CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

*The Bell Jar* is a novel by Sylvia Plath. It was published by William Heinemen in London in 1963. The first publication was under the pseudonym, Victoria Lucas. This *The Bell Jar* was first edition that published by Harper and Row in 1971 in New York. The novel is 288 pages and divided into twenty chapters. The cover is mostly dark and vague; it is designed by Faber.

Sylvia Plath was born in London, on October 27, 1932. She is a poet and novelist. Plath is the legendary author of the novel who shows psychological problem. *The Bell Jar* is her only, which is based on her life and deals with one young woman’s mental breakdown. Her interest in writing emerged at an early age, and she started out by keeping a journal. After publishing a number of works, Plath won a scholarship to Smith College in 1953. Then, a Fulbright Fellowship brought her to Cambridge University in England. In 1956, she married with Ted Hughes. But, Hughes left her for another woman in 1962, and then Plath fell into a deep depression. Struggling with her mental illness, she wrote *The Bell Jar*. The depressive Plath committed suicide in 1963.

The main character in *The Bell Jar* is Esther Greenwood who reflects the character of Plath. The man in Esther’s life, Buddy Willard is all oppressive, whether it is in a physical manner or an emotional one. *The Bell Jar* is a novel
about the events of Sylvia Plath's twentieth year; about how she tried to die, and how she stuck her together with glue. *The Bell Jar* is written before feminist period in America. It sets out to highlight the problems with oppressive patriarchal society in the mid of 20th century America.

The setting of this novel began in New York in a queer and sultry summer, when Esther won the magazine contest by writing essay, poem, and other literary works. She stayed in New Work for a month. She worked in a famous expenses paid and piles of free bonus; ballet tickets, passes to fashion show, hair styling at a famous expensive salon and chances to meet successful complexions. At that time, she thought about Rossenbergs who would be electrocuted. Actually she was stupid about executions. The idea of being electrocuted made her sick. It had nothing to do with her, but she couldn’t help wondering what it would be like, being burned alive all along nerves. She thought about irrational thing. Whenever she was sad, she was going to die, or so nervous, could not sleep, or in love with somebody won't be seeing for a week, she slump down just so far and then she say "I'll go take a hot bath". When she had no spirit, the uncomfortable suspicions she had about herself were coming true and she couldn’t hide the truth much longer.

After a month, she came back to her mother. Esther found out that she did not get accepted into a summer creative program, later than which she quickly spirals down into a suicidal depression. Esther consulted Dr. Gordon, but he botched her with electroshock therapy. After which Esther’s behavior grew increasingly
erratic. Finally, Esther decided to end her life. She hides away in a crawlspace under her home and swallowed a bottle of sleeping pills. Fortunately, she was rescued a few days later. After staying at a couple of hospitals, Esther was taken to a private institution, where she met Dr. Nolan, a compassionate female doctor. While there, Ester undergoes a series of successful electroshock and insulin therapy sessions. At the institution, she encountered Joan; a high school friend also dated Buddy Willard.

However, Esther’s life was again threatened when, after a sexual encounter with a professor she met in Cambridge during a visit out of the institution, she hemorrhages. Joan, who was living in Cambridge, helped Esther to the emergency room, and Esther returned to the institution the next day. Joan also returned to stay at the institution, but she committed suicide in the ground near the institution soon after. On the other hand, Esther condition was making progress. The novel end in the winter of 1954 as Esther entered her exit interview, which will determine if she is ready to leave the institution and started her normal life.

*The Bell Jar* obtains many receptions from public; readers, market, and industrials. *The Bell Jar* is one of hundred best novels in the whole time. There are many who have read *The Bell Jar* and absolutely love it. Robert Scholes praised the novel is “sharp and uncanny descriptions”, he also said “The brittle humor of that early generation is reincarnated in *The Bell Jar*, but raised to a more serious level because it’s recognized as a resource of
hysteria”(http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/03/01/home/plath-bell.html). The Bell Jar is proper as one of the best novel which has written as stated by Ahmad Tohari (the author of Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk) in the cover of The Bell Jar Indonesian Version. But, Linda W. Wagner criticized in her writing of Women Studies Vol 12, 1986, “Plath’s The Bell Jar as Female Bildungsroman”, she state that:

*The Bell Jar* must certainly be read as the story of the inevitable clash, a dulled and dulling repetition of lives all too familiar to contemporary readers, and a testimony to the repressive cultural mold that trapped many mid-century women, forcing them outside what should have been their rightful productive lives (http://www.sylviaplath.de/plath/wagner2.html).

Actually, Plath never wanted *The Bell Jar* to be published under her own name because it would hurt so many people, including her mother. Lock in New York Times writes:


After reading *The Bell Jar*, the writer can give some responses toward this novel. Actually, *The Bell Jar* is one of novels that hard to understand. The writer has to read in several time to get a deep understanding. Because, the author often changes the plot of story without use the sign and it makes the writer confuse
when reads the novel. But, *The Bell Jar* is a great novel. It is not only talk about love like the most of novels, but also talk about woman struggling and literary education. Exactly, it tells about Esther’s psychological problem which difficult to find in the real life.

There are four points of interest in *The Bell Jar*, namely the main character, the plot, the writing style, and the subject matter of *The Bell Jar* story.

Firstly, *The Bell Jar* has a big deal with Esther’s characteristic. Esther is smart woman. But, mental illness arise her. Sometimes, she does unusual thing. Tragic side of Esther’s self-critical attitude is that it can be as ruthless as to be self-destructive to the point where Esther feels she is split in two, where she feels that she is stranger to herself. When Esther looks in a mirror, she does not see herself; she sees a disembodied face. These cracks in Esther’s personality come through when she literally takes on another personality. Whatever her mentality, she always tries to solve her problem even if cannot solve it. But, it can be said that she is an unbreakable woman.

Secondly, *The Bell Jar* is written by using stream of consciousness that illustrates parts of Esther's mind. Stream of consciousness refers to the flow of thoughts in the conscious mind. The author wrote the story without using the method of explanation and conversation as usual. It is aroused the difficulty for the reader to catch the points of story. But, the writer made it as a challenge. The writer reads the novel repeatedly in order to get a clear meaning.
Thirdly, *The Bell Jar* is written in an elevated language that would be almost impossible for young adults to immerse themselves in, depression and language of this manner are not exclusive to people. It is very gorgeous writing.

Fourthly, the subject matter of *The Bell Jar* is extremely mature. This novel focuses on Esther’s mental illness; psychological conflict. Esther often feels isolated from herself. Her anxiety comes when she is in two choices or more. Esther is expected to become a housewife, and a self-sufficient woman, without the options to achieve independence. Esther feels she is a prisoner to domestic duties and she fears the loss of her inner self. *The Bell Jar* addresses the question of socially acceptable identity. It examines Esther's "quest to fake her own identity, to be herself rather than what others expect her to be".

*The Bell Jar* is a novel about Esther’s psychological conflict that can be analyzed by using psychoanalysis criticism. Psychoanalysis is a theory of personality stating that unconscious conflict, usually from childhood is a major force in adult personality. This conflict arises largely throughout early sexual development and the individual effort to deal with the resulting anxiety. Psychoanalysis was a psychology of the unconscious; its interests were in the areas of motivation, emotion conflict, neurotic symptoms, dreams, and character traits. To Freud, (in Pervin, 1984:70-71), Psychoanalysis is three things; a theory of personality, a method of therapy, and a technique for research. Psychoanalysis aims at and achieves nothing more than the discovery of the unconscious in mental life.
Based on the background above, the writer will observe *The Bell Jar* novel by using Psychoanalytic Criticism by Freud. So, the writer constructs the title ESTHER GREENWOOD’S PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFLICTS REFLECTED IN SYLVIA PLATH *THE BELL JAR* (1963): A PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITICISM.

B. Previous Study

Based on the researcher’s observation, *The Bell Jar* was analyzed by Dewi Ningsih (Petra Christian University, 1992). She focused the research on “A Character Study of Esther Greenwood in Sylvia Plath’s The Bell Jar,” by using psychological approach. On her research, she analyzed about the character of Esther Greenwood in *The Bell Jar* novel. The objective of the study is to prove that the main character in Sylvia Plath’s novel has identity crises.

The second researcher’s observation was already done by Y L Zhang (2012), entitle “An Analysis of Esther’s Anxiety of Writing in The Bell Jar”. He explores Esther’s anxiety of writing in Sylvia Plath’s autobiographic novel *The Bell Jar* based on the feminist theories about the anxiety of authorship and women’s creativity. His research focuses on Esther’s anxiety of writing and states that it is not only results from the stereotyped images of women defined by patriarchal norms but also arises from the lack of female models and her lack of experience for writing, which makes her write in anger and anxiety with nobody help. This
thesis states her breakdown has something to do with the patriarchal domination of writing discourse and the lack of female writing tradition.

The third researcher’s observation was already done by Smith, Caroline J (2010), entitle “The Feeding of Young Women: Sylvia Plath’s The Bell Jar, Mademoiselle Magazine, and the Domestic Ideal”. This article examines the way in which Sylvia Plath's novel, The Bell Jar, interacts with and is informed by 1950s magazines, focusing on 1953 issues of Mademoiselle Magazine, the year in which Plath's novel takes place. ”"The Feeding of Young Women"" considers the way in which Plath uses significant moments of eating throughout her novel to underscore the intense hold that Mademoiselle's domestic, behavioral models have on Esther's sense of self. Reading both articles and advertisements in 1953 editions of Mademoiselle and looking specifically at passages in The Bell Jar that deal with Esther's eating and housekeeping habits, this article asserts that 1950s consumer culture-a culture that encouraged women to navigate beyond the private sphere of the home while limiting those options by simultaneously discouraging that navigation-contributes to Esther's metaphorical starvation.

Different with the researchers above, here the researcher tries to conduct the research on the psychological conflicts that appear in the major character, Esther Greenwood by using psychoanalytic criticism. The researcher uses Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory. Dewi Ningsih, Y L Zhang, and Smith Caroline J left an opportunity for other researchers to study the novel. Among others are the psychological conflicts of the main character. That is why the present writer tries
to analyze Esther Greenwood’s psychological conflicts reflected in Sylvia Plath’s *the Bell Jar* by using Psychoanalytic Criticism

C. Problem Statement

The problem statement of the study is “How is the psychological conflict reflected in Sylvia Plath *The Bell Jar* Novel (1963) using a Psychoanalytic Criticism?”

Research Question:

1. What is the indicator of Esther’s psychological conflicts?
2. What causes the psychological conflicts in the self of Esther?
3. How does Esther try to solve the problem of her psychological conflicts?

D. Limitation of the Study

In this study, the writer focuses on Esther Greenwood’s psychological conflicts reflected in Sylvia Plath *The Bell Jar* Novel (1963) based on a psychoanalytic criticism proposed by Sigmund Freud.

E. Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follow.

1. To identify the indicator of Esther’s psychological conflict.
2. To identify what causes the psychological conflict in the self of Esther.
3. To explain the way Esther tries to solve the problem of her psychological conflict.
F. Benefits of the Study

The writer hopes that this research will have some benefits for the readers. After reading this research, the reader can have some advantages as follow.

1. Theoretical Benefit

To give novel contribution and information to the larger body of knowledge, particularly in the literary studies.

2. Practical Benefit

To enrich the knowledge and experience of the writer and the other students at UMS or other universities who have interest with literary study on the novel from psychoanalytic criticism.

G. Research Method

Dealing with research method, there will be at least four points that need to be involved in this research.

1. Type of the Study

In thus study, the researcher applies qualitative research. The data sources are library and literary data. Its purpose is to analyze using psychoanalytic approach. The steps to conduct the research are as follow: 1) determining the type of the study, 2) determining the object of the study, 3) determining data and data source, 4) determining technique of data collection, and finally 5) determining technique of data analyses.
2. **Object the Study**

The object of the study is *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath and was published in 1963 by William Heineman.

3. **Type of the Data and the Data Source**

There are two types of data sources, namely:

a. **Primary Data**


b. **Secondary Data**

   Secondary data sources are some material related to the data required, such as writer biography, the data taken from official website, related theories, etc.

4. **Technique of the Data Collection**

   The method used for collecting data is library research by collecting and selecting both primary and secondary data. The researcher will involve some required steps:

   a. Reading the novel repeatedly to get the messages and deep understanding.
   b. Reading some related references to observe the theory, data and information.
   c. Making notes of important part in both primary and secondary data sources.
   d. Classifying the data into some categories.
5. Technique of the Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the writer applies a descriptive qualitative. The steps taken by the writer in analyzing the data are as follows: the first is analyzing the data based on its structural analysis. The second step is analyzing the data based on psychoanalytic criticism. Focus will be paid on the psychological conflict reflected.

H. Research Paper Organization

This paper is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is introduction, covering the background of study, previous study, problem statement, limitation of the study, benefit of the study, research method, and research paper organization. The second chapter is underlying theory that consists of the notion of psychoanalytic, structure of personality, psychological conflict, aggression, structural elements of novel, and theoretical application. The fourth chapter discusses psychoanalytic criticism and its application in analyzing The Bell Jar. The last chapter is conclusion, pedagogical implication, and suggestion.