

Sylvia Plath Effect in Trauma Narrative in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*

Abinaya Aranganathan^{1*}

Abstract

This research paper intends to focus on the trauma narrative of the woman in America who endure various mental struggles and through which many scientific theories are applied like serotonin theory, Theory of suicide, Mental health theories. This is also the scrutinization of Psychoanalytical Criticism. This manifest the so called 'Sylvia Plath effect' the term which was termed in the year 2001 by psychologist James C. Kaufman, which says about the phenomenon that poets are more susceptible to mental illness than other creative writers. The patriarchal notion upon woman and the conventional lifestyle which the protagonist was against and thoughts about her future all are esmplasted in the novel. The protagonist thinks that anyway she is going to get her mental illness again at anytime and the bell jar could fall upon her. The mission of this research paper is to tell that Sylvia's character Esther Greenwood overcomes mental illness and lead her life in a healthy way since the ending is given in the hands of readers as a open end. Unlike Sylvia's life her character got a life at the end.

Keywords

Personal growth, Human relationships, Dominating

¹ PG & Research Department of English, Jamal Mohamed College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli – 620020

Literature is the expression of human experience and human condition. To define it clearly it is defined as the 'heart of written works. This has been applied to creative works of poetry, novel and prose differentiated by the intentions of their authors and the perceived aesthetic excellence of their execution. American literature is the subject of written works created in the English language in United States. It is connected by the history and culture of the country and its people. American literature is also part of the broader tradition of English-language literature but gives room to the works of other traditions and languages that reflect the diversity of the American population. One such great novelist of only novel, poet, was Sylvia Plath whose roots was in Boston, Massachusetts, and had troubled relationship with the Ted Hughes and she undergone many mental illnesses, depression and died at the age of 31 by committing suicide. Her most famous work 'Daddy' and 'Lady Lazarus' is the depiction of themes like sadness, depression, mental disorder.

Opening the curtains of the novel of Sylvia Plath withstood with the Trauma of the individual. As the trauma narrative can be defined that it takes and plate the psychological issues that is experienced by the protagonist Esther Greenwood from the commencement of the novel to the end. She is the survivor of the real trauma, and she zipped out all her painful memories. As Ester Greenwood scribbles on the paper at the opening of the novel gives way to the readers that the novel is going to take us through the Psyche of an individual. Though it is not clearly shown at the beginning, during the raising action and the falling action approves it. The puzzled thoughts of Ester Greenwood is manifested at the end of the

novel. Also, Ester was crowned with an award of Mary Elizabeth. Also, she was offered with the summer practicum by the college. She was so elated to get that in her hands.

The lead-in of another character named Joan was enlivening for Esther throughout her journey, but it turned out to be ironical at last. Here the novelist explained the 'same same but different' disorder which will be revealed later by Plath. Esther's patriarchal society was totally against her wish. Her love turned vain. She was always struck up between this or that. All her wish is to become a poet, writer and the author. The thoughts which her boyfriend Buddy Willard shared was totally under a male dominated and suppressed society speaker. The destructive patriarchal thought made her mind to get disturbed a much. The ambiguity of her mind flows over her mouth. The stereotypical expression of women in the society and the strain of getting married, having a kid, taking journey of motherhood such cycle is unloved by Esther. This strain added her the mental illness. Thinking of her future and her ambitions as a poet all disturbed her mind. Buddy's way of accompanying Ether was different he even tells Esther to write poetry after children goes go to bed. This is not what was wanted by Esther. This add on pressure and her disliked physical relationship with Buddy was not so romantic. And she started being a person of Genophobia or coitophobia who usually fears or dislikes physical, sexual unification. The male society was the main reason for the cause of mental trauma. Throughout the novel she disapproves the physical sex life with all who tries to have with her, to Buddy, Marco, Joan her friend.

A middle-class lifestyle of Esther bothers her much and

speaks of other girls who have good attire or who comes college by their own horses. The event when Esther speaks with her mother in parents day in zoo reveals that her father is lost. And the constant digging of the past story gives us the idea that she is suffering from OCD and Death obsession. This is the psychological disorder of fascinated and thrilled to know about the death and loss of life. She digs the memories of her lost father in what way he suffered asking that 'whether he bleed while dying, how he died, and the way his breath went mute' all these question makes a researcher to assume that she is suffering from OCD. The Lady's Day Magazine, Esther as the editor turned her life into something new western lifestyle. Her alienation was another cause for her mental illness. She was accompanied by a easy going and enjoying girl named Doreen. Both drinks, attend parties, had sexual thoughts over and over. She had a demanding time with Jae Cee. Esther constantly thought about her future after college and after this four week of summer internship.

Though she lived in the luxuries hotel 'The Amazon' her mind was full of dark surrounded. Her career for poetry and as a writer was under a question for her. This makes her mind to get disturbed. People say good pressure is always good, but her pressures were beyond all and from every side starting from her mother, from patriarchal society, from her boyfriend and specially from her mind. The confused state of her mind puzzled the readers too.

Getting along in physical relationship with Doreen and Lenny Shepard, a cunning and a flirting fellow put her psyche in a very ill full state. She did not get along with UN interpreter named Constantin in the story at the first meet. Lossing her conscious self is the starting point where she lost her mental peace. She constantly shouts, cries and get elevated with her feelings. As the victim of rape by Marco made her mind a bad thought about the patriarchy. Though Esther was so confident and brave enough to break his nose and made him bleed she was devastated. She was torn out by naked, and she covers herself with white cloth while she returns to the hotel where she stayed.

Usage of words like carbon monoxide, cyanide, poison gives us the idea of negative notions of fatality. The futuristic question by Esther to Joan was turned out blunt when she says that 'she will be dead in the next ten years from tonight'. From these readers comes to know that Joan is also mentally ill. Also, she shared a homosexual relationship with Esther in the novel at the last it is very clear to the reader. This takes the reader to the lesbian theme. At last Joan kisses her and ask her to be together but Esther runs out feeling it strange and annoyed. The main sequence of trauma starts when Esther was denied in her newly applied job, she refuses to change her dress for two days, she shouts at her mother, she says the already spoken words over and over, she spills the liquid container and all her attitude let us know that she is completely under mental ill. Her mind had many thoughts coming over. Her dead father was a major missing for her and her intention to know about him made her mind so disturbed. Also, the

Electro therapy or ECT Electro Convulsive Therapy was not friendly with Esther which was given by Dr. Gordon. And that turned her very sick and energy less. This therapeutic approach causes her brain so electrified, and she was affected by so called mental phobia.

By the application of Serotonin Theory, every reader could say that Esther undergone Clinical depression, a person who goes through depression and pain mentally. This theory gives the statement that in early 1950's mental health disorders were adequately diagnosed and treated with lobotomies and ECT. In the book 'Touched with Fire' and American clinical psychologist Kay Refield Jamison says that 38% of writers and poets had been treated for mood disorder, and 89% of creative writers and artists experienced 'intense, highly productive and creative mental episodes.

She denies coming to hospital and hits herself against the wall. She also happens to have movement disorder. The disease such as Akathisia or Ataxia in addition to her mental illness made her repetition of rocking back and forth while she sits.

The attempt of various suicide, having guts and bravery to take her breath out of her went in vain. Such persons are not to be left alone. But there are many incidents where Esther was left alone. These suicide attempts were mainly due to the societal pressure, expectations, ambition, desire. Emile Durkheim is called as the father of "Theory of Suicide". Esther probably been affected by two types of theory. The one Anomie suicide, and the other is Fatalistic Suicide. This type of suicide is committed by a person who is mentally ill, with the social connection and the strains that showered upon them and the continuous thoughts about future yearnings cause the afore mentioned disorder. Also, the inhabitants of such disorders will permanent profound date of disappointments and pains. She slits her hand, overeat pills, tries to hand herself, falls under a water basin by drowning herself. But fortunately, Plath never made Esther get succeeded in the novel. All attempts of suicide go in vain.

There are also other several mental health theories that could be related with Plat's Esther character such as Behaviourism, biological, psychodynamic, cognitive, and humanistic.

She lives in government asylum and Philomena Guinea who shifted her to the private asylum where Esther was free from the world which caused her mental illness. Again this could be related with attributes of Psychological Schizophrenia which says that Esther and also Sylvia Plath might have suffered from serious and chronic mental illness that impairs a person's thoughts and behaviours. Here Esther has disorganized and divergent ideas and paranoiac thoughts. This also relates with authors creativity. 2010 studies manifested the scientific information that both creative people and Schizophrenics have a low density of dopamine receptors. Which is the major cause of stress, depression, moodiness, hopelessness, drug abuse was gone through by Esther in the novel. During 1950's women were not opening or speaking up of problems

which they had that may be the reason for Esther's mental illness.

She was looked after by Dr. Nolan a kind and promising psychiatrist. Her friend Joan's death, her sexual break out of bleeding wit Prof. Irwin caused her mentally weak again. Again, she was admitted in the hospital and after which Esther attains her freedom and sets like she returns to college. At last Plath made this novel a open ending in hands of readers which I intend to move this forward by ending my research saying that at last she survived from her mental illness and turns to be a poet and a writers in line with her wish. Unlike Sylvia Plath's real-life incident, her character Esther Greenwood in Bell Jar gains life after many suicide attempts, not only her aliveness in survived, also her dreams were survived to evolve as a poet and a writer.

Creative writing is connected to mental abnormality. Socrates argues in his work 'Phaedrus that poetry is a form of divine madness. The literary world has lost many of its great people like Virginia Woolf committed suicide by filling her pockets with stones and walking into a river. Edgar Allen poe committed suicide by overdosing on Laudanum and he says, 'I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity'. Fitzgerald suffered from depression and substance abuse, Ezra pound was diagnosed with 'narcissistic personality disorder' it affected many poets and creative writers.

The bell jar is the representation of her confined room of thoughts she has also that represents mental jar of illness which may fall at her anytime. The jar of mental illness always surrounds her anytime. Also the Fig tree is the manifestation of Choices of Esther and the indecision of her.

"Intoxicated with madness, I'm in love with my sadness" says Plath.

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