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**A Psychoanalytic Approach to the Modernist Sole Prose**

**Work *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath**

*An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement  
for a Master's Degree in Literature and Civilisation*

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## Abstract

In a novel where the narrative is only secondary to the introspection, Sylvia Plath explores her own psychological quest. *The Bell Jar* is named after a scientific tool which is equivocal for both readers and critics; thus, it instigates a lot of interpretations. As a renowned poet, *The Bell Jar* is the one and the only time Plath writes prose. She explores in it themes such as paralysis, rebirth, and personal growth; themes that are recurring in the modernist era, but what draws "*The Bell Jar*" distinct from other modernist writings is its treatment of mental disorder, depression, and neurosis; terms which are jargon in the field of psychology. Surely, there is an avalanche of literary works that share the same theme without mentioning other scientific or specialized works; however, Plath was an exception in that she wrote about her own psyche in a journey she entitled "*The Bell Jar*", to commit suicide few days after its publication leaving a mystery behind. Her peerless account is seen as prodigious especially in an era when mental illness was not under lights as much as it is now. The courage to launch such a production can come only from the womb of suffering Plath had endured. Besides, there is remarkable propinquity between Esther, the protagonist of the novel, and Plath, its creator. Plath used an accurate descriptive style when speaking in the words of Esther, because, in the simplest of terms, she is a mere incarnation of Plath herself. What is important for this study is to find the links between the two and to draw the attention to some of the most important landmarks in Plath's life and to track them in her novel, a novel which, among other genre, is clearly a roman-a-clef.

**Keywords:** Psychoanalysis, Mental illness, Modernism, Depression, Sylvia Plath, Roman-a-clef.