declares her independence and asserts her right to control her own life. However, all routes to

seeming freedom have gone to the dead end of restrictive relationships, even adultery and the artist's life, which is itself partly an expression of sexual liberation. The increased adaptability of society meets female rebellion, and her husband has face-saving measures to insist that she has never actually rebelled. Given these constraints, her death by suicide is a statement against the impossibility of achieving absolute freedom. She has taken upon herself the fate that is often written as a punishment for women in her position. Given the relative lack of historical possibilities for women's public life, the practices of gendering made the rules controlling marriage, sexuality, and dependency so insistent in nineteenth-century writings.

1.2. Ways of Looking at Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviours from A Psychodynamic Perspective

Seminal writings by Freud (1917) set the stage for modern discussions over whether societal factors contribute to suicide. The origins, risk factors, and consequences of suicidal ideation, self-harm, and other forms of self-harm have been the subject of several theoretical frameworks since then. Additionally, actions of self-harm and suicide are destructive to the body. How does one's physical self-relate to their sense of self, and what motivates someone to want to harm or destroy either? Freud theorises that there is a direct line from the body to the mind (Freud, 1923). In the beginning, the ego is based on physical feelings, particularly those that originate on the skin. The baby's ego grows as it learns to interact with the outside world, most notably through its mother. This happens as the baby gradually comes to identify with the mother's goodness in providing care and nourishment, which helps ease painful bodily sensations and vocalizations that eventually become part of the developing body image. Consequently, physiological experiences serve as a mediator and anchor for the first sense of self. Modern research supports these psychoanalytic hypotheses by demonstrating that early contact and handling is critical for the maturation of the brain, the regulation of physiological systems, attachment formation, cognitive and affective body awareness, and immune system function.

If you want to hurt yourself, you can cut yourself, ingest poison, or break through some other barrier on your body. By bridging the gap between the inside and outside, between the mind and the body, and between oneself and other people, the bodily border facilitates communication. The actual penetrating of the skin and subsequent opening of the skin may be perceived as a subconscious desire to expel

negative emotions and thoughts, as well as a re-enactment of a traumatizing event. Depending on the context, crossing the bodily border can signify a transition, such as the passage of poison from the outside to the inside, the movement of blood from the inside to the outside, or the passage of one's internal mental life into the outer world. The concept of transition implies that acts of self-harm might be away for individuals to express the struggles they have during life's transitions and the obstacles they encounter. For example, the failure to properly distinguish between one's own identity and that of others, which develops as a result of traumatic events experienced in childhood. A person's internalized rage, according to Freud, which was first aimed at a loved one, leads them to take their own life. He explains in *Mourning and Melancholia* (Freud, 1917) how melancholy sets in when ambivalence and animosity dominate towards the departed thing, making mourning more difficult. The object of hate becomes an integral part of the self, which in turn becomes the target of the attack. A person's unconscious identification with somebody they disliked or lost is the root cause of suicidal thoughts and behaviours, as well as acts of self-destruction.

As a potentially harmful and deeply involved character from whom it is difficult to escape, the abuser may become internalized in the minds of abused children. The situation becomes much more complex when the abuser is someone who was formerly liked and trusted, such as a parent. Because the abuser is the one the kid relies on for survival, it is understood that hostile and angry thoughts towards them are undesirable. When a youngster sees both the excellent thing and the negative conduct, it sets up a psychological conflict. As a result, the youngster internalizes the terrible feelings of bewilderment, anger, and fear, which enable them to cling to the idea that the thing they really need is good. The youngster may internalize the blame and begin to suffer self-harm as a kind of retaliation for whatever pleasure they may have felt and to relieve an underlying feeling of guilt.

Someone who has felt helpless and powerless due to abuse may turn to self-harm as means of reversing that feeling. When faced with an overwhelming emotion, a kid may resort to psychological defense mechanisms like dissociation and passive resistance to help them feel more in control of their lives. But these coping methods may end up being part of who you are, so when a child develops them, they may start to feel different and apart from other people, and they may be hesitant to form relationships in the future. Because the abuser becomes an integral part of the victim's

identity, the act of self-harm becomes an unconscious assault on both the perpetrator and the victim, even though the original intent was to reclaim control over the abuser (Yakeley & Burbridge-James, 2018).

A large number of patients who engage in self-harm or contemplate suicide are met with insensitive or even hostile treatment from healthcare providers. Patients may perceive a bias towards prioritising physical health over mental health. Many people feel that self-harm is an example of harmful conduct that should be condemned since it is considered as a way to intentionally seek attention. Someone who harms themselves may be trying to get someone's attention, but they are really just pleading for understanding and compassion since their actions speak louder than words in their unconscious interactions. Those moments right after a person has severely hurt themselves, or attempted suicide, may be a doorway into their subconscious where they may access the fantasies that drive their destructive thoughts and actions. After a patient has committed self-harm, their psychological barriers are down and they may be more aware of the thoughts, feelings, and triggers that led up to the act, making it more difficult to manage their acute risk. Thus, the clinician should take the time to evaluate the patient's mental health at this stage in order to determine the patient's ongoing risk and to deduce the patient's unconscious motives before they are concealed by their defences (Yakeley & Burbridge-James, 2018).

1.3. Suicide in Life and Literature

Incidents of suicide are deeply troubling. Defying sovereign control over life and death, it disrupts social order. When a person ends their own life prematurely, they not only reduce it to a metaphorical wreck but also shatter the very frameworks that society uses to make sense of the world. As Higonnet mentions, "Paradoxically, a suicide punctuates a particular life story and provokes further stories" (Higonnet, 2000, p. 241). The myths around suicide serve as platforms for societal reconstruction due to the fact that suicides are inherently elusive and difficult to comprehend. The deed prompts several ways of looking at it, which must be interpreted as stories in and of themselves. The indefensibility of suicide, particularly suicides involving women, casts doubt on the essential instruments of comparative critical analysis, such as character, tone, and most importantly genre, as stories are evaluated based on societal models of feasibility and worth. As a topic, the actor's suicide inscribed a story, and as an ambiguous object of interpretation, it prompts tales. An individual becomes both

the subject and the object of their own annihilation when they perform the gesture of self-destruction.

By posing the question, “What is the real reason for this suicide?” (Lester, 1988, p. 12), psychoanalytic thought has greatly impacted the examination of suicides. Investigators have traditionally compiled lists of the most prevalent situations that lead people to take their own lives. These lists usually include things like financial difficulties, legal issues, the end of a personal relationship, and so on. That most people in our culture who go through such things do not end their own lives is the biggest issue with it. In and of itself, these triggers are insufficient to explain suicide. Theoretically, half of all suicide victims suffer from severe depressive disorder; there are also gender disparities in this area. Major depressive disorder is more commonly diagnosed in women than males, however, men are more likely to commit suicide in total. Another well-known fact is that males are less likely to seek help for depression compared to women. Because of this, psychoanalysts began to investigate the suicide’s psychological and, may be, unconscious, intentions. Of course, the reasons behind every suicide are different. As an example, Sylvia Plath’s suicide, according to her own writings, appears to have certain Oedipal characteristics. Her feelings for her late father range from wrath to fondness in the poetry “Daddy.” She sees her marriage as a way to fill in the role of a father figure, and she views her suicide as a way to be reunited with her father.

As with issues regarding human behaviour more generally, psychoanalytic theory has clearly impacted the way we think about and approach suicide. Psychoanalytic thought has either stimulated or is pertinent to a great deal of study on suicide. Many persons who take their own lives appear to have had significant losses as children, which may take them more vulnerable to future tragedies. Unfortunately, there appears to be no correlation between suicidal ideation and aggressive or hostile behaviour, although there is a high correlation between sadness and suicide.

Eight percent of suicide deaths are caused by males, leading many to label suicide as a traditionally masculine act. Two to four times as many women as men engage in non-fatal suicidal behaviors, but women are more likely to attempt suicide. Even though these women probably did not kill themselves, the destructive tendencies they displayed reveal a lot about the depth and breadth of their mental illness. The real-world data may be grim, but there is a suicide rates among female literary characters

are abnormally high. The heroes of the master narrative are childless young people who are financially independent, but still reliant on males, and heterosexually passionate. Women who commit suicide do it spontaneously following a break up with a man, on their first try, and nearly invariably by hanging. They seldom seek aid, show suicidal sentiments or intentions, dread, resist, or plan their deaths (Wax, 2016).

The desire to break social norms about suicidality and despair is a common thread in women's literature. Several of these authors detailed their own plans for suicide in great detail, regardless of the outcome. In *The Bell Jar*, Sylvia Plath uniquely addresses this subject, writing, "It was as if what I wanted to kill wasn't in that skin or the thin blue pulse that jumped under my thumb, more secret, and a whole lot harder to get" (Plath, 2013, p. 156). The centuries-spanning suicide of iconic female characters like Juliet, Cleopatra, and Madame Bovary are prime examples of this literary cliché, which is almost exclusively the province of male authors. That begs the issue of who is authoring these stories and why they are unable to provide accurate depictions of women who have attempted suicide. We can observe a departure from this model when women develop their own narratives. Kate Chopin depicts suicide in *The Awakening* as a rebirth as her protagonist dives into the ocean. Chopin is not afraid to cause some controversy. Indeed, her work compels readers to face a fresh truth: a strong-willed woman who is unafraid to defy societal norms, reject the idealised concept of motherhood, and even commit moral transgressions in pursuit of Romantic enlightenment. These viewpoints point to a refreshingly candid and thought-provoking exploration of the female psyche that challenges conventional wisdom.

In literature Ophelia's death is one of the most controversial phenomena. Ophelia, the beloved of the Danish Prince Hamlet who goes insane and is drowned after he kills her father, is one of the most intriguing and, critically speaking, underappreciated heroines in Shakespeare's canon. As Drilling remarks, "For generations, Ophelia has captivated artists, critics, poets, and musicians alike, who revive her spirit within their creative works, allowing the mystery and tragedy of her death to live on" (Stilling, 2019, p. 1). Ophelia has a great deal of personal agency and fights against the expectations placed on women throughout the play. On account of her gender and age alone, the characters treat her with complete contempt and silence throughout the story. Her fate in the creek is the result of her constant miscommunication, which manifests itself in both verbal and nonverbal forms of

symbolism. The act of her drowning exemplifies the ultimate feminine retreat, giving up one's voice for the sake of joining with the feminine soul and becoming silent forever. The risk of pigeonholing people based on their gender and ignoring experiences of the oppressed is therefore symbolised by her demise. The number of commentators who view Ophelia as uninteresting, underdeveloped, and utilized solely for dramatic effect has ensured that her marginalization has gone beyond her literary demise.

Nobody talks to Ophelia; she is not even given the chance to say anything. This patriarchal view of women as passive recipients of masculine effort is exemplified by her forced receptiveness in interactions with men. Everyone in her life, from men to strong figures, claims her life as their own. For fear of repercussions from her family, she strives to conform to society's expectations of a subservient maiden, but in doing so, she gives up her autonomy and sense of self. As Stilling comments, "Water is an important component of feminine symbolism for Ophelia. Water is related to femininity in its relationship to feminine sensuality, reproductive capabilities, and its alignment with emotion" (Stilling, 2019, p. 8). Seeing Ophelia's death shown visually is deeply moving. Once again, the feminine symbols of flowers and mermaids are bestowed upon Ophelia as she is engulfed in the river's waters, a particularly feminine area. Even though she tried to get her voice heard and fight against her own demise, no one paid attention to her. Ophelia surrenders to her destiny despite her continued use of music and flowers as a means of self-explanation and resistance. By immersing herself in the ultimate emblem of femininity, she accepts and gives in to her inevitable femininity in this life-ending ritual. Ophelia exemplifies the perils of reducing people to mere ideas by ignoring their emotions, insights, hopes, and fears. Many feminine symbols, such as flowers and music, surround her as she dies, suggesting that she submits to her femininity in a final, deliberate act. The visually breath-taking symbolism of Ophelia's death serves to magnify the anguish and sadness of her loss, as the innocence of her demise intensifies the suffering. It is a disservice to Ophelia's character and an enormous miscalculation to see her in this way; otherwise, the play would be more accurately described as an emotionally manipulative tactic. Through a character-centered study, Ophelia is given new life inside the text, representing reductionist ideas on women. Ophelia's death serves as a poignant reminder that

beyond the gender-bound exterior of a person's body is a spirit and intellect yearning for acceptance and comprehension.



2. *THE AWAKENING*

Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* published in 1899, is about a young mother who goes through a period of profound transformation as she awakens to the limitations of her traditional social role and to her full potential as a woman. Many of the scenes in which Edna Pontellier seems fully awake symbolise metaphorical awakenings to new knowledge and sensory experiences. The accessibility of discourse is an essential component in comprehending the roots of Edna's struggle, as shown by the several ways in which Edna Pontellier conveys her discontent with her social position. Edna's efforts to recast herself socially through language, particularly in reference to the males in her social circle and in relation to female characters, highlight the essential role that language plays in establishing one's standing in society. As soon as Chopin's work appeared in print, it was met with fierce opposition and ultimately prohibited from distribution. Although the author passed away relatively unnoticed, *The Awakening* has since been rediscovered and has become an established classic in both American literature and feminist studies.

New Orleans and Grand Isle are two Louisiana locales where *The Awakening* takes place. Meeting the Creoles in Grand Isle and overhearing their open and honest discussions about sex and childbirth gave Edna her first ideas about freedom. These people symbolised to her the power to speak her mind without fear of judgement. The story encompasses the protagonist's quest for self-discovery. The protagonist, Edna Pontellier, is a 28-year-old married woman with two children. She and her husband, Léonce, a successful businessman, are leaving the cottage owned by Madame Lebrun, the proprietor of the Grand Isle resort where the Pontellier family spends their summers. Edna and Léonce are linked via a bad marriage. Léonce seems dissatisfied with Edna's duty as a mother to her two sons, and Léonce sees her as a different kind of mother at that time. At the story's conclusion, the reader is left wondering if Edna's suicide represents a triumph for freedom or a surrender and submission.

Edna's first described experience of waking is one that causes her to lose sleep and leaves her sobbing and irritated while also leaving her unable to explain her feelings to her cruel but caring spouse. Edna's journey begins in a position of helplessness, but it ends in defeat as she learns things about herself and the world via experimentation and exploration that eventually prove fruitless. While on vacation at

Grand Isle on the Gulf of Mexico, she experiences profound personal growth. Edna feels trapped by the constraints of marriage and motherhood. Edna comes from a day at the beach to find her well-respected businessman husband, Léonce treating her with an obvious lack of identity: “You are burnt beyond recognition” (Chopin, 2015, p. 3). Léonce says, treating her like a piece of property. By treating Edna like an object and trying to manipulate her, he reduces her to nothing more than a commodity in his hands. Edna and her husband argue as she begins to doubt her existence as a wife and mother. The traditional Creole society of Léonce Pontellier lacks a vocabulary for the reconfiguration of gender roles. In their marriage, Léonce has yet to find a way to explain the problem. The other characters don’t offer any useful discourse for addressing the concerns raised by Edna’s repositioning, and both characters keep repeating their own bewilderment in interactions with them.

After a long day, Léonce gets home to discover Edna lounging in the hammock instead of in bed. A series of interrogatory questions are posed by him. The grammar questions he asks her imply a power dynamic in their relationship. Instead of questions, his request for details seems like critiques or orders. He begins by asking, “What are you doing here, Edna? I thought I should find you in bed” (Chopin, 2015, p. 40). After that, he says, “Do you know it is past one o’clock?” (Chopin, 2015, p. 40) there is a pause, then he says, “Come on” asking more directly before giving an order. After asking, “Why don’t you come in?” (Chopin, 2015, p. 40) he says, “What folly is this?” (Chopin, 2015, p. 40), which is a more direct rebuke given as a question. Léonce’s irritation shows, and he is not as courteous with his demands as he once was. Nevertheless, he continues to exert his authority and demand respect. Defying his orders is Edna’s way of establishing her independence as a topic of her own story.

Edna discusses the possibility of a social repositioning with her boyfriend, Alcee Arobin. Edna declares, “One of these days...I’m going to pull myself together for a while and think- try to determine what character of woman I am” (Chopin, 2015, p. 97). The text assumes that people have a spiritual and social component, therefore her metaphor of “pulling herself together” is a reference to this duality. Edna’s metaphor suggests that she should merge her two identities so that her social status does not have to choose between her soul and her nature. Edna does not believe she has done anything wrong by breaking norms. Arobin tells her, “Why should you bother thinking about it when I can tell you what manner of woman you are” (Chopin, 2015,

p. 97). He already knows what kind of woman she is- the kind he likes to seduce. Edna's effort to become a whole person is hindered by her inability to engage in meaningful conversation or pursue her chosen career path. She has spent so much time believing the prevalent mythology of marriage and motherhood that she is unprepared to deal with the knowledge that she is unhappy in her social position. Edna is shocked to learn that her culture does not treat her as a whole person as she emerges from her animal existence as a wife and mother. There is no way for her to revert to her animal farm; she must keep developing or perish.

Edna displays defiance toward societal norms in a number of ways. She stomps on her wedding ring, stops hosting Tuesday nights at home, and downsizes to an apartment when she returns to New Orleans. She remembers her own wedding as an accident, a rebellion against the intentions of her father and sister, and she thus refuses to attend any more family weddings. She also experiences a maturation of her spiritual self. She expresses this change in her character as follows, "There was with her a feeling of having descended in the social scale, with a corresponding sense of having risen in the spiritual" (Chopin, 2015, p. 110). Even if her marriage had ended because Léonce abandoned her, none of these lesser sights would have caused her to take her own life. It appears that the deciding element is the mother's internal conflict about how to parent her children in light of the public disgrace she risks bringing upon them.

2.1. Struggle for Freedom

According to Christian teaching, suicide is morally wrong. Because human life is considered sacred and divinely owned, the basic argument is that it is sinful to take another person's life. In the eyes of contemporary medicine, suicidality is mostly a psychological problem, brought on by things like sadness, unavoidable pain or terror, or other pathologies of the mind. Rather than a genuine purpose to die, a suicide attempt is sometimes seen as a "cry for help" (Blazkova, 2009, p. 4) and attention, or as a means to communicate misery and the need to escape. The first issue over Edna's suicide is whether or not she intended to drown herself and commit suicide, or whether it was an accident caused by her overestimating her swimming abilities and her inability to return to the beach. When Edna visits Grand Isle, she inquires about dinner as follows: "what time will you have dinner?" "I'm very hungry; but don't get anything extra" (Chopin, 2015, p. 133).

This reveals a touch of ambiguity in the language of *The Awakening*. “there’s nothing fixed up yet, you see” (Chopin, 2015, p. 133). Before she leaves for the beach, she says, “I’ll give you my room; it’s the only place” (Chopin, 2015, p. 133), and the narrator assures us that, despite the trauma she has endured since Robert’s departure, the man whom Edna loves truly, she was “not thinking of these things as she walked to the beach” (Chopin, 2015, p. 134). On the other side, we learn that:

She had done all the thinking which was necessary after Robert went away, when she lay awake upon the sofa till morning. She had said over and over to herself: “To-day it is Arobin; to-morrow it will be someone else. It makes no difference to me; it doesn’t matter about Léonce Pontellier but Raoul and Etienne!” (Chopin, 2015, p. 134).

At this point, she appears to be taking into account Adele’s final pieces of advice and giving serious thought to how her choices would affect her children. Since she is already in a condition of extreme sadness before she even reaches Grand Isle, it is believed that the story provides additional support for her deliberate decision to intentionally end her life. She disrobes before going for a swim and enjoys the complete sense of liberation. Because she is persuaded that her husband and children had the arrogance to think they could “drag her into the soul’s slavery for the rest of her days” (Chopin, 2015, p. 134). She swims far away from shore without turning back. But she is clever enough to avoid capture. Suicide is her means of evading capture. Is her death the act of the last rebellion, the final step of her awakening, in which she acts according to her newly obtained freedom and independence against the convention, or is it a failure because she recognizes she has awakened to a world in which she has no place?

While Adele assumes she is incapable of doing more than giving her life for her children, Edna Pontellier addresses the essential subject of the women when she says, “I would give up the essential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children, but I wouldn’t give myself” (Chopin, 2015, p. 56). Edna realizes that becoming a mother requires her to sacrifice far more than she ever imagined, even her whole essence. It seems that she has had a profound sense of isolation as a result of Robert’s choice to leave her. She has only one solution to the terrible and unavoidable

constraints of society, and she feels completely alone in this environment. The tale centers on Edna's strange attraction to the ocean; it is one of the novel's primary symbols, representing freedom and escape. It is also a sign of rebirth due to its associations with purification.

As a little kid, Edna is scared of the water and only dabbles in it, "unless there was a hand nearby that might reach out and reassure her" (Chopin, 2015, p. 32). She takes her first step toward freedom by venturing out into the water on her own. She starts to panic when she sees how far she has gone by herself and worries that she may drown, but she eventually makes it back to safety. In this scene, Edna realizes her full potential and learns to master her body. The ocean gives her a sense of ownership over her body and a gradual awakening to her intellectual and emotional potential. As such, Chopin's description of the sea as "seductive, never ceasing, whispering, clamouring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander for a spell in abysses of solitude; to lose itself in mazes of inward contemplation" (Chopin, 2015, p. 16) is inextricably linked to the beginning of her awakening, as if the sea were a dear friend. When it talks, it "speaks to the soul. The sea's touch is sensual, wrapping the body in a gentle, close embrace" (Chopin, 2015, p.16). Upon regaining consciousness, Edna finds herself close to the shore, the exact same description of the ocean is repeated. Edna's quest for freedom and self-determination begins and ends with these words.

The sea means freedom to her, which is why she feels an overwhelming pull toward it. So, when Edna supposedly discusses her sleeping arrangements and the supper with Victor, who is the younger brother of Robert, she is only acting. She has already decided what she would do, but she acts normally in front of her husband and kids. She doesn't leave a note for her loved ones as most suicide victims do. There is a voice. "You know I have a notion to go down to the beach and take a good wash and even a little swim, before dinner" (Chopin, 2015, p. 133). This is how she explains her plan to go for a brief swim before dinner. Then it would appear as though she drowned accidentally, as it was common knowledge that she had just recently learned to swim.

There are various analogies throughout the narrative, but the sea stands out as the most central and important. Edna has a "certain ungovernable dread" (Chopin, 2015, p. 70) of the ocean when she first begins taking swimming lessons. However, after she finds her voice, she associates the water with feelings of peace and rejuvenation. At the end of the novel, a dejected Edna swims out to sea again in search

of the liberating sensation she first had when she learned to swim and made her life's first major shift. She comes to terms with the fact that at the conclusion of her lengthy journey, she is still alone despite her best efforts to satisfy her dreams of being completely self, despite having untethered herself from her husband and children, and despite being willing to bear the censure of the society. After spending time alone in the pigeon house and coming to terms with the fact that she cannot go through life without love, she becomes an outcast like Mademoiselle Reisz, Edna realizes that she is unable to completely liberate herself. Robert abandons her literally, and she eventually makes her way back to the ocean, the setting of her most memorable and joyful life events. In Edna's case, suicide is not a sign of defeat; rather, it is her ultimate act of defiance against the constraints imposed upon her by society. Death is the one aspect of her existence that she has full control over; at that instant, she is master of her own fate.

2.2. Chopin's Narrative Techniques in *The Awakening*

Although the novel's central topic is psychological, the protagonist mostly shows her identity via her actions, such as teaching herself to swim, skipping out on a church service, hosting a costly dinner party, packing up her belongings, and having an affair. In fact, considering the length of the novel, the storyline takes up a disproportionate amount of space compared to exposition on the place, the characters, and the moods they're experiencing. The narrative of Edna is emblematic of the age-old struggle between spirit and flesh, mind and body, unlimited potential, and finite reality. The story is portrayed via a mixture of lyrical and satirical tones, with elements such as lovers and women in black, pirate gold and modest repairs, passionate confessions, and painful accouchements.

Constantly shifting from one view point, feeling, or event to its opposite has real, material consequences. They give off the impression that you can't be bothered by the ups and downs of life. After a growing whirlwind of contrasting images, the author abruptly stops the narrative, but she doesn't explain her distancing. This surface tension between societal claims to identity, nature, and desire persists for the duration of the novel but dissipates without resolution in the last chapters. Chopin has not given us any indication of her stance. It's not like you have to decide between Edna and Mme. Ratignolle. Instead, we require the author's take on the infeasibility of a binary decision. From an aesthetic perspective, it makes little difference whether Chopin

purposefully hides her view of Edna's awakening. As Tompkins remarks, "*The Awakening* would have been in the top tier of turn-of-the-century fiction if this ambiguity had been resolved" (Tompkins, 1976, p. 33). However, even after learning why Chopin's tale falls short of brilliance, many unanswered issues remain. Considering *The Awakening* only in terms of aesthetic judgment appears to gloss over what is most provocative and vexing about the novel given its subject matter and the historical context in which it was written. The novel's unresolved finish leaves readers wondering why Dr. Mandelet's ghostly presence in the back drop seems to stand for some unknown idea of reconciliation. Mandelet, who may be a fictionalized version of Dr. Kolbenheyer who encouraged and supported Chopin in her career, may have been included to show that Edna had other options except suicide. However, the doctor is purposefully side-lined in the last act, leaving the audience to fumble for an explanation. Chopin may have been hesitant to project or envisage the life Edna would have in her freshly awakened state of mind, but it is doubtful that she was unwittingly punishing her heroine for contravening society's norms. Maybe she doesn't have any literary precedents to follow. It is more likely, however, that Chopin takes Edna's life because her continued existence would have required a choice between the competing ideals the narrator presents. Self-disclosure is out of her comfort zone as a writer. Chopin consequently opts for a theatrical climax, akin to the strategies she used to successfully conclude many of her short tales, in which the resolutions frequently seem to lie in the story's more serious underpinning.

There is still the alternative option. Chopin's topic was not only critical of human conduct and societal mores, but revolutionary in a socio-political sense, thanks to her status as a woman in a male-dominated culture. As Tompkins mentions: "Edna Pontellier's behavior before her death posed a greater threat to society than infidelity alone" (Tompkins, 1976, p. 35). Both the author and Edna saw suicide as an escape at the time. The dramatic manner in which Edna dies by drowning weakens the novel's collected social critique by suggesting that the heroine's rejection of life was purely romantic, directed against mortality itself, rather than against particular social structures. These factors don't improve *The Awakening* as a novel, but they do show how challenging it must have been for Chopin to give her ideas full literary embodiment given the subversive nature of her subject matter. When reading Chopin's literature, the realistic voice might give the impression that the author knows more

than she is letting on, that she understands that sometimes the best way to convey an understanding of the actual world is through understatement. Puzzled by the ambiguity of the finale, fans of Chopin's *The Awakening* can't help but wonder what, if anything, the author knew yet chose not to reveal. Whatever the reason for her reserve, it's probable that she was cognizant of it.

2.3. The Puzzling Interpretation of Suicide in *The Awakening*

The idea that Edna's suicide would finally put an end to her personality quirks is troubling. Edna's persona is utterly miserable in real life and in performing. She despises being a mother, her husband isn't the one for her. She is stuck in an unhappy marriage to someone who doesn't appreciate her. The only path Edna sees out of her current situation is death. By stating, "How strange and awful it seemed to stand naked under the sky!" (Chopin, 2015, p. 135).

Chopin ends the piece with a setting that focuses on rebirth. She "felt like some new-born creature, opening its eyes in a familiar world that it had never known" (Chopin, 2015, p. 135). Edna in her final scene, stands naked in a pool of water, symbolizing the complete cycle of life and death. But in fact, Edna is not gaining anything via her death. Chopin's protagonist does not reach a new beginning but rather the conclusion of her life in the material world, where she can no longer learn about herself or develop in any way. On her quest to discover who she is, Edna had an epiphany but doesn't do anything to act on it. Chopin does not have her make any changes to the future of women in society before she passes away. Given that Edna will never experience genuine joy in this life, her passing is a tragic event rather than a hopeful symbol of a fresh start.

Edna's suicide is problematic since it demonstrates a lack of bravery rather than heroic action. Chopin invents a companion for Edna who becomes a pivotal figure in her life and shapes many of her choices. Edna thinks in her mind: "How Mademoiselle Reisz would have laughed, perhaps sneered, if she knew! And you call yourself an artist! What pretensions, Madame! The artist must possess the courageous soul that dares and defies" (Chopin, 2015, p. 255). Edna thinks her buddy would want her to challenge herself and take bold action in pursuit of happiness. But even in death, she cannot put things to rest. Edna is completely motivated by her own interests. Her frustration at her perceived social constraints is understandable, but Chopin does not make her address these issues. She goes against the grain of her culture by prioritizing

her own beliefs over those of her peers, yet she does nothing to make a difference. When she passes on, everything will be as it was before she lived her life.

Edna tells us she is better off than other women of the period. She describes this as follows: “a little money of my own from my mother’s estate, which my father sends me by driblets. I won a large sum this winter on the races, and I am beginning to sell my sketches” (Chopin, 2015, p. 93). Few years after Chopin, Virginia Woolf has a famous quote saying: “A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (Woolf, 2015, p. 2), which is precisely what Edna possesses. So, it is supposed that Edna will be happy in the home she purchases around the corner from her husband’s property, where she will have plenty of room to pursue her passion in art and develop her mind. The fact that Edna already have nannies and nurses to take care of her children is something Woolf neglected to disclose. Edna, in Chopin’s telling, is one of the luckiest women in the world, therefore she has the opportunity to set an example by rebelling against her possessive husband. Leaving her husband for the man she loves and is passionate about, Robert, would have been scandalous, but she has the option. It would have taken courage to live as a social outcast if it meant finding happiness in the end. The suggestion of a prohibited deed for one of Chopin’s characters, however, may have been too risky. Finally, Edna’s suicide is troubling because, in a modern context when mental illness is widely discussed, her passing should be viewed as a terrible, avoidable loss. Throughout the narrative, Léonce Pontellier witnesses his wife’s distress. The physician first asks as to whether or not “she has recently been associating with a circle of pseudo-intellectual women- super-spiritual superior beings” (Chopin, 2015, p. 77). Chopin here alludes directly to the feminist movement, drawing a parallel between the marginalized feminist. Those who, like Edna, feel confined, lonely, and alone in their positions as women are disproportionately represented among those labeled as different and mentally unstable. And then Doctor Mandelet suggests, “Let your wife alone for a while” (Chopin, 2015, p. 78), rather than trying to speak through what’s wrong or getting a treatment like therapy, which is usual nowadays. We now know that leaving a loved one who is mentally ill or addicted to drugs is never recommended, but that a strong support network should be established to aid them through their struggles.

Edna’s death may be directly attributed to the community in which she was raised. She struggles under the weight of conventional morality in this patriarchal

culture. Ethical norms continuously call her attention to her role as a wife and mother. As a result, she has a hard time finding love, independence, and acceptance since she is always being instructed on what to do and what not to do. The ideal wife is a gentle, good, and obedient lady who is completely devoted to her husband. A mother's role is that of a selfless protector and devotee, ready to extend her wings for her offspring. The women of Grand Isle strive to uphold the established moral norms of a patriarchal culture by playing the ideal wife, and doting mother. At first, Edna seems like the perfect housewife of a successful businessman. She does as her spouse says and helps out around the house. Other women think her spouse, Léonce Pontellier, is the finest husband ever. While Léonce Pontellier is sympathetic to his wife, it is because she accepts his ultimate power and does her home obligations without question, that he remains the voice of a patriarchal society. He loves his wife, but not for herself, but for what she can provide for him financially. When Edna's son Raoul shows signs of having a fever, Léonce Pontellier accuses her of being a negligent mother. Edna cries herself to sleep because she is depressed for no apparent reason. Edna is seen as unfit by her husband and the community at large. However, Madame Ratignolle is a model wife and mother who adheres strictly to societal expectations. She reminds Edna of her motherly duties despite the fact that she is in a lot of pain after giving birth. This is how the conflict is reflected: "Think of the children; remember them" (Chopin, 2015, p. 129). But Edna knows that in order to conform to patriarchal society's expectations of women, she'll have to give up who she is as a person. She would rather give up everything she owns and die than give up her identity and her independence.

Edna starts to dislike her husband's commanding ways as she wakes up and realizes how he treats her. She takes off her wedding ring and repeatedly stamps on it with her bare feet, and she also won't go to the Tuesday business events unless she's given permission. Léonce Pontellier has no idea what has happened to Edna. Astounded and enraged, he reacts. He addresses Edna's father. Even the Colonel's son-in-law is given specific instructions on how to raise the Colonel's daughter. "Authority, coercion are what is needed.... The Colonel was perhaps unaware that he had coerced his own wife into her grave" (Chopin, 2015, p. 84). Edna has never felt fully understood by either her husband or her father. Pontellier, on the other hand, is focused on his professional and personal success. Edna leaves her husband and begins searching for genuine love outside of marriage in an effort to fill her emotional and

sexual hole. She initiates two extramarital relationships. One is the idealistic young man named Robert, whom she secretly adores. As for the other, Alcee Arobin wants to satiate her sexual appetite. However, it cannot be denied that extramarital relationships are doomed to fail by the standards of patriarchal culture. Edna's actions in search of genuine affection and independence are analogous to ingesting poison to satisfy thirst.

2.4. The Role of Genetics and Early Environment

Edna's desire to find love in her life may have been triggered by upbringing trauma. Her mother had a very short life. Edna was never nurtured by love due to her mother's neglect and her father's repressive adherence to conventional authority. The inability to self-regulate emotional pain can lead to the emergence of mental disturbance. Due to her developing pains, she needs attention more than before. She needs love as much as she needs air and water. As a result, she still seeks approval and adoration from Robert, despite having left her abusive spouse. For example, "She leaned over and kissed him.... The action was full of love and tenderness" (Chopin, 2015, p. 125). "I love you, she whispered, ...It was you who awoke me last summer out of a life-long, stupid dream" (Chopin, 2015, p. 127). The above quotations summarize Edna's feelings towards Robert. Edna awakes from her comatose state. She believes the power of love to be boundless, and as a result, she experiences feeling of vigor and emotion all throughout her body. Unfortunately, Robert, the fantasist lover, ultimately breaks up with Edna to protect their respective reputations. Now that she has given up on finding her one true love, she is consumed by loneliness and feels as though nothing in the world is worth her melancholic nostalgia. Edna is not ready to take on the role of a mother since she is still dealing with the effects of her own traumatic childhood experiences. "It seemed to free her of a responsibility which she had blindly assumed and for which fate had not fitted her" (Chopin, 2015, p. 22).

When Edna was young, the mother figure in her life was vacant. When she is an adult, Edna doesn't know how to define herself morally as a mother. She retains conflicted sentiments for her kids and goes through the agonizing process of shifting from ambivalence to outright rejection of her moral identity as a mother. She ends up thinking the kids are a source of more trouble than they are worth. Ultimately, Edna's perspective on her own children shifts for the better. She develops such a hatred for them as described in the narrative: "The children appeared before her like antagonists who had overcome her; who had overpowered and sought to drag her into the soul's

slavery for the rest of her days. But she knew a way to elude them” (Chopin, 2015, p. 134) here; that would mean certain death. Edna must make the ultimate sacrifice in order to shed her mother’s persona.

2.5. Edna’s Own Self-Contradiction

Edna, the protagonist, goes through a transformation that is important to the plot. To be sure, Edna is a courageous fighter. She’s on a quest to figure out what it means to be a unique human being. She has an innate sense of curiosity and adventure, and she is not afraid to question the norms of society. Despite her young age, Edna has a spirit of defiance. She refuses to pray; so, she bolts for the open plains. Edna shares her sister’s opposition to marriage when they reach adulthood. Despite opposition from her family, she is set on getting married to Léonce Pontellier, a devout Catholic. Edna does not shrink from danger. She gives swimming a shot for the first time and has her sights set on exploring a previously undiscovered location. She starts a profession as a painter, following her heart and her passion. She decides to take her own life in the vast, unknown ocean. Like a caged canary, all she wants to do is get out. Edna wants to be the master of her own fate more than anything. Yet, she is delicate and easily hurt. “Woman, my dear friend, is a very peculiar and delicate organism—a sensitive and highly organized woman, such as I know Mrs. Pontellier to be, is especially peculiar” states Dr. Mandelet (Chopin, 2015, p. 78).

Because of her mental weakness, Edna can not be a powerful woman. Because of her contradictory and complicated personality, Edna has a hard time establishing herself. “At a very early period, she had apprehended instinctively the dual life—that outward existence which conforms, the inward life which questions” (Chopin, 2015, p. 16). She has the courage to quit her miserable marriage and the mundane routine of secular life, despite the judgment of others. Besides thinking that Madame Ratignolle’s marital life is monotonous and pointless, she also considers the wedding ceremony to be one of the most tragic events that could ever take place.

Furthermore, the sight of the gory spectacle of the parturition itself causes her great distress. However, she is hesitant to live as a recluse and dedicate herself solely to painting like Mademoiselle Reisz did. Therefore, her spiritual environment is a purgatory invaded by dread, anxiety, and boredom due to the continual inner conflicts and difficulties she faces.

As Hildebrand remarks, “Through dying, Edna, frustrated that unmitigated rights elude her in life, lays ultimate claim to masculine privilege” (Hildebrand, 2016, p. 206). The realisation that she would never have the same level of freedom and independence enjoyed by males of her racial and socioeconomic class leads her to make the tragic choice to end her own life. Dying gives Edna a last, firm claim to the manly right to solitude, to the (literally dead end) life of art that she had envisioned for herself. Edna is not a feminist hero at all; rather, she serves as a warning against the dangers of believing in a notion of total personal freedom, which includes creative freedom, but is fundamentally determined by men and limits human existence.



3. *THE BELL JAR*

3.1. Sylvia Plath's Mental Problems

College professor Otto Plath and his student Aurelia Schober had a daughter, Sylvia, in Boston in 1932. Plath's parents were German immigrants. The poet grew raised on the beach, but all changed in 1940 when her father passed away. Her authoritarian father was the subject of some of her most striking poems, such as the famous "Daddy", which deals with her complex emotions of betrayal upon his death. Sylvia Plath was an exceptionally talented student who, at the tender age of seventeen, had her work published in major periodicals and had already received many accolades. Winning a Mademoiselle fiction contest one year and earning a distinguished guest editorship of the magazine the next summer, she continued to flourish while attending Smith College on scholarship.

The signs of the clinical depression that would eventually claim Plath's life, first appeared during her time as an undergraduate. During Plath's lifetime, there were no truly effective treatments for bipolar disorder, also called manic depression, which she eloquently describes. Plath tried to end her life by eating sleeping pills in August of 1953 when she was twenty years old. After surviving the attempt, she was sent to the hospital to undergo electro-shock therapy. Later on, in her lone published novel, *The Bell Jar*, she fictionalized her experiences of collapse and rehabilitation.

After Plath was well, she went back to Smith to finish her degree. While pursuing her Fulbright scholarship at England's Cambridge University, she crossed paths with poet Ted Hughes. Their 1956 wedding ceremony took place. Both *The Bell Jar* and "The Colossus" a collection of poems, were published by Plath during her life time. Unfortunately, Plath was left with two little children after her marriage ended in 1962. Following an intensive period of creation that resulted in the poetry in Ariel, she took her own life by inhaling gas from a cooking oven (Gill, 2006).

On every front, her opinions are unwaveringly strong and daring. Almost all of her works of literature are autobiographical, detailing her personal triumphs and tragedies. Accordingly, reviewers' prevailing perception of Plath's work is that it is autobiographical. Plath depicts the depressing reality of American women in the 1950s, filtered through her own experiences, in her publications. Her masterwork in feminist literature, *The Bell Jar* tells the narrative of a young girl who, like many girls

of the 1950's, feels exploited by the male-dominated social system and an innocent child who finds herself trapped in the social bell jar. She decides to victimize herself in order to break free of this oppression. Suffering from despair and a sense of social repression, she develops a dual personality and a mental chasm that fuels internal and external conflicts. The novel sheds light on the woman's struggle against societal norms and expectations. A woman's defiance in the face of suffocation is the central theme of the tale. A woman's struggle for liberation from the shackles of an airless existence is thus chronicled in the book (Imtiaz et al., 2019).

3.2. Struggle with Patriarchal Norms and Mental Breakdown in *The Bell Jar*

Esther Greenwood, the heroine of *The Bell Jar*, is a young woman struggling to realize her dreams as a writer in a patriarchal culture that puts obstacles in her way. Esther has a mental breakdown and makes many suicidal attempts. The story of a young woman's fight for independence in a patriarchal culture is at the heart of *The Bell Jar*, a feminist work in many respects. Esther's loved ones attempt to repress her and keep her firmly rooted in conventional beliefs and traditions, even though they know she has literary and poetic gifts. Everyone from men to society to her own mother is against her pursuing a career in this field. For instance, Esther's mother persists in trying to get her study shorthand, but Esther consistently rejects her, stating, "When I tried to picture myself in some job, briskly jotting down line after line of shorthand, my mind went blank" (Plath, 2013, p. 117). Contrary to popular belief, Esther defies the societal norms and expectations of her day. She explains her feelings as follows:

.....The last thing I wanted was 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 colored arrows from a forth of July rocket (Plath, 2013, p. 87).

After winning a contest for a fashion magazine with her essays, tales, poetry, and fashion blurbs, the novel's protagonist, Esther, dreams of living in a world where fashion is king. For one month, she works in New York. Esther cannot escape society's norms and expectations, but neither can the other females. She assists a "other girl with wealthy parents who wanted to be sure their daughters would be living where men could not get at them and deceive them" (Plath, 2013, p. 4). Esther wishes she could

live like her bloody magazine buddies. At one end of the spectrum, Esther aspires to lead the glamorous city life modelled after that of her cynical and bewildered fashion magazine acquaintance “Doreen”, who personifies an independent and fully formed woman’s sexuality. Alternatively, she appears to be professionally unsure of herself. While Esther considers completing a thesis on Finnegans Wake, she is caught between the deep thoughts happening at the university and the superficial fashion pieces she writes for the magazine. Esther hates it when her goals, objectives, and self-concepts are at odds with one another. At the end of the book, she decides that the agony is too much and takes the ultimate suicide route.

To all appearances, Esther is defiant; she does not enjoy being boxed in by accepted societal standards and beliefs. The fact that not even her mother makes an effort to comprehend her interests reveals her defiant personality. In addition to shorthand, cooking, and dance, her mother says she should study sewing. But Esther does not share that vision; she opts out of following in the footsteps of conventional women. To her, it seems her life is not meant to follow the path of ordinary women. In the quotation below she describes how she thinks:

... I hated the idea of serving men in any way I wanted to dictate my own thrilling letters. Besides, those little shorthand symbols in the book my mother showed me seemed just as bad as lets equal time and lets equal the total distance (Plath, 2013, p. 79).

Esther aspires to have a life defined by her career and her independence. She is in a tricky spot, though, because of her boundless energy and excitement for adjusting her professional career. What to do with her life professionally was a mystery to her. In her words:

....I saw my life branching out before me like the green fig-tree in the story. From the tip of every branch, like a fat purple fig, a wonderful future beckoned and winked. One fig was a husband and a happy home and children, and another fig was a famous poet and another fig was a brilliant professor, and another fig was EevGee, the amazing editor, and another fig was Europe and Africa and South America [...] above these figs were many more figs I couldn’t quite make out (Plath, 2013, p. 80).

In the words quoted above, the novel's central theme -the protagonist's struggles with future fear and her own and others' sexuality- begins to take shape. According to Plath, the societal issues around gender roles are the root cause of Esther's future fears. She does not have an issue with her chosen profession failing; rather, she appears to be struggling to reconcile the traditional gender norms in her community with her ambitions for professional success. As a successful career woman, Esther is more concerned about failing to complete her daily tasks than she is with contemplating the bigger picture. The fact that she has too many choices but is still unhappy with them is really her issue. Uncertainty and dread about her future have always plagued her. She sinks into a terrible sadness as a result of her anxiety of an uncertain and disorienting future. Finally driven insane by her uncertainty, she sits paralysed. Her breakdown, insanity, and suicide were all caused by the horrifying and inhumane treatment she received in the hospital. Esther views her shock treatment as retribution for a heinous act that she did not commit; she does not perceive it as a kind of healing. She describes the shock treatment vividly as follows:

..... Then something bent down and took hold of me and shook me like the end of the world. Whee-ee-ee-ee-ee, it shriled, through an air crackling with blue light, and with each flash a great jolt drubbed me till I thought my bones would break and the sap fly out of me like a split plant. I wondered what terrible thing it was that I had done (Plath, 2013, p. 152).

She runs into her acquaintance Joan, who was formerly Buddy Willard's girlfriend, on the way to her physical therapy appointment. They have a history of suicidal thoughts and behaviors, and both have mental health issues. Two days down the road, Joan hangs herself. When Esther hears about this, she is shocked. As she nears Joan's burial, she feels her own death approaching. She adds "during the simple funeral service I wondered what I thought I was burying" (Plath, 2013, p. 232). Depression brought on by a lack of professional success as a result of male dominance and societal norms and expectations converts the life of another wise vibrant, adaptable, and gifted woman into a dark cavern. Everyone, even her mother, who wants her to continue the family tradition, is always trying to dissuade her from doing so.

The Bell Jar, the bildungsroman, or rite of passage for girls, addresses the stifling nature of being a girl in the 1950s. With its strong female lead, it captures the essence of the 60s nicely. Written in the same year as *The Bell Jar*, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* is another comparable look back at the 1950s; it's in a different genre, but it deals with very similar issues. An important part of the second wave of feminism, Friedan's writings addressed issues faced by American women in the 1950s and were highly regarded. Besides depicting women's struggles in the 1950s, both Plath and Friedan discuss how these issues drove women to mental hospitals, where male doctors failed to grasp the true nature of their crisis. According to Friedan and Plath, many middle-class women found the 1950s oppressive due to the return to the kitchen, the migration to the suburbs, and the change to consumerism. In *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Friedan famously referred to this issue from the 1950s as the problem "that has no name" (Uslu, 2021, p. 4). After gaining education and independence in the public realm by working, women found themselves confined to the home, deprived of the freedoms they had previously enjoyed. Friedan said that middle-class women were increasingly seeking solace in psychiatric clinics as a result of their dissatisfaction with life.

It would be fair to say that Esther was typical of the many women of her time who sought solace in psychiatric clinics, which served as conduits for prevailing patriarchal and conformist ideology. Fear of reliving a previous conflict and the continuing cold conflict with Russia contributed to the stifling political climate of the 1950s, which is echoed in *The Bell Jar*. The dread was further fueled by McCarthyism and the notorious communist witch hunt that McCarthy led across the nation. The Rosenberg couples were infamously hunted down for allegedly passing on nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union. In the summer of 1953, the Rosenbergs were electrocuted since their guilt could not be confirmed. This occurred as "the witch-hunts whipped up a frenzy of terror across American society" (Uslu, 2021, p. 4) and the trial was considered questionable.

This happening sets the stage for *The Bell Jar*, and the electrocution of the Rosenbergs serves to hint at Esther's anxieties in a culture that punishes deviation from the norm harshly. Beginning with the electrocution of the Rosenbergs, the novel foreshadows Esther's own electro-shock treatment by male physicians. She describes her trepidation and horror as follows:

It was a queer, sultry summer, the summer they electrocuted the Rosenbergs, and I didn't know what I was doing in New YorkI couldn't help wondering what it would be like, being burned alive all along your nerves. I thought it must be the worst thing in the world (Plath, 2013, p.1).

Through connecting Esther's experiences in psychiatric hospitals to the broader political climate of the 1950s, Plath emphasizes how the political inadvertently becomes personal as it affects various institutions, all of which encourage women to adhere to and embrace traditional gender norms. A society that requires women to execute traditional gender roles is something that Plath establishes early on in the novel, and Esther is at conflict with this. Esther stands out from the other females in some way, and her statement about being unhappy with an unnamed aspect brings to mind Friedan's "problem that has no name" (Uslu, 2021, p. 4). Girls her age "with wealthy parents who wanted to be sure their daughters would be living where men couldn't get at them and deceive them" (Plath, 2013, p. 4) are the guests at the New York hotel where she stays. These females serve as "secretaries to executives and junior executives and simply hanging around in New York waiting to get married to some career man or other" (Plath, 2013, p. 4). When it comes to these females, Esther just does not get along. According to her, they appear "bored". The opinion that "girls like that" (Plath, 2013, p. 4) is sickening. The girls are the ones who propagate patriarchal doctrine and have internalized it; therefore, Esther is right to be critical of them. This ideology tells women to stay at home and be mothers and spouses. But Esther is a girl who is on the lookout for her own potential. The seemingly endless possibilities, though, like becoming a poet, a lecturer, or an editor, leave her bewildered. She considered herself "dropping clean out of race" (Plath, 2013, p. 44) after witnessing the competitive environment in New York; up until that point in her life, she had been a scholarship-and straight- A student.

Esther has not left New England for nineteen years; her first visit to New York is a result of a scholarship she received to serve as a guest editor for a magazine. Rather than bringing Esther joy, her time in New York highlights alternative paths she may take as she builds her identity. While in New York, she has a resurgence of her post-psychotic crisis dissatisfaction with the gap between her desires and societal standards. As a result of her unrealistic desires and the oppressive social climate of the 1950s,

Esther becomes despairing. Esther is left in a position of crisis by these possibilities, as described in the novel's fig tree metaphor. Having "a husband and a happy home and children" or becoming "a famous poet" or "a brilliant professor" (Plath, 2013, p. 80) are among these. Because she can't pick just one, we are not letting her have them all. She describes her mind as follows:

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, 2013, p. 80).

To summarize her identity dilemma, Esther says she is "Interested in everything" (Plath, 2013, p. 29), but she also has no idea what she wants to achieve with her life. She has found a solution to her predicament in a culture that expects her to wed Buddy Willard, a medical student, and the ideal husband material. The idea of marriage and domestication is completely repugnant to Esther. She has no interest in being "in demand among all the up-an-coming young men" (Plath, 2013, p. 23) since she hates cooking and doesn't want to learn shorthand. The 1950s accepts the primacy of the woman's role as wife and mother and assumes that other aspects of women's lives must be fitted into that. Esther vehemently disagrees with these gender stereotypes, stating that she "hate[s] the idea of serving men in any way" and "want[s] to dictate [her] own thrilling letters" (Plath, 2013, p.79). Some have speculated that her desire to break free of patriarchal society's stifling expectations is what drives her to pursue poetry. Esther initially displays a lack of maturity when it comes to matters of marriage and sexuality, similar to other heroines in the bildungsroman genre. She still does not seem to understand the double standards in society in the parts where she describes her connection with Buddy Willard. After progressively realising her boyfriend is a "hypocrite" (Plath, 2013, p. 54), her views on sexuality begin to shift. The double standard that she observes educates females to be virgins while boys are allowed to do everything they want. According to the results, Buddy is just like everyone else. He has sexual relations with other women despite his expectations that Esther should stay a virgin and that she should be experienced, both of which are

indicative of contradictory expectations of women. However, Esther is commanded to keep her virginity until she marries.

It is highly valued to remain “clean” (Plath, 2013, p. 84), according to figures like her mother and Buddy’s mother, who are representing the patriarchal discourse. One day while Esther is a college student, she gets a letter from her mother. In the letter, she reads an article titled “Defence of Chastity” (Plath, 2013, p. 84) that cautions females about the risk of becoming pregnant. There is no “one hundred percent sure way not to have a baby” (Plath, 2013, p. 84), the paper says, therefore it is “better be safe than sorry” (Plath, 2013, p. 85) for girls to not have children. Realising about Buddy’s interactions with other women prompt Esther to come up with her own definition of sexuality. In her mind, she is no longer “the place an arrow shoots off from,” but rather “the arrow into the future” (Plath, 2013, p. 87). She hopes for “change and excitement and to shoot [herself] off in all directions...like the coloured arrows from a Fourth of July rocket” (Plath, 2013, p. 87).

It is believed that the challenges encountered by the community-minded, morally upright person seeking meaning and self-transcendence are emphasized in *The Bell Jar*. As Pascual-Garrido mentions, “Her cynical and painful account refutes the utopian conception of community and, her isolation inside a bell jar, reveals its absence” (Pascual-Garrido, 2017, p. 75). Without a doubt, the stifling environment and its devastating impact on the morally upright individual of the 1950s is conjured up by *The Bell Jar*. Esther Greenwood is introduced in New York, where she has been awarded the position of guest editor at a woman’s magazine. She slowly sinks into despair after her brief but vivid encounter in New York. No matter how many seemingly fulfilling life goals she pursues, she never appears to be able to form meaningful relationships with anybody. Upon her comes home, the symptoms of her sadness become readily apparent. The narrator goes into depth about her mental breakdown, her suicide attempt, and her subsequent institutionalization in a mental hospital. The story concludes with Esther’s release from the institution and subsequent reintegration into society, suggesting that she has made a full recovery from her mental illness following a few months of isolation and ECT.

Contrary to what some writers have said, the novel is really about more than only the challenges faced by ambitious women in the 1950s or by unmarried women navigating the rites of passage into adulthood. Rather, Plath recognizes that the idea in

an operating community is fuelled by the ubiquitous vocabulary of deceit in American society by presenting what appears to be a “distorted” (Pascual-Garrido, 2017, p. 77) view of the world. If one believes in such a society, it is because they think it’s possible to reach nirvana or complete oneness with all living things. Esther leaves behind a desire for belonging and takes on an attitude of mistrust and finding fault as circumstances progress. After spending so much time alone in *The Bell Jar*, she begins to make fun of other people’s optimism and her own dishonest attempts at connecting with them. Plath shows the difficulty of joining an operational community-the one that would ostensibly provide the subject a feeling of personal satisfaction and communal transcendence- through Esther Greenwood’s anti-heroic story.

The patriarchal ideology of the 1950s places limits on women, and the fact that the narrative of mental degradation and apparent recovery is told from a female point of view clearly indicates this. As Pascual-Garrido points out, “Despite the suggestion of recovery at the end of the novel, there is no certainty as to whether Esther’s feeling of estrangement is completely overcome, or, indeed, that it could ever be” (Pascual-Garrido, 2017, p. 78). While there isn’t yet a perfect community where all living things merge into one, *The Bell Jar* quietly suggests strategies to live with the “inoperative community” (Pascual-Garrido, 2017, p. 78) that exists instead. The primary focus of Esther, a talented guest editor, upon her arrival in New York is to assimilate, to meet the standards set out by society for becoming a respectable citizen. But she is also striving to find her own identity while she mimics and rejects several roles: Pollyanna from Betsy, man-eater from Doreen, dedicated scholar from Jay Cee, accomplished writer from Philomena Guinea, and model mother from Dodo Conway. By “trying out” (Pascual-Garrido, 2017, p. 78) several persons, such as Elly Higginbottom or a fictional heroine called Elaine, she tries to integrate into the group, but it just makes her feel more alienated.

Plath clearly raises doubts about the old concept of community in this work, which she defines as the coming together of individuals’ egos. As Pascual-Garrido mentions, “The bitter consciousness of the increasing remoteness of such a community” (Pascual-Garrido, 2017, p. 79) is reinforced when she has Esther go through a process of self-fragmentation leading to profound despair and isolation. Plath blatantly criticizes the “rhetoric of deception” (Pascual-Garrido, 2017, p. 79) that rules contemporary society, especially the American ethos of the 1950s, by

mentioning the fallacy of community, which is one of the most prevalent “inherited myths” (Pascual-Garrido, 2017, p. 79) in Western culture. As Pascual-Garrido remarks, “. . .the experience imparted by the narrator in *The Bell Jar* highlights the fact that we live through shattered myths” (Pascual-Garrido, 2017, p. 79). In fact, *The Bell Jar* delves into two crucial falsehoods, the demise of which Esther Greenwood feels as a crushing reality. First, there is the myth of communion with others, which is the belief that via good communication, one might reach a state of communication, or fusion, with other creatures and, as a result, experience a transcendental sense of immanence within society.

The Bell Jar presents Esther with a challenge to the idea that she may join an operational society that will satisfy her need for permanency and meaningful belonging. Most people—including her mother, the girls she meets in New York, the more mature women she encounters, the insensitive Dr. Gordon, her boyfriend Buddy Willard, and the other male figures she tests out as potential matches—remain distant and unsympathetic due to her warped view of social bonds and her critical attitude towards sanctioned behavior, models, and norms. Esther Greenwood’s inability to openly express her sentiments of isolation and despair to others stems from her awareness of living in a confusing society that upholds a multitude of false ideas and twisted concepts that everyone embraces. Next, the idea that one’s self is an independent and self-contained entity is debunked throughout the novel. Esther confronts issues of self-autonomy and unity of being via her attempts to establish a consistent identity while attempting to connect with and interact with each other personalities.

Plath may have been able to see through the American cultural ideal of Independence and self-sufficiency, according to an analysis of the “separate self” (Pascual-Garrido, 2017, p. 80) metaphors in *The Bell Jar*. Pascual-Garrido notes that Plath eloquently describes the “destructive effects of our cultural commitment to that model” (Pascual-Garrido, 2017, p. 80) and uses Esther’s suicide wish and mental decline as examples. Symbolic of the weight that this prevailing self-model has placed on modern Western civilizations, and American culture in particular, are the numerous depictions of detachment and disintegration in *The Bell Jar*. Esther’s perplexed perspective on life calls into doubt long-held cultural beliefs, such as the validity of a cohesive group with common ideals and objectives and the independence and stability

of an individual's sense of identity. As Pascual-Garrido remarks, "Most critics have read Esther's ability to retell her experience as a clear symptom of her reintegration into society" (Pascual-Garrido, 2017, p. 80). They have largely assumed that the significance of her escape from the mental institution and her decision to comply with marital and motherhood rites, which she had previously rejected, suggests that Esther has returned to her normal self. Nevertheless, Plath is actually exposing a vocabulary of deceit that leads us to stray by suggesting that true connection with people and awareness of one another are attainable, enabling the solitary individual to experience contentment and belonging.

As a result, we should see *The Bell Jar* as an indicator of a sick culture that has propagated ideas on the limited role of the individual in society. *The Bell Jar* echoes the modern and post-modern experience of profound loneliness and dissolution of self-identity by expressing the anguish of incomplete, fractured, and individual beings confronted with an ineffective community.

Esther is unable to understand her feminine process and transform it into coherent speech because she has never been taught the language of her own gender. "I don't know just why my successful evasion of chemistry should have floated into my mind there in Jay Cee's office" (Plath, 2013, p. 39), she says. The reason that Jay Cee/college memory sequence pops into her head at the Ladies' Day luncheon is also a mystery to her. Finally, even though Esther considers her evasions to be "successful" (Plath, 2013, p. 32), she is really led into another fraudulent retreat since each time she tries to leave, it is a "lie" (Plath, 2013, p. 35). Repetition of the escape routes leads nowhere; they are carbon copies of one other, and as a result, neither insight nor self-knowledge are produced. Esther should have found the language and identity she craves in female-dominated environments like Ladies' Day, Jay Cee, and her institution. However, by either letting masculine language infect and control feminine expression or by completely giving up on expression, each has diminished their power. So, all of these add up to the self-destructive distortion that silences Esther's fundamental instincts while they beg for aid.

If Esther wants to have a meaningful conversation with the world, she looks to Jay Cee for a feminine language. All of her issues, she thinks, would be resolved if Jay Cee were her mother. Yet Jay Cee is only a new facet of the subjugation of women. In her feminine appearance, she embodies the masculine "languages" she says, but she

can only alter them. By herself, she does not constitute a linguistic source. Physics and chemistry pose a threat to Esther because, like her biological mother, the language taught by Jay Cee is a male-oriented shorthand that diminishes her to the same shortened, fragmented self-concept. “I hated the idea of serving men in any way” (Plath, 2013, p. 79) she explains. “I wanted to dictate my own thrilling letters. Besides, those little shorthand symbols in the book my mother showed me seemed just as bad as lett equal time and lets equal the total distance” (Plath, 2013, p. 79). Following that: “The only thing was, when I tried to picture myself in some job, briskly jotting down line after line of shorthand my mind went blank...as I sat there and watched, the white chalk curlicues blurred into senselessness” (Plath, 2013, p. 128).

The only thing taught on Ladies’ Day is how to serve men, rather than how to express oneself. The following hospital scenes and the results of Esther’s insulin treatment highlight the grotesqueness of overeating and its connection to female sexuality; sitting at a table that represents the stifling excess of female domesticity; Esther eats herself to death. Because of her excessive eating, Esther experiences a life-threatening sickness just before she attempts suicide. The final act of her suicide is characterized by complete quiet. She only makes a spoof of botanical richness with her lips, a “fuzzy pink-lips shape [that] bloomed right in the middle of [her] serviette like a tiny heart” (Plath, 2013, p. 58), symbolizing the absence of speech but the presence of silence. They reopen, and all that comes out of her mouth is the poison’s after effect, which are admirably concealed in the “bland pink-mottled claw-meat” (Plath, 2013, p. 50); Dr. Gordon’s words also hide a “claw” (Plath, 2013, p. 137). So, it is not unexpected that Esther’s suicide attempt stems from a literary crisis—a face-off with the male author’s failure to capture women’s inner selves or to serve as vehicles for such expression. Since literature can converse in both male and female languages, it cannot be relied upon as a perfect solution for women’s issues.

Suicide is not an aesthetic that can convey or represent women. In contrast to Esther’s destructive, intuitive retreats, Plath’s textual retreat throughout the college/ Jay Cee/ Ladies’s Day sequence and the entire work exemplifies a feminist discourse marked by both retreat and recuperation. Meanwhile, the text re-opens dialogue with the reality it is fleeing from while also with drawing, remembering, digressing, and engulfing scenes inside scenes and stories within stories.

In the first half of the novel, we hear two stories: Buddy Willard's and Esther's summer in New York. There is no mathematical equality between these two narratives. Imagistic mini-narratives placed within the matrix generated by the other similarly condensed story fragment express each story as they circle each other. A dynamic antithesis to Esther's deadly inward spiralling is inaugurated by this interaction of tales in which frame and emphasis, cause and effect, the parts of scientific formulation and equation, move location and displace each other. Instead of being a potentially fatal retreat-just like Esther's increasingly desperate and dangerous escapes-it becomes a new, independent, and dominant context-a story in its own right, expanding outward instead of inward-as it makes its way to the center of consciousness. Because symbolism is inherently masculine, Plath's work does not contain any simple formulae or symbolic abbreviations. Instead, there are intricate patterns, schematics, and cycles that give each other life; this process goes beyond only fictional writing and into author biographies.

By publicly severing ties with Joan and then cutting off the lesbian option with Joan's death, Plath rejects both the lesbian alternative and the prospect of androgyny. As certain as the chemical, botanical, and physical foundations of the cosmos are, so too is the sexist language an element of women's literary and cultural legacy. However, a woman may and should also wed herself to her feminine identity at the same time as she marries into a male-dominated society. Being ret(h)readed is what Plath means by this. As Dr. Nolan's thread-like touch entices Esther inside the chamber, she unearths the enchanted thread that connects her to the world and her inner creativity. Threads can go in any direction. It comes from the medical professionals-male and female-who teach her about health and whose terms, jargon, and knowledge she must absorb. However, it is also a thread that originates from within; the thread takes form as she looks into the mirror. This path leaves the privacy of one's own chamber and enters a room that has always been, and probably always will be, predominantly male. The umbilicus is a potent thread that may absorb the masculine energy, transform it within the female's internal region into a vibrant, throbbing life, and then carry that unique expression of self out into the world. Feminist speech follows this line of thought, adapting the language and art of the past into a feminist one while inevitably drawing on the masculine language that came before it (Budick, 1987).

3.3. Maternal Crisis

Esther could be treated as a substitute for Plath because as the author Plath did, Esther is searching for her identity while also learning about life philosophy and the art of living. Similar to Esther in the book, Plath faced discrimination and rejection in the 1950s due to her femininity. Since Plath struggled with her own severe depression and mental breakdown, the book could be regarded as an autobiography that offers the reader a glimpse into the author's own life. The novel provides readers with a biographical account of Plath's life as well as the uncanny impression that all of the thoughts, feelings, and emotions she expresses via Esther are indeed her own. To put it briefly, Plath's life experiences and the protagonist's decline into mental illness are similar. I thus felt that discussing Sylvia Plath's mother problem would be crucial.

Slowly but surely, Plath seemed to have been swept away by this maternal dilemma. In April of 1960, her daughter entered this world. It was April of 1961 when she was well into penning *The Bell Jar*. Following a miscarriage and an appendectomy in 1961, she became pregnant once more. She started riding horses and raising bees in the summer of 1961 and had a life that she called "points of satisfaction separated by large vacancies" (Schwartz & Bollas, 1976, p. 23). She had a son and a daughter, just like her mother, after the birth of her son in January 1962. Her son's birth seems to have given her a new sense of self-assurance as well as a fresh outlet for her anger. She said that a car accident she was in in June 1962 was a suicide attempt, and she had high fevers and an illness that summer. She uprooted her family from Devon and settled in London in the autumn of 1962, renting a home that had been Yeats's. She likely felt abandoned by Ted Hughes and the move was a reaction to a triangle scenario. *The Bell Jar* came out in January of 1963. She placed her children's breakfast supplies in their room, and then committed suicide by putting her head in an oven with the gas jets turned on on the early morning of February 11, 1963. The woman had passed away.

As Schwartz remarks, "We suggest that the precipitating factor in her final self-destructive journey was her feeling of having been abandoned by Ted Hughes" (Schwartz & Bollas, 1976, p. 90). His departure seemed to herald the end of the secure marriage she has enjoyed for so long. Furthermore, we argue that her internal conflict over a mother she saw as a red stigmata—a Medusa—was an onto the genetic element. She became overwhelmed with the dread that she was the destructive mother when her son was born, despite the fact that her obsessional defenses, which appeared to be more

effective than before, did not stop her. Because her anger and feelings of abandonment had coincided, she was unable to fulfill the horrific role of motherhood. In her role as a mother, she could no longer separate her nurturing self from her brilliant inner world, making it impossible to meet her child's needs while simultaneously addressing her own. The separation manifested itself for a few months as her attending to her children in times of crisis while she faced her psychotic reality of murder on her own. We believe that her real suicide was an effort to end the inner suffering she was unable to express herself without further exacerbating her misery.

Do we really have to say that her mind's fluidity and wonderful wordplay led to her self-destructive performance? Plath started to describe Esther's "rebirth" when she re-entered the realm of human connections in *The Bell Jar*. Despite the degrading and impersonal nature of the mental institution and the terrifying electric chair effects of the shock treatments, an additional event takes place. From the schizophrenic realm, where fulfillment can only bring about depletion- much like the dreadful ordeal of pregnancy and childbirth- Esther starts to emerge. She exhibits signs of developing a bond with the elder women she meets, taking their milk. "Luxuriously, the way a baby tastes its mother" (Plath, 2013, p. 213). When Dr. Nolan inquires after the shock treatment as to whether or not Esther's faith in her was warranted, the latter responds with a simple "Yes". "*The Bell Jar* hung, suspended, a few feet above my head; I was open to the circulating air" (Plath, 2013, p. 227). In order to heal and start a fresh, it is important to keep in touch with a symbolic other. Antipathy and exclusion may be part of it. A "ritual for being born twice" (Plath, 2013, p. 257) a bodily and spiritual encounter between the two, "mother" and "child," is the last act of *The Bell Jar*. As tenuous as connection is, Esther feels it, like an umbilical chord with another during a magical spell. In its last moments, the book says: "The eyes and the faces all turned themselves towards me, and guiding myself by them, as by a magical thread, I stepped into the room" (Plath, 2013, p. 258).

However, Esther's budding redemption in *The Bell Jar* comes at the cost of her suicide attempt. Joan, who serves as a contrast to Esther "Joan's room was a mirror image of my own." (Plath, 2013, p. 207) takes her own life, mirroring Esther's prior thoughts about suicide. At Joan's burial, Esther expresses her ontological recovery. "I am, I am, I am" (Plath, 2013, p. 256).

3.4. Reading Beyond the Ending of *The Bell Jar*

Not much has changed on the outside at the conclusion of *The Bell Jar* as Perloff states, “– she has found neither a lover nor her future vocation-but now she can view that situation differently” (Preloff, 1072, p. 18). After surviving the afterlife, she and Dr. Nolan work on creating a new persona. Notably, Esther never wishes to emulate or be like Dr. Nolan, despite the fact that she is the only genuinely admirable woman in the book. The idea is that Dr. Nolan is more of an anti-model than a model; she is the tool through which Esther discovers who she is-herself-rather than any other hypothetical lady. This new Esther pulls off her mask and refuses Joan’s homosexual approaches head-on. She is also more than capable of handling Irwin and Buddy. Even better, the natural world, which Esther encounters in the novel’s opening chapters when she traverses the “granite canyons” (Plath, 2013, p. 139) of Manhattan, is now within reach. The following lines reflect Esther’s feelings:

Pausing in my work to overlook that pristine expanse, I felt the same profound thrill it gives me to see trees and grass land waist-high under flood water-as if the usual order of the world had shifted slightly, and entered a new phase (Plath, 2013, p. 252).

In reference to Esther’s enjoyment of watching the sun emerge from the clouds as she shovels Buddy’s car out of the snow. She describes her mind as follows: “As if the usual order of the world had shifted slightly...” (Plath, 2013, p. 252). Even though Esther still views her future with a lot of “question marks” (Plath, 2013, p. 257), she has learned something crucial as she stands on the threshold of the chamber where the hospital board is ready to hand down her ultimate sentence. Sylvia Plath posits that the tragic loneliness Esther experiences when her props fall apart is ironically the outcome of rejecting her own uniqueness. Being authentic is the most challenging thing to accomplish, and it becomes much more so when you’re young, a woman, and really talented. The first step towards resuming “the circulating air” (Plath, 2013, p. 227) is for Esther to come to terms with the fact that she will never be anyone other than herself-never marry a Buddy Willard, a Constantin, a Mrs. Guinea, or a Jay Cee, for example, or have lesbian affairs with Joan or Dee Dee-forever. Although Esther is unique in that she suffers from schizophrenia, the intensity of her goal, her solitude,

her pain, and her capacity to laugh it off all combine to make her a genuine, exemplary heroine of the 1970s.



CONCLUSION

The alienated protagonist is a recurrent figure in much of the twentieth-century American and European fiction. Alienation is the result of loss of identity. Alienation as a literary theme presents the characters who are under the pressures of society and, thus have a sense of feeling of lack. As a result of their feeling of lack of identity, the literary heroes or heroines have many psychological and social troubles and they do not have a feeling of meaningful life. In general, feminist authors from all eras have delved deeply into the topic of women's estrangement, seeking to provide literary alternatives to this problem. The deep wisdom of the protagonist in *The Bell Jar* makes it clear that a life devoid of meaning is not worth living. The main character experiences depression and thoughts of suicide as a result of her complete detachment from her surroundings. Many things contribute to Esther's misery: her idealized views of life, her dissatisfaction with reality, and the fact that American social life cannot satisfy an ambitious woman. The novel takes place at a period when male-dominated conventions promoted cultural confinement in conservative, conformist, and suburban America as well as prescriptive roles for women. While trying to fit in with society, Esther becomes emotionally distant from her environment, which the author shows right from the start of the story.

Works from the nineteenth century portray death as a cosmic or essentialist end when a woman crosses the boundaries of what is deemed acceptable in terms of her desires. Dying is the inevitable outcome of a woman's sexual energy being unleashed outside of the bounds of marriage or legitimate love, as shown in instances of adultery. When *The Awakening's* female protagonist's teleological love connections do not work out, she dies. In a linear fashion, her marginalization grows as the tale goes on. The many acts of ownership that Edna has endured-from her husband and lovers to her children-have left her with no choice except to end her life. Her suicide serves as a protest against the futility of seeking complete liberty. She has accepted the destiny that is often reserved for women in her position.

Harmful to the body are acts of self-harm. Physiological events mediate and ground the initial self-perception. New evidence backs up these psychoanalytic theories by showing how important early touch and handling are for several developmental processes, including brain maturation, physiological control,

attachment formation, cognitive and emotional body awareness, and immune system function. Moving beyond the boundary of one's body might symbolize a change, such as the infiltration of poison, the outflow of blood, or the entry of one's inner mental life into the outside world. It is suggested by the idea of transition that self-harm might be a means for people to communicate their hardships and the challenges they face during life's changes.

As a way to regain a sense of control, someone who has experienced powerlessness as a result of abuse may resort to self-harm. Dissociation and passive resistance are psychological defense strategies that children may use when they are overwhelmed emotionally. When a youngster develops these coping mechanisms, they run the risk of becoming an integral part of their identity; as a result, they may be less likely to reach out to others and create connections in the future.

Medical professionals often show indifference or outright hostility towards patients who hurt themselves or consider suicide. Some patients may feel that their mental health is less important than their physical health. Since it is seen as a deliberate attempt to attract attention, many people believe that self-harm is a form of bad behavior that ought to be denounced. In their unconscious interactions, someone who hurts oneself may be attempting to get someone's attention, but in reality, they are simply begging for sympathy and understanding. Therefore, it is crucial for the doctor to thoroughly assess the patient's mental health at this initial assessment. This will allow them to discern the patient's ongoing risk and uncover their unconscious motivations before they put up any barriers.

Because suicides are innately nebulous and hard to understand, the myths surrounding them provide a foundation for society's reconstruction. The act of self-destruction transforms a person into both the destroyer and the destroyed. That is, by asking, what is the true motivation behind suicide? The investigation of suicides has been significantly influenced by psychoanalytic theory. Gender differences exist in this area, and serious depressive illness affects half of the people who commit suicide. Suicide is more prevalent among men, yet major depressive illness is more typically diagnosed in women. One other thing that everyone knows: men are statistically less likely to seek treatment for depression than women. However, every suicide has a unique cause.

The majority of female suicides occur on the first attempt, after a breakup with a man. They seldom hesitate to ask for help, display suicidal thoughts or behaviors, fear, fight, or plot their demise. Almost all literary works featuring prominent female characters—such as Juliet, Cleopatra, and Madame Bovary—end in suicide. This literary cliché is largely written by male authors. That raises the question of who is writing these works and why they fail to accurately portray women who have tried suicide. By creating their own stories, women show that they are moving away from this model. As the protagonist of *The Awakening* jumps into the water, Kate Chopin portrays suicide as a rebirth. Chopin is not hesitant to stir up trouble. Her writings force readers to confront a new reality: a strong-willed woman who is not hesitant to break the rules, rejects the idealised conception of motherhood, and even does immoral acts in her quest for romantic enlightenment.

Ultimately, Edna's suicide is troubling because it gives her character a satisfying ending, makes it seem like her acts were brave, and downplays the gravity of suicide. Edna should not be held up as an example for social movements like feminism, and modern researchers should realize that her deeds have no bearing on modern society. Nevertheless, the tale hinges on Edna's demise. Chopin portrays Edna in her writing in the manner she thinks her heroine would have behaved in real life.

Chopin makes Edna feel that dying is her only choice in her oppressive culture. She believes this is the brave thing to do that may set her free from her captivity. Thankfully, women nowadays have a great deal more autonomy. Numerous choices exist for dissatisfied individuals to achieve a satisfactory degree of happiness. Being an early feminist literature, this novel offers modern society a chance to learn from the past and not make the same mistakes. She goes swimming again at the end of the book, this time hoping to relive the rush she had when she made her first major life shift and mastered swimming. She comes to terms with the fact that she will always be alone no matter how hard she tries to be authentic, how far she goes from her family, and how much she is willing to put up with society's criticism at the conclusion of her journey.

As a story, Edna represents the age-old conflict between soul and body, potential and reality, and limitless thought and possibility. A blend of poetic and humorous tones portrays the narrative, which features aspects like women and lovers, passionate confessions, and painful accouchements. Readers are left to ponder, at the novel's unfinished conclusion, why the spectral figure of Dr. Mandelstam in the

background seems to represent an undefined concept of reconciliation. Edna may have had alternatives to suicide if Mandelet had not been there; he may be a fictionalized version of Dr. Kolbenheyer, who supported and promoted Chopin's career.

Edna is a brave warrior. Her mission is to discover what it means to be an exceptional human being. She is not scared to challenge social conventions since she is naturally curious and adventurous. Edna has a rebellious personality even at an early age. Danger does not faze her. For the first time, she dives into the water and sets her eyes on discovering a hidden location. She follows her dreams. Suicide on the huge, uncharted ocean is her decision. She yearns to be released from her confinement like a confined bird. Above all else, Edna wants to control her own destiny. However, she is fragile and takes damage well.

According to Chopin, Edna is one of the fortunate women on earth, thus she has the chance to lead by defying her husband's domineering behavior. It would have been scandalous if she had left her husband for Robert, the man she is much in love with, but she is free to choose. If living as a social pariah meant ultimately discovering happiness, then it must have required bravery. Edna is aware that she will have to sacrifice her identity in order to live up to the standards of a patriarchal society for women. She would sooner die without a single possession than forfeit her freedom and sense of self.

Standing nude in the water, Edna symbolizes the whole cycle of life and death in her last appearance. However, Edna stands to gain nothing by her demise. The heroine of Chopin's story doesn't start again; rather, she reaches the end of her existence in the material world, where she is unable to grow or discover herself anymore. Prior to her death, Chopin does not have her alter society's outlook on women. Since Edna will never know true happiness in this world, her death is more of a tragedy than a hopeful sign of a new beginning.

Edna commits suicide after coming to terms with the fact that women of her ethnic and social background would never have the same opportunities for personal autonomy as men. As she nears the end of her life, Edna stakes her final, unwavering claim to the masculine right to solitude and the artistic career she had dreamed of. There is no feminist heroism in Edna; rather, she is a cautionary tale about the perils of holding on to the idea of complete personal freedom, which encompasses creative freedom but is ultimately dictated by men and puts limits on human life.

Chopin probably killed Edna because keeping her alive would have forced the narrator to choose between two of her clashing goals. As a writer, she felt uneasy about disclosing personal information. As a result, Chopin chose a dramatic ending, similar to the methods she used to effectively end several of her short stories, where the conclusions sometimes seem to conceal the story's darker core. One interpretation of Chopin's realistic voice is that the author knows more than she lets on; that is, she realizes that understatement may be the most effective method to show how the world really is. Fans of Chopin's *The Awakening* are perplexed by the ending's ambiguity and wonder what the author knew but decided to keep hidden. Her reserve, for whatever reason, was probably something she was aware of.

The Bell Jar is a reflection of the 1950s, the doctor-patient dynamic, and the gender norms and power dynamics that shaped it. Looking at the novel as a whole, it becomes clear that the patriarchal system, the expectation of total conformity, and the portrayal of the medical profession as a symbol of this expectation have all had an impact on Esther's life throughout her formative years in the 1950s. The novel's doctor characters are emblematic of the way that psychiatry and medicine as a whole perpetuate patriarchal norms and suppress women by claiming scientific proof of their beliefs. By banding together with other women, Esther is able to break free of them in *The Bell Jar*.

Like many females in the 1950s, the protagonist of *The Bell Jar* is a helpless little girl who, like many others, feels stifled by the patriarchal society around her. For the sake of liberation from this tyranny, she chooses to victimize herself. Because of her internal and exterior struggles brought on by her feelings of social suppression and despair, she develops a split personality. A woman's fight against cultural expectations and conventions is illuminated in the tale. Defying suffocation is the fundamental topic of the narrative, which centers on a woman. Consequently, the novel details a woman's fight for freedom from the constraints of a life without oxygen.

When it comes to most living things, Esther is unable to communicate. Despite her ability to communicate with others and receive their responses, she is becoming more and more isolated from society, making it almost difficult for her to form genuine, long-term relationships. When Esther struggles to have authentic conversations with other New York characters, it is the first sign of a lack of community, or the realization that a functional community has disappeared. Her search

for other people or entities that she can relate to, particularly other young women her age who can act as role models for her emerging adulthood, is fruitless. Despite her best efforts, our heroine is unable to fully integrate into society and instead stays on the periphery. Central to *The Bell Jar* is the misery of the solitary person, who laments the loss of a perfect community or the other while they are alone. By depicting the disintegration of the self and by addressing our collective myths about community and the self, Plath's work compels readers to contemplate the essence of community and the importance of embracing the commonalities shared by all living things, such as vulnerability, mortality, and the uniqueness of being.

The fact that Esther is unsatisfied with all of her options while having too many is her true problem. She has always been paralyzed by fear and uncertainty on what lies ahead. She is so worried about the future that she falls into a deep depression. She is finally paralyzed with fear and uncertainty, which has driven her mad. Thanks to the horrific and cruel care she had in the hospital, she had a breakdown, went insane, and eventually committed herself. According to Esther, she is being punished for a horrible crime that she did not commit.

Plath has also addressed the topic of virginity. In handling this matter, there are two sets of rules. In most cultures, males are well within their rights to have sexual intercourse before to marriage, while women should abstain until they are married. Esther thinks it's hypocritical. Her perspective on sexuality starts to change as she gradually comes to terms with the fact that her partner is a hypocrite. She sees a gender bias in the education system that teaches girls to be virgins while giving men free reign. Buddy is no different from everybody else, the findings show. Even though he has contradicting expectations of women -that Esther should remain a virgin and that she should be experienced- he has sexual contact with other women nevertheless. But until she marries, Esther must remain a virgin.

In addition, two major misconceptions are explored in *The Bell Jar*, and Esther Greenwood experiences the shattering truth of their annihilation. To begin, there is the idea that one might achieve a transcendental feeling of immanence within society via a condition of connection-or fusion-with other beings through excellent conversation. This is known as the myth of communion with others. The second point is that the story disproves the concept that an individual's identity is static and unchanging.

Through her efforts to connect with and engage with each other's personalities, Esther faces concerns of self-autonomy and oneness of being.

Finally, *The Bell Jar* should be seen as a symbol of a sick culture that has spread views about the restricted role of the individual in society. By depicting the pain of incomplete, broken, and separate persons faced with an ineffectual community, *The Bell Jar* reflects the contemporary and postmodern sense of severe loneliness and the breakdown of self-identity. Esther is different from other heroines of the 1960s in that she has schizophrenia. However, her intensity of purpose, loneliness, suffering, and ability to laugh it off make her a true and inspiring figure.



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