

ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of the character of matrophobia as demonstrated in the relationship between Esther Greenwood and her mother, Mrs. Greenwood, in Sylvia Plath's novel *The Bell Jar* (1963). The aims of this research are to find out the portrayal of Esther's matrophobia in the novel and to analyze the cause of Mrs. Greenwood to trigger Esther's matrophobia. The feminist literary critique was used as the research method and Adrienne Rich's theory of matrophobia and institutional motherhood (*Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* 1976) was applied. The method of research for this research is library research method with the primary source of information is *The Bell Jar* and secondary sources are books and journal articles of scholars.

The results show that Esther doesn't hate her mother, but she fears to inherit the limited existence lived by Mrs. Greenwood in a patriarchy. The role of Mrs. Greenwood, as an unconscious agent of the patriarchy, is to embody the traditional image of womanhood, to control Esther's actions and desires, and to perpetuate internalized misogynistic values through maternal care. Thus, Esther has an identity crisis, a psychological conflict in her, and grows even more anxious as she is torn between her own identity and her mother's identity. The study findings suggest that Esther's psychological collapse is related to matrophobia as a structural reaction to the oppression of patriarchal authorities that was linked to the mother-daughter relationship. Hence, *The Bell Jar* offers as a psychological struggle and a feminist criticism of the intergenerational transmission of patriarchy.

Keywords: Matrophobia, Mother-Daughter Relationship, Patriarchy, Institutional Motherhood, Feminist Literary Criticism, *The Bell Jar*