



## Main Character's Internal Conflicts in Plath's Novel "*The Bell Jar*"

Patricia Martha Olivia<sup>1</sup>, Zubaedah Wiji Lestari<sup>2</sup>, Erik Rusmana<sup>3</sup>

[patricimartha1419@gmail.com](mailto:patricimartha1419@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [zubaedahwiji@unpas.ac.id](mailto:zubaedahwiji@unpas.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>, [erik.rusmana@unpas.ac.id](mailto:erik.rusmana@unpas.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>

Faculty of Arts and Letters

Universitas Pasundan

Bandung

### Abstract

This research focuses on analyzing the main character's internal conflicts in the novel "The Bell Jar" by Sylvia Plath. The purpose of this research is to find evidence of internal conflicts owned by the main character in this novel. The writers use the limitation that only analyze one character conflicts with one point of view using the semiotic approach by Peirce (1860) this research, the writer uses a qualitative research approach to find and analyze data in the form of text to answer research questions. The data in The Bell Jar emphasizes the monologue that is carried out by the main character by underlining the evidence of the novel's text in the document analysis process. The analysis was conducted by using an observation checklist and field-noted instruments. The writer found that the problems of internal conflicts conveyed by Plath as an author are owned by the main character in this novel after the writer correlated the analysis of nine internal conflicts and ten symbols in certain chapters. Plot and point of view were also carried out carefully to facilitate the discovery of the main topic analysis and these two things open up new evidence that is directly related to the main topic.

Keywords: *novel, internal conflict, main character, Sylvia Plath*

### INTRODUCTION

Literature is an art concept that aims to provide a certain type of structure containing with thoughts, ideas, experiences, and imagination of the author (Fajri, 2020). Literature was initially described as a vast collection of works written specifically as art based on the development of literary theory.

In the modern era, literature is wrapped in multiple kinds of genres such as novels, poetry, drama Script, music, and art. According to Pradopo (1994 in Moputi and Husain, 2019),

literary work is pictures of the world and human life, the main criteria that are put on the literary work is truth, or everything that wants to be a picture by the author. Every kind of literature genre consists of a feeling, expression, social aspect, and personal experience in its work.



The storyline in *The Bell Jar* novel was primarily centered around the main character's point of view, which was the main element of this novel, and the plot flowed along with that. In this novel, Esther Greenwood as the main character becomes a prominent element responsible for building the storyline. The main character's point of view and the development of the plot create a conclusion for the main character's internal conflict.

The problems come from internal elements of this novel, especially from the main character's depiction of her mind, her life, and the conflict within herself. The objective of the study is to analyze the internal conflict types depicted in *The Bell Jar* novel.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There are some literature sources used that underly the study

### 2.1 Novel

One of the imaginative works that has a sense of fiction is the novel. Mazzoni (2017) stated that a novel is a literature work that consists of some stories told in any way whatsoever about the experiences of ordinary men and women who exist as contingent beings within time and space. The novel has some particular elements such as intrinsic and extrinsic which build a storyline in each chapter. Both of the elements have a certain function to complete the novel itself (Moputi & Husain, 2019).

One of the well-known modernist poets and writers who represented a side of the real world of life is Sylvia Plath in her novel

entitled *The Bell Jar*. Although this novel's theme is about mental illness and the ways to resolve it, none of the words glorify mental illness (Villiers, 2019). The bell jar had a huge influence on young adult women to grow up and take a step to cure their mental health issues (Clark, 2021). The honesty of each point of view of Plath written in this novel shows the sincerity of a vulnerable woman and it makes the reader get involved in each plot that is being told.

The plot is interconnected in a novel or other narrative work that consists of conflict and resolvment which are placed in the beginning, the middle, and the ending (Booker, 2004). There are multiple stages of plots according to Freytag (1984 in Tussadiyah, 2017), those are exposition, rising action, internal conflict, and external conflict.

### *Point of View*

A literary work will be influenced by the way a writer views the surrounding environment. As cited by Aminuddin (1995 in Ulfa, 2019) point of view is how an author presents the characters in a story to a reader. In their literary work, a writer learns a lot from things they experienced before or based on real events experienced by people around them. Usually, the center of a point of view will be focused on the main character which holds the storyline as a first person. Usually, the main character's point of view uses the words "I" or "us" in the plural structure. Two parts of the role that use the first person's point of view, include: the main character (usually the author uses the word "I" as the focus of one thought), side character (just like the main character, the pointer of subject is "I". But in the storyline, the side character will only be an



additional informant who supports the main character's point of view.

### *Theory of Internal Conflict*

The conflict in a novel is added to enhance the storyline written in every chapter. For instance, the writer needs a certain conflict as an element to build a climax in the story. In *The Bell Jar*, the conflict focuses on the main character's struggle with herself, which is being called an internal conflict in literature. According to Stanton (1965 in Mulawarman, 2021), the conflict is introduced through a complication that sets in motion the rising actions, which typically lead to a climax and eventual resolution. The triggers of internal conflicts usually come from internal feelings, personal struggle, an interpersonal battle that takes place within the individual of a person, mental disorders, and contradictory impulses. This conflict represents the condition of the character's state of mind and subjective feeling. It also proved that internal conflicts align with the character's emotions such as doubt, confusion, fear, and anxiety.

There are several types of internal conflicts according to Krosel et al., (2022):

- Religious Conflict, the contradiction of religious thought and belief is the main reason why this conflict is felt by the main character. Krosel et al., (2022) explain this kind of conflict constantly occurs in the early stage of the plot. For example, the main character drowns in a confusion of their belief and it leads them to a stage of doubt.
- Moral Conflict, the main character had their purpose written in the
- novel. Krosel et al (2022) stated that to reach the purpose, sometimes the main character needs to against their value to meet the expectation of the purpose. This kind of conflict refers to confusion between two opposite values.
- Self-Perception Conflict, the main character of the novel especially in a mental illness genre will experience this kind of conflict. According to Krosel et al., (2022), self-perception conflict is related to the idea of self-image and self-awareness of the main character. They usually doubt their authenticity. For example, a leader of a religious community has to keep their positive self-image in front of the congregation. That example explains how a main character struggles with this kind of internal conflict
- Love Conflict, In internal conflict stated by Krosel et al., (2022), the main character struggles with the love decision between their logic and their emotion. It does not only occur between a romantic partner but it can also happen to a mother and child problem.
- Societal Conflict that has a huge impact on the main character's choice to pursue a certain role in society. According to Krosel et al., (2022), the cause of societal conflict is because they have another responsibility to do based on society's expectations towards them while they trying to find their identity.
- Existential Conflict, Role confusion, and anxiety of a main character are the aftermath of existential conflict. This conflict occurs when a character starts to question their purpose in life. Krosel et al.,



(2022) stated that someone who experiences this conflict will constantly be stuck and confused about what should they do in life as a human being.

## METHOD

In this study, the use of qualitative approach. A qualitative approach requires deep work in the process of data collection and analysis (Fraenkell, Wallen, and Hyun, 2012). The main reason why the researcher chose the qualitative method is because the object of this paper is in the form of written literary works. The Bell Jar, which is used as primary data, does not show statistical data in the form of numbers. In addition, the topic of analysis determined by the researcher requires data from a text or monologue where the data can only be analyzed using qualitative research methods to answer research questions and interpret the data.

For this research, the writers use descriptive methods which is a part of qualitative research design. This type of research tends to explore the problem of an issue and highlight the meanings of a text to be analyzed. According to Sileyew (2019), research design is a framework used in a research paper. This research design also involves data collection techniques for a document which will be written in the form of words.

Two research instruments used in this research:

- Observation Checklist: in this study, the writer uses an observation checklist in qualitative research. Creswell (2018) stated that

- Observation was the process of accumulating open-ended and direct information by observing people and the location of a search site.
- Field Notes: the second research instrument used by the writer is field notes. According to Cresswell (2012), field notes are the text noted by the researcher throughout an observation in qualitative studies.

Related data that has been obtained from observation and data selection through a field notes instrument analyzed by the writer objectively. Data analysis is carried out based on the study of approaches and theories that support the data. Data in this study is used to examine internal conflict in The Bell Jar novel using Peirce's theory. Creswell (2018) determines four essential steps for this phase: preparation data, analysis data, report results, and interpret the results.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section discusses the findings of the study and discussion of the findings related to the theory.

### 4.1 Findings

In this section, the writers elaborate on the finding of internal conflicts based on the main character's point of view that was written in the monologues of The Bell Jar novel. The writer drags down each plot implied in The Bell Jar's novel to evaluate the main character's point of view. The findings of the point of view assist the writer in analyzing the internal conflicts Esther Greenwood has in the novel through an observation checklist. The main



character's internal conflict is found in these parts:

## ***Exposition (Beginning)***

### *Chapter 1-2*

At the beginning of *The Bell Jar* novel, the writer starts her depiction of an event by using narration from the main character's point of view. The exposition is made as a backward plot where Esther Greenwood as the main character explains how her life was in 1953 as the winner of the annual contest to live in New York and her life as an editor in a fashion magazine. In this plot, Esther's perspective on her surroundings is limited by her ability to subjectively analyze the environment. It is starting from an explanation of how the condition of the hotel where she lived to the depiction of the characters of her friends.

In this plot, the conflict starts with Esther's first meeting with Lenny Shepherd, a man who approached Doreen to join a nightclub. Esther's decision to join Lenny's invitation makes her enter into a new internal conflict. It is said that after their first meeting, Lenny and Doreen did indecent things in front of Esther's eyes which made her feel neglected by her own best friend and made her feel uncomfortable at that time. Esther decided to get out of the embarrassing incident and returned to the hotel. This is where Esther begins to see how she tends to hide in her solitude by performing special "rituals" whenever she feels uncomfortable with her surroundings. She will drown herself in a bathtub with warm water while enjoying her solitude. In this early plot, the writer implicitly reveals that the main character's depression begins to arise from the internal conflict at the beginning. The author also shows how the main character's self-limitation begins to arise.

### *Chapters 3-5*

In this chapter, the external conflict causes Esther's internal conflict to increase. It started with information that Esther got a scholarship at Harvard University from Philomena Guinea due to financial problems her family had since her father died. This made Esther push herself and become a directionless person. Furthermore, the storyline develops into a mixed plot, namely forward and backward plots when the writer tells how Esther's family is, and these two plots are used to also explain the emotional side and experiences that she went through. Starting from feelings of guilt to feelings of insecurity that Esther felt while she had to fight for her family after losing her father.

In chapter 5 of the novel, another internal conflict comes from a man named Buddy Willard. The depiction of Buddy Willard began to be associated with symbols that explained the relationship between Esther Greenwood and Buddy Willard. Unreal imaginations are also written in Chapter 5 where Esther imagines how she will have a special mothering with Buddy.

## ***Rising Action to Climax (Middle Plot)***

### *Chapter 6-17*

In the middle plot, the main character's internal conflicts escalate into a rising action and reach a climax. It starts from the conflict with Buddy Willard which is getting more complex as well as affecting Esther Greenwood's internal conflicts. In the storyline, the middle stage of the plot produces new internal conflicts that are influenced by characters who also develop as the conflict progresses. The flashbacks in





this plot also yield evidence of the role confusion Esther experienced during her childhood.

There are also many symbols written as parables of meaning in a change of conflict in each part of the novel which uses the middle stage of the plot. The author expands her point of view which is related to the main character in various factors that trigger the internal conflicts of Esther Greenwood. One of them is the emergence of Mrs. Greenwood's character as Esther's mother who also plays a role as a cause of internal conflict and conflict resolution that Esther feels.

There is also another character that causes the internal conflicts of Esther Greenwood in the middle stage. Dr. Gordon, who acted as the first psychiatrist to treat Esther's depression had to leave his duties after Mrs. Guinea moved Esther to a hospital with better management due to a cruel misuse of shock treatment he had given to Esther as a form of punishment. In addition, he is depicted as a male with dominant and conventional attractiveness who lives with a perfect wife and children. The depiction of Dr. Gordon in this Chapter symbolises male dominated society which has caused Esther's Greenwood depression stage. At the new hospital, Esther was treated by Dr. Nolan who managed to recover Esther without the shock treatment that she had experienced from Dr. Gordon. Dr. Nolan and the new patients at the local hospital play an important role in Esther's recovery and problem-solving. In this plot, the ending of the plot tells how Esther is moved to a better place or ward after being assessed for progress in her mental recovery.

***Falling Action to Denouement (Final Plot)***

### *Chapters 18-20*

In the previous stage, Buddy Willard is one of the characters that cause Esther Greenwood's internal conflicts. In the final plot stage, the author uses him as a resolution or problem-solving. In Chapter 18, when Esther Greenwood is finishing her final shock treatment which makes her remember her habit of using a knife, Joan, one of the patients and her friend gets a letter from Buddy Willard which is also sent to Esther. It was from there that Esther's final decision was not to marry Buddy and chose to find the right man in the future. New facts were revealed when Joan admitted that she liked Esther more than Buddy. But in fact, Esther ignored Joan's statement and chose to think about her future after leaving the hospital.

In her conversation with Dr. Nolan, she explained that she had no plans to get pregnant because she felt she didn't have a maternal instinct when she saw a mother and baby. In the final stage of the novel's plot, Esther is taken to several rooms that make her reflect on her past in the family, academic world, school, fashion magazine company, and how she survives in the cold of New York City. The room resembled the places where Esther had experienced role confusion (one of Esther's internal conflicts). The recovery stage in this final plot proves that Esther has reached a normal stage for mental illness patients and can be discharged from the hospital. In the end, the writer writes that Esther restarted her ambition and returned to find her identity from the start as a woman.

After analyzing the point of view from each plot of *The Bell Jar* which produced new findings of the main character's internal conflicts subchapter, the writer will drag



down the internal conflicts in the form of a table. These new findings are used to answer the first research question by using observation and note-taking methods. The subchapter also answers the research question, "What are the internal conflict types that are depicted in *The Bell Jar*?" by pointing out the Chapter and page where the internal conflicts occurred.

Table 4.1 The Relevance of Esther Greenwood's Point of View and Internal Conflicts

No	Esther Greenwood's Point of View	Internal Conflict	Chapter and Page
1.	Point of view on the religion she believes and afterlife idea (death)	Religious confusion Fear of death	Chapter 1, page 5 Chapter 2, page 28 Chapter 13, page 213
2.	Point of view on her family problem in a past (the death of her father)	Directionless Role confusion	Chapter 3, page 41 Chapter 4, page 50 Chapter 7, page 95-96
3.	Point of view on patriarchal environment	Trust issue Situationship (lacks of commitment with a partner in romantic relationship)	Chapter 7, page 102 Chapter 8, page 117
4.	Point of view on the hospital where she gets a shock treatment by Dr. Gordon and Dr. Nolan	Depression Alienation Suicidal thoughts	Chapter 9, page 142 Chapter 12, page 191 Chapter 13, page 205 Chapter 15, page 241

Table 4.1 provides information about how Esther Greenwood's point of view as the main character relates to the internal conflict in the novel's plot. Each internal conflicts have a symbol that represents the meaning behind the conflict. The writer observes and takes notes from certain pages in a novel and then finds that only some chapters in *The Bell Jar* consist main character's internal conflict. From the observation, it was also found that the author of *The Bell Jar* also attached the information about the main character's internal conflicts implicitly.

## Discussion

In this chapter, the writer discusses about main character's internal conflict based on the theory of internal conflict. As the writer mentioned in chapter two about the theory of internal conflict, it is

concluded that internal conflict is a tool in a novel to enhance the storyline. In modern literature, internal conflict is used to explain the reality and issues that society has. For example, mental health issues, political issues, economic issues, religious issues, etc. In *The Bell Jar* itself, Esther Greenwood as the main character experienced several internal conflicts that related to society's current situation. It is written by the author, Sylvia Plath, in the s and mostly monologues in some chapters. This chapter discusses Esther Greenwood's internal conflicts and relates it to the theory of internal conflict stated by Krosel et al., (2022).

### Religious Conflict (Religious Confusion and Fear of Death)

#### *Chapter 1 page 5 (Religious confusion)*

The writer found that a monologue in Chapter 2 page 5 correlates with Esther Greenwood's internal conflict called religious confusion. This internal conflict is classified as religious conflict according to Krosel et al.,(2022).

*"I felt as though I were carrying that cadaver's head around with me on a string, like some black, noseless balloon stinking of vinegar."*

The word "carrying that cadaver's head around me on a string" pointed out that Esther Greenwood was delusional about being a dead body. In the first Chapter of *The Bell Jar*, the author depicts how Esther struggled with her biggest fear, which was the fear of death. But at the same time, Esther was not a religious kind of person. Therefore, Esther doesn't believe in the idea of life after death. This monologue shows how Esther struggles with the confusion of religion and the thoughts of suicide. According to Krosel et al.,(2022), religious



conflict is felt by someone because of the contradiction of religious thought and belief. In the novel's chapter, the author wrote about Esther's relationship with her religious mother which led her to a confused about the religious system because of the things that happened in the past related to her mother. It was the way her mother burdened her with a lot of expectations and neglected her mental health issues. Esther thought that the religion her mother believed was not the right thing to follow because her mother's attitude did not align with the kindness that Esther expected.

#### *Chapter 2, page 28 (Religious confusion)*

The writer found that a monologue in Chapter 2 page 28 correlates with Esther Greenwood's internal conflict called religious confusion. This internal conflict is classified as religious conflict according to Krosel et al.,(2022).

*"I don't believe in baptism or the waters of Jordan or anything like that, but I guess I feel about a hot bath the way those religious people feel about holy water."*

The monologue Esther has with herself after she finds out that her friend, Doreen, has neglected her shows how desperate she is to heal herself. The hot bath agenda is one of the escapism that Esther did to console herself. The religious conflicts in this context were shown through the thoughts of "I don't believe in baptism" because baptism is usually performed by Christians. It also shows the fact that Esther wasn't a Christian at all. The Chapter also represented that she had a religious confusion within her. According to Krosel et al.,(2022), religious conflict constantly occurs in the early stage of the plot, and the main character's confusion will be established from this plot to the next plot.

This conflict is written in Chapter 2 which is the early stage of the plot. Esther's fear of death in religious conflict is affected by the environment around her which led her to the contradiction of religious thought. Therefore, the religious conflict in Chapter 2 page 28 has a relation to the religious conflict stated by Krosel et al.,(2022).

#### *Chapter 13, page 213 (fear of death)*

The writer found that a monologue in Chapter 13 page 213 correlates with Esther Greenwood's internal conflict called fear of death. This internal conflict is classified as religious conflict according to Krosel et al.,(2022). The monologue written in The Bell Jar is as follows:

*"Of course, I didn't believe in life after death or the virgin birth or the Inquisition or the infallibility of that little monkey-faced Pope or anything, but I didn't have to let the priest see this, I could just concentrate on my sin, and he would help me repent. The only trouble was Church, even the Catholic Church, didn't take up the whole of your life. No matter how much you knelt and prayed, you still had to eat three meals a day and have a job and live in the world."*

In the monologue above, it is mentioned by the author that Esther Greenwood was having a religious conflict within her. The words life after death, virgin birth, little monkey-faced Pope, Church, and Catholic church represented religious things. The conflict shows in a sentence, "No matter how much you knelt and prayed, you still had to eat three meals a day and have a job and live in the world." The reason why Esther said this to herself is because she was disappointed by her expectations when she chose to believe in religion. She thinks that religion could not save her mental issues





and her suicidal thoughts. It is related to the definition of religious conflict stated by Krosel et al.,(2022) that someone has a religious conflict usually because of the contradiction of thought and belief. The way Esther put her opinion about religion's system because of her mental issue shaped a contradiction of thought and belief within her towards religion.

### ***Moral Conflict (directionless)***

#### *Chapter 3, page 41*

The writer found that a monologue in Chapter 3 page 41 correlates with Esther Greenwood's internal conflict called directionless. This internal conflict is classified as moral conflict according to Krosel et al.,(2022). The monologue written in *The Bell Jar* is as follows:

*"I'm very interested in everything." The words fell with a hollow flatness onto Jay Cee's desk, like so many wooden nickels."*

Esther's sense of loss of direction or loss of purpose (directionless) was first written by the author in Chapter 3 of this novel. Starting from the meeting with Jay Cee, Esther's manager at a fashion magazine company, where Jay Cee advised Esther to take a writing class and develop her language skills because, in the previous Chapter, she was unsure about taking the chemistry class again or try to step up to become a writer. According to Krosel et al.,(2022), moral conflict usually happens within someone because of two opposite values that affect them to against their value to meet the expectation. The loss of direction and purpose of Esther was also written down because of the family's expectations given by her mother. The influence from her family, especially the mother figure's influence, affected Esther's

journey as a young adult woman in pursuing her purpose. The words "hollow flatness" prove that Esther has no passion for pursuing her dream job as life's purpose.

#### *Chapter 4, page 50*

The writer found that a monologue in Chapter 4 page 50 correlates with Esther Greenwood's internal conflict called directionless. This internal conflict is classified as moral conflict according to Krosel et al.,(2022). The monologue written in *The Bell Jar* is as follows:

*"My mother wasn't much help. My mother had taught shorthand and typing to support us ever since my father died, and secretly she hated it and hated him for dying and leaving no money because he didn't trust life insurance salesmen. She was always on to me to learn shorthand after college, so I'd have a practical skill as well as a college degree. 'Even the apostles were tent-makers,' she'd say. 'They had to live, just the way we do.'"*

In the monologue above, the author starts to write about Esther Greenwood's past and the pressure from her mother. It is also written that Esther's father passed away before she started her young adult life. It is explained that her mother taught her about shorthand to support her family's financial problem after her husband died instead of to support Esther's dream job. The continuous pressure given by her mother is also written in a sentence "Even the apostles were tent makers". It is shown that Esther's mother was pursuing nothing and gave half of the burden to Esther to make money. The conclusion is Esther was having a directionless internal conflict where her purpose had already faded because of the pressure given by her mother.



## ***Self-Perception Conflict (role confusion)***

*Chapter 7, pages 95-96*

The writer found that a monologue in Chapter 7 pages 95-96 correlates with Esther Greenwood's internal conflict called role confusion. This internal conflict is classified as self-perception conflict according to Krosel et al.,(2022). The monologue written in The Bell Jar is as follows:

*"I was a terrible dancer. I couldn't carry a tune. I had no sense of balance, and when we had to walk down a narrow board with our hands out and a book on our heads in gym class I always fell over. I couldn't ride a horse or ski, the two things I wanted to do most because they cost too much money. I couldn't speak German read Hebrew or write Chinese. I didn't even know where most of the odd out-of-the-way countries the UN men in front of me represented fitted in on the map."*

The evidence of role confusion is when Esther deliberately ignores the direction of the writing. She gets distracted from the surrounding society and her thoughts which leads her into this role confusion. The role confusion in Esther Greenwood is influenced by the choice of role that she will achieve in the future. When one of her friends, Jody, asked her if she would join them in renting the same apartment (since Esther took a writing class nearby) she immediately turned it down. The confusion of roles has surfaced throughout her conversations with her friend because writing has always been Esther's goal in life but she doesn't even try more to achieve it. This conflict felt by Esther is related to the self-perception conflict stated by Krosel et al.,(2022). It is stated that self-perception

conflict is related to the idea of self-image and self-awareness of the main character which leads them to doubt their authenticity. The way Esther wasn't sure about her goals in life and decided to focus on the other goal, made her doubt her skill and authenticity and led her to role confusion.

## ***Love Conflict (Trust issue and situations)***

*Chapter 7, page 102 (trust issue)*

The writer found that a monologue in Chapter 7 page 102 correlates with Esther Greenwood's internal conflict called trust issue. This internal conflict is classified as love conflict according to Krosel et al.,(2022). The monologue written in The Bell Jar is as follows:

*"Finally I decided that if it was so difficult to find a redblooded intelligent man who was still pure by the time he was twenty-one I might as well forget about staying pure myself and marry somebody who wasn't pure either. Then when he started to make my life miserable I could make his miserable as well."*

In the monologue above, Esther was having a trust issue problem within herself. The reason behind this internal conflict is because of the patriarchal society and its law which burdened the victim of rape which in majority felt by women. The amount of burden that the law had for a woman as a victim made the trust issue within Esther toward marriage increase. On the other hand, the consent policy made to put a man and woman in equal rights threatened Esther as a young adult woman. The fact is the consent policy couldn't save a woman from becoming a victim of a rape case or in sexual life between an opposite



gender. The words, "I might as well forget about staying pure myself and marry somebody who wasn't pure either" are sarcastically pointed out to the patriarchal society. According to Krosel et al (2022), love conflict usually brings the main character to a struggle between their logic and their emotion. It is related to the way Esther has to struggle with her hopeless romantic feelings and the logic of living in a patriarchal society. She needs to press down her feelings because of the reality she faced regarding a romantic relationship. In conclusion, the trust issue in the love conflict made Esther have a problem with having a true relationship with a man.

#### *Chapter 8, page 117 (situations)*

The writer found that a monologue in Chapter 8 page 117 correlates with Esther Greenwood's internal conflict called situationship. This internal conflict is classified as love conflict according to Krosel et al.,(2022). The monologue written in The Bell Jar is as follows:

*"I thought if only I had a keen, shapely bone structure to my face or could discuss politics shrewdly or was a famous writer Constantin might find me interesting enough to sleep with. And then I wondered if as soon as he came to like me he would sink into ordinariness, and if as soon as he came to love me I would find fault after fault, the way I did with Buddy Willard and the boys before him."*

In the monologue above, Esther mentioned two names of a man they are Constantin and Buddy Willard. In the first paragraph of the monologue, Esther mentions how she had hoped to become an attractive girl in her society. It is because she had a romantic feeling towards Constantin, a translator at the United Nations who had a mysterious

side that Esther couldn't find an American man. But her feelings towards Constantin lead her to another insecurity because she thinks that her appearance doesn't fit with the beauty standard in her society. So it is leading her to tend to change a romantic partner because of a lack of self-esteem and confidence. On the other side, her relationship with Buddy Willard also had a problem. Buddy who was written as Esther's first real boyfriend and the only man who almost committed to marrying her in the first place, is the one who caused Esther's relationship problem. It was after Buddy's summer affair with a waitress. In The Bell Jar, Buddy is also depicted as a hypocritical man who tries to seduce Esther and dumps her after his feelings for her decrease. After that case, Esther's relationship conflict continued. Some of the men who had a relationship with Esther are Constantin, Buddy Willard, and Marco.

#### ***Existential Conflict (Suicidal Thoughts, Depression and Alienation)***

#### *Chapter 9, page 142 (suicidal thoughts)*

The writer found that a monologue in Chapter 9 page 142 correlates with Esther Greenwood's internal conflict called suicidal thoughts. This internal conflict is classified as existential conflict according to Krosel et al.,(2022). The monologue written in The Bell Jar is as follows:

*"The grey scraps were ferried off, to settle here, there, exactly where I would never know."*

It started with Doreen asking Esther to attend her friend's party, his name is Lenny. At first, Esther is hesitant to attend a party she usually avoids, but then she decides to join with Doreen. At the party, Esther meets Marco, a man who hates women and the one who asks her to be his dance partner.



The first time, Esther turned him down but Marco insisted on her. The reason for him insisting on Esther to be his dance partner was because he wanted the “gold” Esther had brought. Throughout the story of Esther and Marco, there is no passion and love between them but only anger and hatred. Esther punched Marco in the nose and Marco had a bloodstain on his cheek. After the incident, Esther returned to her apartment feeling empty. On the roof of her apartment, Esther loses her mind and feels an emptiness inside her. In the middle of a lonely roof, she crawled and stood on the precarious chair. It shows that Esther had a depression within her that she couldn't share with anyone but herself. The suicidal thoughts in existential conflict felt by Esther have a relation with existential conflict stated by Krosel et al., (2022). It is stated that existential conflict occurs when a character starts to question their purpose in life. Krosel et al.,(2022) also stated that this conflict is the aftermath of traumatic loss and mental health issues experienced by Esther Greenwood in *The Bell Jar* novel.

#### *Chapter 12, page 190 (Alienation)*

The writer found that a monologue in Chapter 12 page 190 correlates with Esther Greenwood's internal conflict called alienation. This internal conflict is classified as existential conflict according to Krosel et al., (2022). The monologue written in *The Bell Jar* is as follows:

*“I moved in front of the medicine cabinet. If I looked in the mirror while I did it, it would be like watching somebody else, in a book or a play. But the person in the mirror was paralyzed and too stupid to do a thing.”*

In the monologue above, Esther has just woken up from the shock treatment given by Dr. Gordon. At that time she had to undergo several treatments to cure the

mental illness she was suffering from. It was written that she had a progressively worsening condition before she was taken to a special hospital to be given some mental healing treatment. Esther explained that she was unable to recognize herself in the mirror after waking up from a paralyzed condition after the treatment. Therefore, the internal conflict in this chapter is alienation. Alienation is a condition where a person is confused about her self-consciousness and it makes a person struggling to recognize themselves. It also has an obvious relation with Krosel et al.,(2022) statement about the existential conflict which has a definition as a condition where the character is stuck in confusion and loss of self-awareness as a human being.

#### *Chapter 13, page 205 (Suicidal Thought and Alienation)*

The writer found that a monologue in Chapter 13 page 205 correlates with Esther Greenwood's internal conflicts called suicidal thoughts and alienation. This internal conflict is classified as existential conflict according to Krosel et al.,(2022). The monologue written in *The Bell Jar* is as follows:

*“That morning I had tried to hang myself.”*

I had taken the silk cord of my mother's yellow bathrobe as soon as she left for work, and, in the amber shade of the bedroom, fashioned it into a knot that slipped up and down on itself. It took me a long time to do this, because I was poor at knots and had no idea how to make a proper one.”

In the monologue above, Esther was having suicidal thoughts that made her impulsively search for something to kill her. It is conducted after she had a shock treatment





in a special hospital and after that she felt a worse alienation with her own body. The suicide attempt was conducted in her house when her family was not around. It also shows that she doesn't have any trust in her family, especially her mother. The monologue above also shows how Esther was not interested in her current career as an employee in Fashion Magazine. She thought that her current career was a failure because she couldn't follow the fashion trend. The suicidal thoughts were proved in a sentence, "That morning I had tried to hang myself" and the other sentences show Esther's alienation from her purpose. Krosel et al., (2022) stated that the existential conflict affects someone's perspective on their own life and will eventually question their life as a human being which also happened to Esther in The Bell Jar novel.

*Chapter 15, page 241 (Depression and Alienation)*

The writer found that a monologue in Chapter 15 page 241 correlates with Esther Greenwood's internal conflicts called depression and alienation. This internal conflict is classified as existential conflict according to Krosel et al., (2022). The monologue written in The Bell Jar is as follows:

*"I sank back into the grey, plush seat and closed my eyes. The air of the bell jar wadded around me and I couldn't stir. I had my room again."*

In the monologue above, Esther has alienated herself multiple times after a treatment given to her in her new ward (mental hospital's ward). It is written that she didn't sink herself in the grey area or a plush seat, it means she was drowned in her own worst thoughts. The mental sickness

she had shaped her into a person who hardly recognized her existence even her own body. The word "the bell jar", proved that Esther was trapped in her thoughts and world.

## CONCLUSION

Each of the internal conflicts felt by Esther Greenwood came from the point of view she had throughout the novel's chapter. In the discussion, there are the types of internal conflicts stated by Krosel et al., (2022) which also have a relation to the conflicts that Esther has. There are five types of internal conflicts by Krosel et al., (2022) that represent nine of Esther's internal conflicts. Each internal conflict has an implied meaning which represents the main character's state of mind. This state of mind was causing the internal conflicts that happened in Esther's young adult life. The writer found that the author of The Bell Jar novel did not convey the main character's internal conflicts explicitly. Sylvia Plath as the author provides implicit codes in the form of symbols that describe Esther Greenwood's mental state. The phrase "The Bell Jar" which is the title of this novel is one of the main symbols that describes the condition of the main character's whole life. The internal conflicts that Esther felt during her youth are related to one another which forms a pattern, namely the "depressive process" of having internal conflicts. The research question regarding "What is the correlation between each symbol with Esther Greenwood's internal conflict" proved by the relevance of symbols to existing internal conflicts. The relevance is associated with a semiotic approach in symbolism by Peirce (1860).





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