

and eventual recovery. The roots of Esther's mental illness have been shown in the very beginning of the novel. Although Plath does not mention one specific cause of Esther's condition but presents the cause of Esther's dissatisfaction in the first chapter. One of the most significant causes of this depression is certainly the high pressure environment where Esther lives. As the novelist already informed that Esther is an achiever, a scholarship winner and a bright student who consistently wins the prizes and contests for her academic abilities. Plath describes that the other girls who are working for this magazine internship are from wealthy backgrounds while Esther comes from a modest family. This disparity also brings dissatisfaction in the life of Esther. The next prominent cause of her anxiety is Esther's view on sexuality. The society of early fifties in which the story takes place is noted for its sexual repression. Plath introduces the theme of sexuality partially through the contrast between the characters of Doreen and Betsy. Esther tries to coordinate between the two. She chooses to associate with Doreen, but admits that Doreen causes major trouble for her. The information regarding Rosenbergs also brings in Esther's preoccupation with death, a character trait that foreshadows the suicide attempt that is the central event of the novel.

The regular physical fights, screamings and shameless sexual efforts of Doreen and Lenny makes Esther depressed, lonely and continues a slow progression of her descending mental health. The most significant event demonstrating this decline is Esther's acute reaction to the silence around her. "There was not a soul in the hall. I let myself into my room. The silence depressed me. It was not the silence of silence. It was my own silence[15].

Esther meets Buddy Willard and considers him the most wonderful boy she had ever seen. Infact, Buddy occupies a significant place in Esther's life. For her Buddy is a symbol of her doomed expectations. Buddy dismisses the artistic and literary mind of Esther and finds her poem as a 'piece of dust'. He tells that her poems are like dust and her passion for poetry will change as soon as she becomes a mother. She imagines her relationship with Buddy like a fairy tale and thinks that it can be maintained even on a single kiss. She finds Buddy as an ideal hero or a man of heroic actions. But Buddy is responsible for Esther's dissatisfaction with the world. He treats her as a foolish child. His sexual teaching, baby born episode and description of male body parts were very offensive and inhuman. Buddy has created many problems in the life of Esther regarding her anxiety over her future as well as her idea of sexuality. In order to take revenge with Buddy, Esther decides to seduce herself through Constantine. This decision may represent an assertion of her independence in the face of societal repression around her but ultimately increases her mental illness.

After few months, Esther again meets Buddy and wishes to go with him on skiing. She considers the possibility that she may die while skiing, yet even after she breaks her leg so she wishes to make this eventual suicide attempt again. Esther is unable to maintain a balance between her body and mind. All the time she is proceeding towards despair and depression. Infact, Esther suffers from the stifling intellectual atmosphere that Buddy has created for her, in which her ideas and

emotions are diagnosed as mere neuroses instead of her good choices and decision.

Esther meets Marco who is described in the novel as a "woman hater". Marco offers a diamond pin to Esther which is a symbol of marriage. But he too wants her independence, sexuality and other things in exchange. He physically threatens Esther and attempts a rape but could not succeed. "Marco set his teeth to the strap at my shoulder and tore my sheath to the waist. I saw the glimmer of bare skin, like a pale veil separating two bloody minded adversaries".[90] Marco's actions were more violent, aggressive and gender biased in comparison to Buddy who is subtle and passive. Marco's violent actions once again proceeds Esther towards her suicide attempt. She has grown mental illness including insomnia and listlessness. This time her depression has become clear enough that her doctor recommends psychiatric treatment again.

Esther's mental illness becomes more severe so she visits Dr. Gordon for shock therapy. But Dr. Gordon appears to be indifferent to her problems and unwilling to learn anything significant regarding her illness. He merely prescribes shock therapy for her and refers to Dr. Nolan for further treatment. During the treatment, Esther reminds the time when she accidentally electrocuted herself with her father's lamp. Afterward, she claims that she feels all right despite loathing the treatment.

Esther diagnoses her problem as sitting under a bell jar. It relates the societal pressure that Esther faces. The bell jar is intended to preserve Esther as an ornament and suffocates her. This implies that her problems are due to the societal pressure but she herself discards the charge and accepts some of the blame for her own problems. This is an important step for Esther, as she assumes responsibility for her own actions even if she is not ready to repair her life. But her conflicts and frustrations are quite real. She has a pessimistic personality. Her encounter with Buddy reflects the dehumanizing aspect of the modern world. She is betrayed by the patriarchal structure of society. This leads her pessimistic approach and she gets alienated and dejected from the rest of the world around her.

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