

Esther Greenwood's Finding Identity Process
in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*

Lafindri Taniajeng Permatasari

English Literature, Faculty of Language and Arts, The State University of Surabaya
lafindrip@mhs.unesa.ac.id

Hujuala Rika Ayu, S.S., M.A.

English Literature, Faculty of Language and Arts, The State University of Surabaya
hujualarika@unesa.ac.id

Abstrak

Sylvia Plath, yang dianugerahi Hadiah Pulitzer untuk puisi, memiliki sebuah karya novel yang terkenal dan juga *best seller* berjudul *The Bell Jar*. Novel ini mempunyai tema yang umumnya muncul dalam novel remaja yaitu identitas. Skripsi ini menggambarkan proses pencarian identitas dan perkembangan kepribadian Esther Greenwood dalam novel *The Bell Jar* karya Sylvia Plath. Teori *mirror stage* digunakan untuk menganalisis masalah identitas dalam novel ini. Analisis . Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menjelaskan bagaimana Esther Greenwood menemukan id tersebut berfokus pada teori dan konsepsi identitas oleh Jacques Lacanentitasnya yang kemudian memberikan pengaruh kepada perkembangan kepribadiannya. Skripsi ini memaparkan kehidupan Esther Greenwood sebelum dan sesudah memiliki identitas serta perjuangannya mencapai keadaan tersebut. Selain memaparkan proses pencarian identitasnya, skripsi ini juga menunjukkan bahwa proses tersebut mempengaruhi perkembangan kepribadian Esther Greenwood.

Kata Kunci: identitas, kepribadian, mirros stage, masa remaja.

Abstract

Sylvia Plath, who is awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry, writes her one and only novel that has been published and has become a best seller novel titled *The Bell Jar*. The novel used a common theme that occurred in adolescence novel which is identity. This thesis portrays finding identity process and personality development of Esther Greenwood in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*. Mirror stage theory is used to clarify the identity issue in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*. The analysis focused on the theory and conception of identity by Jacques Lacan. The aim of this research is to explicate finding identity process of Esther Greenwood which later on related to her personality development. This thesis discovers Esther's struggles before she found her identity and how she manages to achieve her identity after her struggling. Besides her finding identity process, this thesis also shows that the process of her finding identity influences her personality development.

Keywords: identity, personality, mirror stage, adolescence.

INTRODUCTION

Sylvia Plath once wrote a novel titled *The Bell Jar*. One of the themes of the novel is about identity. Identity is a self-portrait that is formed from many elements; vocational or career identity; political identity; religious identity; relationship identity; achievement, intellectual identity; sexual identity; cultural identity; interest; personality characteristic; physical identity (Erikson in Medinnus and Johnson, 1967). Thus, identity has a crucial part which determines about the role of someone has in life. Identity and life are two things that cannot be separated whether in real life or 'life' in literary work. Hence, every character in novel must has an identity to differentiate one with another and to give a purpose why the character in the novel is created in the first place. Mostly, seeking an identity happens during adolescence period. Adolescence period is one of the fragile examples that we can take in terms of identity. Adolescent terms have a broad meaning, which includes mental maturity, emotional, social, and politics. But adolescent can also be interpreted in terms of a smaller development that is a transitional period between

childhood and adulthood that include changes in biological cognitive, social, and emotional (Santrock, 2003). In the novel, Esther is in her adolescence period which still questions who she is, and what will she do with her life.

The main reason on why *The Bell Jar* is chosen to be analyzed is because the author of the novel, Sylvia Plath is one of well-known American poets and she is awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry, posthumously. Sylvia Plath was born on 27 October 1932 in Boston, Massachusetts. She began her writing journey at age of eight, her first poem published in the *Boston Herald's* children's section. After graduating from high school, she continued her study in Smith College and won many prizes in writing and scholarship. She also wrote over fifty short stories which were published in a raft of magazines. She got a chance to experience guest editor life at *Mademoiselle* Magazine for a month in New York after her third year of college. It turned out that the experience was far from her expectation and it led her to a depression. This depression made Sylvia Plath commit

suicide by taking her mother sleeping pills but fortunately she survived from that suicide attempt. Then, she spent six months to receive psychiatric treatment at McLean Hospital. After receiving the treatment, she could go back to college and graduated from Smith with highest honors. On her graduation in 1955, she won the Glascock Prize for *Two Lovers and a Beachcomber by the Real Sea*. Later on, she was accepted at Newnham College to continue her study through fullbright scholarship. She was convinced by Robert Lowell and Anne Sexton to write from her depression experience when attending creative writing seminar. She asked assistance from both Lowell and Sexton to discuss about her depression and suicide attempts. Sylvia Plath became more serious in writing poems and short-story. In October 1960, she published her first collection of poetry, *The Colossus and other poems*. She had been short-listed several times in the Yale Younger Poets book competition and had had work printed in *Harper's*, *The Spectator* and the *Times Literary Supplement*. In August 1961, she finished her semi-autobiographical novel titled *The Bell Jar*. In October 1962, after survived from many terrible events, she wrote 26 poems of her collection *Ariel*. During winter in 1962, she suffered from depression again but she managed to complete the rest of her poetry collection which would be published after her death. Her only novel, *The Bell Jar*, was published under the pen name Victoria Lucas in January 1963. A month after her first novel was published, thirty years old Sylvia Plath committed suicide at her dwelling. She was found dead of carbon monoxide poisoning with her head in the oven. After her death, the volumes *Winter Trees* and *Crossing the Water* were published in the UK, including nine previously unseen poems from the original manuscript of *Ariel* in 1971. Then, her poetries written from 1956 until her death were published in 1981 with title *The Collected Poems*. According to Ted Hughes, her ex-husband, Plath once wrote some one hundred thirty pages of another novel titled *Double Exposure* but the manuscript disappeared somewhere around 1970.

The second reason on why *The Bell Jar* is very challenging to be analyzed is because it is a marvelous novel which achieves a lot of attention from literature world. *The Bell Jar* also gets praises from credible critics, one of them is from The Guardian.

“The Bell Jar is not just a classic piece of fiction (though so out of the box for its time), but also a novel that will continue to resonate with people throughout time as it talks of problems and classic faults with human nature that will always persist.” – The Guardian

On the other hand, *The Bell Jar* has been translated into numerous languages. Then, a famous movie director named Larry Peerce directed a movie based on the novel in 1979 and the movie came up with the same title with the novel. The fascinating facts about *The Bell Jar* above make it becomes one of the twentieth century's best-known novel which never fails to amazed its readers. *The Bell Jar* is mostly based on Plath's own experience. The main character of *The Bell Jar* is a young woman from

the suburbs of Boston, name Esther Greenwood. She got a chance to do internship at a magazine in New York City. Not like other people who worshipped the greatness of New York, Esther felt like she did not belong to the city. She experienced many bad events that made her frightened and disoriented. Besides that, she also received pressure from people around her. Somehow, those things above lead Esther to identity crisis which makes her clueless about herself. In the title *The Bell Jar* also lays powerful clue that reveals Esther Greenwood condition. A bell jar itself means a bell-shaped glass laboratory vessel designed to cover objects or to contain gasses or a vacuum. The image is neatly related with Esther's feelings about herself. She sees herself as a specimen in a jar – disorted from view, preserved against her will, acted upon by others. The metaphor suggests suffocation, immobility, and separation. Trapped in her social and psychological crisis, Esther finds herself “stewing” in her own “sour air” (Plath, 1963).

The last reason on why the novel is worth to be analyzed is because the novel talks about identity. This issue is really appealing because identity is an important element in human life and mostly people face identity issue in their life. *The Bell Jar* can be categorized as coming of age novel that shows Esther's struggles to find her identity that affected by her surroundings. Although identity is frequently mentioned in some literary works but *The Bell Jar* arouses the researcher to analyze it because the novel is a really well written novel which reflects Sylvia Plath personal life at that time.

This research is conducted to mention and describe how Esther Greenwood's finding identity process is depicted in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and to find out how Esther Greenwood's finding identity process develops her personality in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*.

The novel is analyzed using identity theory, specifically the mirror stage, by Jacques Lacan. Identity is a multidimensional and indistinct concept that has been discussed upon in a variety of human sciences, most notably perhaps in philosophy, psychology, social psychology and cultural studies. The definition of identity as elaborated by The Oxford English Dictionary is “the quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties, or in particular qualities under consideration; absolute or essential sameness; oneness” and “the sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition of being a single individual; the fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality” and “who or what a person or thing is; a distinct impression of a single person or thing presented to or perceived by others; a set of characteristics or a description that distinguishes a person or thing from others”. Those definitions by The Oxford English Dictionary strongly relate identity with the idea of sameness and continuity. Meanwhile Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's English Dictionary defines identity simply as “your identity is who you are” or “the identity of a person or place is the characteristics they have that distinguish them from

others". The idea that identity consists of characteristics that distinguish one individual from other individuals is clearly stated in both dictionaries' definitions above.

Identity as the widest self-related concept, and notes the importance of Erik H. Erikson in the modern definitions of identity: "[Erikson] emphasized that identity is both a highly personal construction, developed through the integration of various identifications and misidentifications with significant others and reference groups, and a social construction, developed through internalization of roles and reflected appraisals of others" (Westen, 2003). Identity can be defined as an entity that is equal to itself (Lacan in Tiainen, 2013).

Jacques Lacan's theory of relational identity allows for relativity and difference in one's identity formation (Bertens, 2008). The important concepts in Lacanian psychoanalysis are the 'Imaginary', the 'Mirror Stage', the 'Symbolic' and the 'Real'. The 'Imaginary' state begins in the infant's development when the infant has not developed the speaking ability or having the sense to differentiate itself and the world. The infant lives in a world of primal desires and drives. The 'Mirror Stage' is the crucial one in the person's identity formation. After finishing the 'Mirror Stage', the infant will go to a state called the 'Symbolic' where its ability to speak and know language are central. In entering the 'Symbolic' and the 'Real', the infant loses its sense of wholeness and boundlessness, and enters into a world of language, social conventions and limitations. The desires and drives of the 'Imaginary' are suppressed and devolved to the unconscious part of mind (Bertens, 2008).

As stated above, between all of the states, the 'Mirror Stage' is the most important stage in relation to identity formation. The mirror stage means identification, or in other words, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image (Lacan, 2000). At this stage, the subject starts to build their identity on the basis of the 'mirror image' that other people and the world reflect back to the subject. Like an image in an actual mirror, this mirror image is a distorted version, a reflection of the actual being. (Bertens, 2008).

The mirror-image is a mirage of the 'I' (Bowie, 1991). Nevertheless, it forms the principle of identity for the subject. The importance of the mirror devices itself in showing the appearances of the 'double', in which psychological realities, however heterogeneous, are manifested. Thus, the subject can see and experience the different sides and notions of themselves (Lacan, 2000).

The concept of 'others' or 'the other' is really crucial for someone's identity. The concept links someone's identity directly to the environment or to the social. For Lacan, it is necessary to get the response and recognition of 'others' and of 'the other' to have an agreement at what someone thinks as their identity. A 'subjectivity' is deciphered if there is any interaction with others. Others can be interpreted with individuals who resemble the subject in one way or another but who are also irrevocably different. Someone can be the subject by way of the perspectives and views of others (Bertens, 2008).

It can be said that the individual's identity is essentially constructed if the interaction between the

individual and the world outside the individual happens. 'Others' or 'the other' can be embodied as concrete persons or the society and social order in real life. The individual's identity is dependent on 'the other' and cannot exist without it. As a result, the identity that an individual has at a given moment is always a relational construction: it allows for a great deal of difference and change. It can happen that way because 'the other', or the world outside the individual whether other people or social and cultural systems, is not stable or it changes constantly. Thus, identity is an ever-ongoing process rather than a fixed state (Bertens, 2008).

To sum up, Lacan's notion of identity crucially involves the ideas of relationality, the importance of 'others' or 'the other', 'the mirror-stage', and 'the double'. The researcher will use these ideas in examining Esther's finding identity process. Although Lacan's stages are used in describing an infant's development, the writer regard them as symbolically applicable to human development in general, and hence, useful and relevant in analyzing Esther's finding identity process.

Since this research also analyzed Esther's personality that is affected by her identity finding process, it is necessary to provide the definition of personality. Personality is a set of individual differences that are affected by the development of an individual: values, attitudes, personal memories, social relationships, habits, and skills (Mischel, W., Shoda, Y., & Smith, R. E., 2004).

Meanwhile oxforddictionaries.com defines personality as the combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual's distinctive character. Another reliable dictionary, Merriam-webster.com, defines personality as the complex of characteristics that distinguishes an individual or a nation or group; especially: the totality of an individual's behavioral and emotional characteristics. Personality also refers to the pattern of thoughts, feelings, social adjustments, and behaviors consistently exhibited over time that strongly influences one's expectations, self-perceptions, values, and attitudes. It also predicts human reactions to other people, problems and stress (Winne, 1973). The definitions above give information that personality is characteristics that make an individual distinctive and can be distinguished from other individuals. Yet, it should be remembered that personality is different with identity because personality is what an individual has shaped the way they live their identity and represent it meanwhile identity is what an individual give to themselves.

METHOD

This research is using second stage of Lacan's theory which is mirror stage. The main data for this research is a novel by Sylvia Plath titled *The Bell Jar*. The novel is analyzed by doing close reading to answer the problems of the research. This method serves the data from the intrinsic and extrinsic aspect in the form of statements and quotations. The data are in the form of direct and indirect speech of the characters in the novel. Particular phrases, dialogues and epilogues which indicate and represent

Esther Greenwood's finding identity process and how it develops her personality are also used to analyze the problems discussed. Some references are also taken from library to support the analysis and strengthen the concept of topic discussed.

ANALYSIS

The Bell Jar talks about the adulthood life of Esther Greenwood. She is the heroine and the narrator of the novel. She comes from middle class family and grows up without her father. She is described as the one who has not found her identity in the novel. The novel starts when Esther gets a scholarship in New York during summer. Since the beginning of the novel, Esther is depicted that she has no clue about herself. When she describes about her family financial status and her achievements, she implies that she does not steer herself. It can be assumed that she just follows what activities she supposed to do, not she wants to do. Esther also says that she feels empty although she lives the dream of thousands of other college girls all over America. She gets a chance to do internship in prestigious magazine but deep inside it is not what she wants to do considering that she does not feel excited with it.

"Only I wasn't steering anything, not even myself. I just bumped from my hotel to work and to parties and from parties to my hotel and back to work like a numb trolley-bus. I guess I should have been excited the way most of other girls were, but I couldn't get myself to react. I felt very still and very empty, the way the eye of a tornado must feel, moving dully along in the middle of the surrounding hullaballo." (p. 3)

Later on, when all the girl that get scholarship must attend an official party, Esther and her friend, Doreen, escape from it and somehow they are trapped among strangers in a bar. When a man asks about Esther's real name, she creates a fake identity to not expose her real name. She states that she feels safe after she introduced herself with a fake name. The reason why she acts that way is because she does not want to be associated if there is any problem in the future considering that she hangs out with bunch of strangers and she has a reputation to be kept. Meanwhile, Doreen introduces herself with her real name confidently. Doreen is not afraid if she must deal with anything that can be happened in the future and she is ready to take the responsibility if she has to hence she does not create a fake name like Esther. From the difference between Esther and Doreen, it can be assumed that Esther is not confident or she does not

trust herself that she can take responsibility like Doreen. She tries to hide herself and creates a fake identity to protect her from what might happen in the future. She chooses to play safe and not to take a risk. It also shows that Esther is not ready to embrace who she is or she does not know about herself.

"Say, where do you come from?" Frankie asked, sitting up with a jerk. 'What's your name?'

'This here's Doreen.' Lenny slid his hand around Doreen's bare arm and gave her a squeeze.

What surprised me was that Doreen didn't let on she noticed what he was doing. She just sat there, dusky as a bleached blonde negress in her white dress and sipped daintily at her drink.

'My name 's Elly Higginbottom,' I said. 'I come from Chicago.' After that I felt safer. I didn't want anything I said or did that night to be associated with me and my real name and coming from Boston." (p. 12)

When Esther and Doreen come to Lenny's apartment to continue the party, Esther alienates herself meanwhile Doreen and Lenny are busy jitterbugging. The crucial thing for someone's identity is the concept of *others* or *the other*, which links the person's identity strongly to the environment, to the social (Bertens 2008). The quotation below shows that Esther does not bother to join the interaction between Doreen and Lenny. The lack of interaction between Esther and her environment creates a barrier for her to find her identity. With no identity in life, Esther feels like she does not exist. She feels like a hole in the ground. She feels that way because when someone does not have identity then they do not know who they are. If someone does not know who they are then they find it difficult to find a purpose in life.

"My drink was wet and depressing. Each time I took another sip it tasted more and more like dead water. Around the middle of the glass there was painted a pink lasso with yellow polka dots. I drank to about an inch below the lasso and waited a bit, and when I went to take another sip, the drink was up to lasso-level again.

Out of the air Lenny's ghost voice boomed, 'Wye oh wye did I ever leave Wyoming?'

The two of them didn't even stop jitterbugging during the intervals. I felt myself shrinking to a small black dot against all those red and white rugs and

that pine-panelling. I felt like a hole in the ground.

It's like watching Paris from an express caboose heading in the opposite direction – every second the city gets smaller and smaller, only you feel it's really you getting smaller and smaller and lonelier and lonelier, rushing away from all those lights and that excitement at about a million miles an hour.” (p. 17)

The mirror stage means identification, or in other words, the transformation that takes place in the subject when they assume an image. At this stage, the subject starts to build their identity on the basis of the 'mirror image' that other people and the world reflect back to the subject (Lacan, 2000). Meanwhile, the quotation below shows that Esther cannot recognize herself so when she looks at mirror, she describes herself as 'the person' because she assumes that the reflection she stares at is a picture of someone else. That situation also implies that Esther does not know who she is even when her reflection is right in front of her. It can be concluded that Esther cannot identify herself.

“At first I didn't see what the trouble was. It wasn't a mirror at all, but a picture.

You couldn't tell whether the person in the picture was a man or a woman, because their hair was shaved off and sprouted in bristly chicken-feather tufts all over their head. One side of the person's face was purple, and bulged out in a shapeless way, shading to green along the edges, and then to a sallow yellow. The person's mouth was pale brown, with a rose-coloured sore at either corner.

The most startling thing about the face was its supernatural conglomeration of bright colours.

I smiled.

The mouth in the mirror cracked into a grin.” (p. 183-184)

Identity is a self-portrait that is formed from many elements; such as vocational or career identity; political identity; religious identity; relationship identity; achievement, intellectual identity; sexual identity; cultural identity; interest; personality characteristic; physical identity. One element that forms identity is vocational or career identity (Erikson in Medinnus, 1967). Meanwhile, in this phase, Esther still confused with what career she really wants to do. This quotation below shows her confusion. At first, she believes that her dream is to study and read and write and work like mad

but then she said “it actually seemed to be true” that indicates her doubt.

“All my life I'd told myself studying and reading and writing and working like mad was what I wanted to do, and it actually seemed to be true, I did everything well enough and got all A's, and by the time I made it to college nobody could stop me.” (p. 33)

The quotation below still proves Esther's confusion about her career. When Jay Cee asked her what she wants to do after she graduates, she gives a shocking reply for herself. She said she does not really know with no doubt at all. The narration tells that Esther thinks she wants to be an editor. Her unconscious mind states like that because she adores Jay Cee who is an editor of pretentious magazine and able to speak a couple of languages which Esther dreams about. Esther really wants to be a multilingual but somehow she cannot make it comes true. Thus, when she meets Jay Cee, she admires her. Esther's admiration slowly turns into a desire to be like Jay Cee that is why she imitates her.

“What I always thought I had in mind was getting some big scholarship to graduate school or a grant to study all over Europe, and then I thought I'd be a professor and write books of poems or write books of poems and be an editor of some sort. Usually I had these plans on the tip of my tongue.

'I don't really know,' I heard myself say. I felt a deep shock, hearing myself say that, because the minute I said it, I knew it was true.” (p. 34)

Once again, Esther's unconscious mind wants to imitate someone else. This time, Esther is envy with Doreen and secretly wishes that she can do whatever she wants just like Doreen. Esther always looks someone else and wants to be anyone but herself. She is lost and cannot decide what is best for her and what she supposed to do. Esther acts that way because she is powerless and not able to control herself since she does not know what she should do with her life.

“I told Doreen I would not go to the show or the luncheon or the film premiere, but that I would not go to Coney Island either, I would stay in bed. After Doreen left, I wondered why I couldn't go the whole way doing what I should any more. This made me sad and tired. Then I wondered why I couldn't go the whole way doing what I shouldn't, the way Doreen did, and this made me even sadder and more tired.” (p. 31)

People who have identity, normally already know what they want to do in life. For Esther who has no identity and still clueless about her future, it is difficult for her to live her life. This quotation below clearly shows about Esther's hesitation to choose a path life. She uses a fig-tree as a metaphor of her life. The tree has many branches that every one of the branches holds one path that guides Esther to the future. Here, Esther implies her dreams. In first branch, it shows her to be an ordinary housewife with happy family. Second branch shows her passion to be a famous poet and the third one still shows her career identity to become a brilliant professor. The fourth branch clearly indicates that she wants to be an editor and has nickname just like Jay Cee. Then the fifth branch tells about her dream to explore around the world and the sixth tells that she does not want to settle down and only want to date men with no intention to be married. Besides those branches, there are still many branches that she cannot figure out. It implies that she has various choices and cannot decide one for her life. Esther wants to have all the choices because she really wants to be everything. *"She wants," said Jay Cee wittily, 'to be everything.'"* (p.107) Her inability to choose one makes her lost the opportunity to live her dream and lets all the options gone just like that.

"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 Ee Gee, the amazing editor, and another fig was Europe and Africa and South America, and another fig was Constantin and Socrates and Attila and a pack of other lovers with queer names and off-beat professions, and another fig was an Olympic lady crew champion, and beyond and above these figs were many more figs I couldn't quite make out.

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." (p. 81)

The quotation below indicates that Esther already has a vision for her future although it is

only in a supposition. She has been through many terrible events in the past thus she wants to get rid of it and be someone new. She always mentions Elly Higginbottom and Chicago when she wants to hide her real name and city she comes from. Under her new name that once she created in New York, she wishes that she will meet people who love her for her personality not because of her brain. She also hopes that she will marry someone ordinary whose characteristics are far different from her ex-boyfriend who gives her hard times.

"I thought if I ever did get to Chicago, I might get change my name to Elly Higginbottom for good. Then nobody would know I had thrown up a scholarship at a big eastern women's college and mucked up a month in New York and refused a perfectly solid medical student for a husband who would one day be a member of the A.M.A. and earn pots of money.

In Chicago, people would take me for what I was.

I would be simple Elly Higginbottom, the orphan. People would love me for my sweet, quiet nature. They wouldn't be after me to read books and write long papers on the twins in James Joyce. And one day I might just marry a virile, but tender, garage mechanic and have a big cowy family, like Dodo Conway.

If I happened to feel like it." (p.140)

The mirror stage means identification: "the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image. . ." At this stage, the person starts to build his identity on the basis of the "mirror image" that other people and the world reflect back to the person (Lacan, 2000). Like an image in an actual mirror, this mirror image is a distorted version, a reflection, of the actual being (Bertens, 2008). "The mirror-image is a mirage of the 'I. . .'" (Bowie, 1991). Nevertheless, it forms the basis for the person's identity. Also notes the importance of the mirror apparatus itself in showing "the appearances of the double, in which psychological realities, however heterogeneous, are manifested". Thus, in a mirror, one is able to see and experience different sides and notions of oneself (Lacan, 2000). Then, Esther also experiences it. It is happened when she thinks about children. Esther has a unique taste on men, she seems always dates a man who has extraordinary name. Once, she gets a chance to date a man named Constantin. Night after they spend time together, Constantin asks Esther to come to his apartment. She knows what this means yet she does not reluctant to go there. She is ready to lose her virginity to Constantin and she thinks that

someday she may have a baby but that thought does not mean should happen in near time or if it is not going to happen then Esther feels okay about it.

"I know I might have a baby, but that thought hung far and dim in the distance and didn't trouble me at all." (p. 85)

Esther stated earlier that she might have a big family but her mind still sways and confused. To have a big family means that she should give a birth many times and take care of her children. Yet, one day she wakes up by the sound of woman wheeling baby carriage down the street, the woman is her neighbor who has seven children. Then she said, *"children made me sick"* (p. 124). It indicates her negative thought about children which means she hates them.

Then, Esther changes her mind about marriage. She is unwavering when she tells Buddy that she is never going to get married when Buddy asks her to marry him. She said that his marriage proposal will bowl her over if he asks years ago. At the time Buddy proposes, Esther has set up her mind that she wants to be free and does not want to be attached to anyone by marriage.

"Buddy sat down beside me. He put his arm around my waist and brushed the hair from my ear. I didn't move. Then I heard him whisper, 'How would you like to be Mrs Buddy Willard?'"

I had an awful impulse to laugh.

I thought how that question would have bowled me over at any time in my five- or six-year period of adoring Buddy Willard from a distance.

Buddy saw me hesitate.

'Oh, I'm in no shape now, I know,' he said quickly. 'I'm still on P.A.S. and I may yet lose a rib or two, but I'll be back at med school by next fall. A year from this spring at the latest. . .'

'I think I should tell you something, Buddy.'

'I know,' Buddy said stiffly. 'You've met someone.'

'No, it's not that.'

'What is it, then?'

'I'm never going to get married.'

'You're crazy,' Buddy brightened. 'You'll change your mind.'

'No. My mind's made up.'" (p. 98)

Buddy thinks that the problem is because of his body which gets worse since he is in quarantine program so he convinces Esther that he will back in his shape in a year. Esther knows that she refuses his proposal not because of it but because she really does not want to marry anyone. The thought of marriage does not appeal her anymore. Esther

begins to know what she really wants to do in her life. The society at that time thinks if marriage is an important part for someone life but Esther refuses that idea and instead she wants be a free woman. She does not want to have a commitment which makes her spend her lifetime with only one man.

The joke was that at my wedding my grandfather would see I had all the caviar I could eat. It was a joke because I never intended to get married... (p. 28)

As Erikson earlier, religion identity is a part of identity. Through experience and society around her, Esther decides her religion identity. She comes from multi-religion family. Her mother is a Catholic and her father is a Methodist. Since she is born, she follows her father's step to be a Methodist. It is a common thing if someone is born and their parents teach what their belief to them. The religion that Esther has at that time is a legacy from her father which means that Esther does not decide it by herself. Later on, after her father passes away and she moves to a new city then she turns to be a Unitarian. It still can be assumed that the choice is not made by herself but her mother because at that time, Esther is still under her mother control and her mother picks what she thinks it is the best for Esther. When Esther becomes a grown-up, she said that she is going to a Catholic church. This time, Esther chooses the path by herself. She chooses to be a Catholic in order to save herself from the thought of suicide.

"... I remember the Methodist church. I had been a Methodist for the first nine years of my life, before my father died and we moved and turned Unitarian.

My mother had been a Catholic before she was a Methodist. My grandmother and my grandfather and my Aunt Libby were all still Catholics. My Aunt Libby had broken away from the Catholics Church at the same time my mother did, but then she'd fallen in love with an Italian Catholic, so she'd gone back again.

Lately I had considered going into the Catholic Church myself. I knew that Catholics thought killing yourself was an awful sin. But perhaps, if this was so, they might have a good way to persuade me out of it." (p. 172-173)

During Esther's finding identity process, she gets many influences from people around her, one of them is Buddy Willard. Esther really adores Buddy and she puts so much respect to him. Therefore, her admiration and respect make Buddy Willard as her role model. Esther stated that Buddy is not the type of man who will do sex before marriage.

All I'd heard about, really, was how fine and clean Buddy was and how he was the kind of person a girl should stay fine and clean for. So I didn't really see the harm in anything Buddy would think up to do. (p72)

With Buddy and his perfect image in Esther's eyes as her role model, she wants to be someone pure like Buddy so she protects her virginity at all costs. Later on, when Buddy confesses about his affair with a waitress in his past workplace, Esther learns that Buddy is just an asshole and she considers that protecting her virginity is no longer important. After taking off Buddy's image as her role model, she starts to know what she wants to do and she decides to not protecting her virginity any more.

"Ever since I'd learned about the corruption of Buddy Willard my virginity weighed like a millstone around my neck. It had been of such enormous importance to me for so long that my habit was to defend it at all costs. I had been defending it for five years and I was sick of it." (p. 240)

As stated above, Esther wants to be a free woman and to achieve her dream, she decides to do bolt. It is her own choice and she knows what consequences that will wait for her. Yet, Esther sees the consequences as things that give her a freedom. By doing bolt, she does not need to worry about marriage or having a child. So, Esther is one step closer to achieve her dream to be a free woman.

"I climbed up on the examination table, thinking: 'I am climbing to my freedom, freedom to fear, freedom from marrying the wrong person, like Buddy Willard, just because of sex, freedom from the Florence Crittenden Homes where all the poor girls go who should have been fitted out like me, because what they did, they would do anyway, regardless...'" (p. 235)

After doing bolt, Esther feels relieve and confident. She stated *I was my own woman* means that she is confident that she has all parts of her body, mind, and soul. She does not belong to anyone but herself. She can do whatever she wants to do without worrying anything. Then, she stated *The next step was to find the proper sort of man*, the quotation shows that even though she does not have any intention to be married but she still needs man and this time, she does not want to recklessly choose partner. She sets her standard because she knows that she is worth it.

"I was my own woman. The next step was to find the proper sort of man." (p. 235)

Esther used to see Joan as her double in many ways. Esther dates Buddy Willard and Joan once dated him too. Then, Esther and Joan end up in the same private institution to cure their mental illness. After that, just like Esther, Joan commits suicide too. Every time Esther sees Joan, she hates her because Joan reminds her with herself, the failure and pathetic Esther. Later on, she found her identity and she is able to differentiate her with 'others' or 'the other', in this case is Joan, she no longer sees Joan as her double. She stated that everything about Joan does not belong to her but she admits that they are close enough so Joan's thoughts and feelings resemble hers just like what the quotation below shows.

I looked at Joan. In spite of the creepy feeling, and in spite of my old, ingrained dislike, Joan fascinated me. It was like observing a Martian, or a particularly warty toad. Her thoughts were not my thoughts, nor her feelings my feelings, but we were close enough so that her thoughts and feelings seemed a wry, black image of my own." (p. 231)

It is important to someone who has been through identity crisis to accept their past and then move on to next stage of their life. Esther proves that she can accept her past and she claims that her past is part of her. After she found her identity, she learns that what creates and strengthens herself is her past.

"I remembered the cadavers and Doreen and the story of the fig-tree and Marco's diamond and the sailor on the Common and Doctor Gordon's wall-eyed nurse and the broken thermometers and the negro with his two kinds of beans and the twenty pounds I gained on insulin and the rock that bulged between sky and sea like a grey skull.

Maybe forgetfulness, like a kind snow, should numb and cover them.

But they were part of me. They were my landscape." (p. 250)

Esther success found her identity through long and tiring process. She is no longer empty and she already found a purpose in her life. She knows that her existence in this world matters and she really treasures it. Esther stated *"I am, I am, I am"* (p. 256) which means I am here, I am alive, I am okay.

"I took a deep breath and listened to the old brag of my heart.

I am, I am, I am". (p. 256)

Esther's personality has been affected during her finding identity process. Her personality develops following her identity process. The more

she finds out about herself, her personality becomes more stable too. In this sub part, the development of Esther's personality in *The Bell Jar* will be mentioned. The discussion will be focused on the quotations that show her thoughts or acts which show the development of Esther's personality.

I thought some of the boys and girls in that bright group might well be friends of Buddy Willard. They would know I knew him, and they would be curious to see me, and afterwards they would gossip about me among themselves. I wanted to be where nobody I knew could ever come. (p. 186)

When Esther receives treatment from the hospital, there is a situation where she is examined by a group of doctor. Considering that Buddy is a doctor too, Esther thinks that one of the doctors that examine her is a friend of Buddy and that will make them talk about Esther behind her back. She is suspicious toward everyone around her because she does not want to be talked about. In fact, her suspicion is unfounded. No one talks behind her back and no one makes a joke about her or her illness. Her suspicion grows because she does not trust anyone even her mother.

When one does not trust anyone included the person that has the closest relationship with them, it is possible if that person throw suspicion to anyone around them and it makes them does not comfortable being around people so that situation leads them to be a loner.

As explained above, Esther is suspicious with everyone around her and it makes her to be a loner. She rather spends her time with her self than with other patients in the hospital.

I thought if they left me alone I might have some peace. (p. 213)

Space that she needs, it can be intended to figure out herself. When she keeps distance with her surrounding then she has more time to think about her purpose in life and her identity. Sometimes, keeping distance can be a good start to find out someone's identity because they can focus on what they want to do in their lives and no one from their surrounding can influence their decision. Yet, in Esther's case, she crosses over the line. Her lonely soul finds it difficult to face her problems by herself. With no one to trust, this lonely part of herself leads her to do something terrible, a suicide.

Esther fights her problems with no support from neither her family nor her friend. She tries to solve the problems by herself. Yet, all her effort makes her to attempt suicide.

Then I saw it would be pointless to swim as far as the rock, because my body would take

that excuse to climb out and lie in the sun, gathering strength to swim back.

The only thing to do was to drown myself then and there. (p. 169)

She attempts suicide not only once but four times. First is, as the quotation above, when she swims with her friends in the ocean, she lets her body drawn. Second is when she decides to hang herself and fortunately she cannot find proper place to do it. Third is when she wants to cut herself and this attempt is failed because there is no hot water to support her suicide. Last is when she takes her mother's sleeping pills and later on her mother found her overdosed and almost died. Before all those attempts, Esther's unconscious mind already gives hint about that act. She has a bizarre taste on plant. She mentions that her favorite plant is the whipping scholar tree. The plant has an ability to disemboweled itself. Just like a suicidal attempt. She finds it calming her mind when she thinks about that plant. Her mind unconsciously forms thought if something do not go well with her life then she will do a suicide just like the plant.

"It was so dark in the bar I could hardly make out anything except Doreen. With her white hair and white dress she was so white she looked silver. I think she must have reflected the neons over the bar. I felt myself melting into the shadows like the negative of a person I'd never seen before in my life." (p. 10)

There is a scene where Esther and Doreen go to a bar with some strangers. Since Esther steps in the bar, she already feels that her appearance is not as attractive as Doreen's. With Doreen as the comparison, she defines herself as a negative film of someone she had never seen before meanwhile she describes Doreen as neons over the bar. Negative film has dark and boring color while neons have colorful color and they illuminate. The way Esther looks at herself as something that is not attractive shows that she has a low self-esteem. She feels that Doreen's existence and appearance are more dominant than hers.

"It never occurred to me to say no." (p. 101)

The state that shows Esther is powerless is when Buddy asks her to go skiing with him. She said that "*she had no business up there*" (p. 99). She knows that she does not want to go there but she cannot say no to Buddy. Buddy keep insisting to teach Esther skiing although he does not know how to skiing. Esther is powerless so she cannot deny what Buddy asks to her. The consequence that Esther should take because of her inability to say no is she gets into accident and her leg is broken.

But I wasn't getting married. There ought, I thought, to be a ritual for being born twice – patched, retreaded and approved for the road. I was trying to think of an appropriate one when Doctor Nolan appeared from nowhere and touched me on the shoulder.

'All right, Esther.'

I rose and followed her to the open door.

Pausing, for a brief breath, on the threshold, I saw the silver-haired doctor who had told me about the rivers and the Pilgrims on my first day, and the pocked, cadaverous face of Miss Huey, and eyes I thought I recognized over white masks.

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. (p. 257)

After Esther gets her identity, she starts to have positive personalities. Esther is no longer having low self-esteem. She sees herself as someone who is confident and ready to face anything in front of her. Her confidence is proved when she will be examined by the doctors to decide whether she can leave the asylum or should stay to lengthen her treatment. Although at first, she is nervous but she can convince herself that the examination is nothing but a ritual to be the new version of herself. She realizes that she should be confident to through this examination so she can reach what she has been dreaming of. Her confidence success makes her step in the room.

"I waited for the doctor, wondering if I should bolt." (p. 232)

The new Esther, who already has an identity and knows what she wants to be, becomes brave and can take a decision. She also has the guts to take the responsibility of her decision. When Esther knows that she does not want to have children, she decides to do bolt. She does not reluctant to do it eventhough it is illegal and contrary with her religion. *"I knew what I was doing was illegak – in Massachusetts, anyway, because the state was cram-jam full of Catholics..." (p. 232)*

CONCLUSION

The finding identity of Esther Greenwood and how the process develops her personalities are already explained. The finding identity process is analyzed using mirror stage to prove that there are three steps of finding identity process that must be passed to help Esther found her identity. Mirror stage means identification which has three stages and those stages are an imagery of someone who never see their reflection in a mirror then they see their reflection and they learn that they are different with other people then they know who they are. After the

theory is applied to the novel, it can be found that Esther overcame those three stages. First, she does not have identity so she hides under a fake identity to make herself comfortable and she follows women role model around her to copy them. Second, she starts to learn who she wants to be and to form her identity. Third, she can identify herself and she becomes the person who she wants to be. After unraveling the finding identity process of Esther Greenwood, then, how it develops her personalities can be pointed and mentioned.

Esther Greenwood personality develops concomitant with her finding identity process. The development of her personality is shown vividly in the novel. There is a contrary in her personality when she has not found identity and when she already has it. Esther Greenwood's personality when she has not have identity tends to negative side such as suspicious, loner, depressed, low self-esteem, powerless. Meanwhile, after she found her identity, she becomes a confident and brave woman. It can be concluded that her personality development is definitely influenced by her identity.

All in all, this this thesis tries to give some idea about the finding identity process of Esther Greenwood and how the finding identity process develops her personality. It is also a decent material to understand what is going on inside the novel and help the reader to comprehend the issue easier. Besides the problems that are already discussed in this thesis, another issue which can be studied is gender role in 1950s America. *The Bell Jar* takes a place in America during 1950s and shows that male and female characters deliver different roles based on their gender. This issue is expected to be analyzed for the next study for those who want to use Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* as the object of the study.

REFERENCES

- Bertens, Hans. 2008. *Literary Theory: The Basics*. 2nd ed. Oxon: Routledge.
- Bowie, Malcolm. 1991. *Lacan*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Collins English dictionary*. 2006. Glasgow: HarperCollins
- Lacan, Jacques. 2000. "The mirror stage" in *Identity: A Reader*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. 44–50.
- Medinnus, Gene Roland. 1967. *Readings in The Psychology of Parent-Child Relations*. New Jersey: Wiley.
- Mischel, Walter & Shoda, Yuichi & Ayduk, Ozlem. 2004. *Introduction to Personality: Toward an Integrative Science of the Person*. New Jersey: Wiley.
- Personality. 2017. In *Merriam-Webster.com*.

Retrieved 17 April, 2017, from <https://merriam-webster.com/dictionary/personality>

Personality. 2017. In *Oxforddictionaries.com*
Retrieved 17 April, 2017, from
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/personality>

Plath, Sylvia. 1999. *The Bell Jar*. London: Faber & Faber.

Santrock, John W. 2003. *Adolescence*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

The Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tiainen, Annimaria. 2013. *Becoming Jane: Identity, Dependency and Autonomy in Charlotte Brontë's Jane* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from <https://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:uta-1-23359>

Westen, Drew & Heim, Amy Kegley. 2003. Disturbances of Self and Identity in Personality Disorders. In Mark R. Leary & June Price Tangney (eds.), *Handbook of Self and Identity*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Winne, J.F. & Gittinger, J.W. 1973. An Introduction To The Personality Assessment System. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 01 (02), 99-163. doi: 10.1002/1520-6629(197304)1:2<99::AID-JCOP2290010202>3.0.CO;2-U.