

## Adolescent Psyche and Expressionism in ‘The Catcher in The Rye’ and ‘The Bell Jar’

Ananya Roy

Postgraduate Student

Department of English

University of Delhi

Chhatra Marg, Art(s) Faculty

University Enclave

Delhi, 110007, India

[rupananya1008@gmail.com](mailto:rupananya1008@gmail.com)

### Abstract

J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) and Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar* (1963), both serve as masterpiece accounts of teen angst and intricate detailed workings of the mind post world war when society was growing on one side with new foliage of technological innovation aimed at improving the lifestyle of human beings, on the other was on a slow yet painful process of moral, individual and spiritual decay as men and women had given way to the evils of the surplus and easy way of living. Not only were relationships coming under the radar of suspicion with humans doubting and betraying each other, a major issue of serious concern was on the rise as well that being the changing dynamics of adolescent brain and mind. Prone to modernization, the functioning of the mind of teenagers was undergoing a tremendous change where overt sensitivity was on rise. This paper focuses upon the main themes of (I) ideals cherished by both the protagonists, their view on them as individuals of the society, (II) on sexuality and (III) the serious issue of suicide which had been sought out as the best means of escape as their surroundings fail to bend according to their visions. This

paper makes special efforts at analysing the same by bringing into it the status of relationship of the protagonist with his or her family member, peers, teachers and counsellors and how exactly it helps in expressing who they are and what they want.

Keywords- Adolescence, Expressionism, Psyche, Holden Caulfield, Esther Greenwood.

## 1. Introduction

*The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger and *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath both bring forward themes highly central to the world of the past, post World War II as well as of the present as we are slowly yet surely headed towards another one of those destructive catastrophes in the near future. During the entire passage of time when human beings all over the world were in the process of healing and mending physically as well as mentally, a shift in emotional and psychological balance was noticed and as the mutated state of mind kept altering to various degrees of degradation the crisis became more palpable than what could be hidden behind the veil of ignorance and societal denial. The worst to be affected by the mental calamity of despair and depression was the youth deployed in the army to serve during the wars as it slowly caught up with the city-bred, urban youth as well. It is noteworthy to note that, in this aspect that both Holden and Esther are in the domain of the urban environment, the evils of which slowly catches up with the two in no time. Since time immemorial we have been taught in text-books regarding the harmful effects of urbanity apart from industrialization which gradually and certainly corrodes and emaciates the individual morale from within. Despite being overrun by the flowing mass of herd mentality and people conforming to such aspects Holden and Esther's determination to stay rooted to their own bigger than life ideals made them gradually detach and isolate themselves from the society. The societal mores and folkways of turning its back upon non-conforming

individuals like Esther and Holden has always been the norm as a result of which it has made their day to day lifestyles highly ‘depressing’ and ‘lousy’. Be it from the linguistic point of view or the semiotic interpretation from the same, both Holden and Esther stand on the same peripheral border of the societal mentality where people do not bother to give time and importance to their views and opinions.

A commonplace language with an informal tone, which never was quite the popular style back then, undertaken by both Salinger and Plath for both their protagonists has done more good than harm to the readers, as it opens to us a window to peek into the intricate whirlwind of a world of two strangely peculiar individuals. The first of the foremost formidable barriers to communication is broken through the barrage of rant and ramblings, both acquaint us with dissolving the fine line between being a reader and a participant in the text. Although semi-autobiographical in nature, *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath has been treated as a novel detached from all such affectations of previously cultivated thoughts based on the poet’s life. Every precaution has been taken to prevent being affected by such a common fallacy be it in case of Salinger or Plath, their protagonists have been analysed as characters distinctly set apart from their own lives as anomalies of various degrees have been traced if at all both the novels are to be treated and traced along the authors’ lives. Both novels have been written in first person narrative giving us an insight into their uniquely familiar lives accompanied with the familiar simulacrum of stream of consciousness. The familiarity between Holden and Esther can be traced back to the fact that post-traumatic disorder, depression, anxiety and mental-health related problems were fairly on rise post the world wars era, reasons behind such changes took the centre-stage of all experimental and empirical analyses with little or no success at all.

Anxiety was at the forefront of medical and psychiatric attention in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s. Yet since that time, depression—considered a rare disease in the

post–World War II period—has become the focus of mental health concern. (Horwitz,2010,113)

## 2. Idealism and belief

Holden and Esther despite being separated by a gap of two years stand more or less along the same convoluted line of life that oscillates between them in a to and fro motion of a pendulum as events push and pull them, reeling towards a life of uncertainty in an age when unpredictability loomed at large. Holden, despite being provided with the best a parent could ever provide for to their child, made it his life’s ultimate motto, well at least for the time being, to never get along with school, its authorities and his peers describing them as ‘phony’, ‘lousy’ and such related negative adjectives to begin with. ‘Phony’ according to the OED, which means ‘not genuine; fraudulent’ is common in both the novels, being uttered by Holden innumerable times throughout the novel and only once by Esther towards the end. If we are to concentrate on this word which seems to be a personal favourite of Caulfield which in a similar way also intersects with Greenwood’s *lingua franca*, we are bound to delve into the fact why exactly these two adolescents are so interested and worried about the essential nature and natural truth associated with people. The surface and superficial appearance of people and their actions is what terribly upsets both as they recount that the all-pervading snobbery is etched to the bone of the society. The inclusivity of language as being gendered to some extent is evinced as Holden intentionally avoids the sophistication that is associated with education at elite prep schools like Pencey, Elkton Hills and Whooton. Esther on the other hand, a lot more mature than the seventeen-year old Caulfield, armed with a college degree in English Literature and a promising future in academics has a similar penchant for run-of-the-mill language although she practises moderate temperance at that unlike Holden who is adamant upon flouting and breaking every norm and regulation imposed and

established. The usage of words by both also gives us the readers a macroscopic view through the microscopic pinhole into their psyche as Holden's conversation with people around him as well his monologues reflect upon his urge for freedom in a society of multiple constraints and restraints that force to hold him back and keep him shackled to the looms of false integrity, norms and fallacious ideals. The falsity and make-believe projected from every facet stifles Holden from flourishing into the kind of person he wants to be.

Anyway, I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around - nobody big, I mean - except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff - I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be. I know it's crazy. (Salinger,2010,186)

Holden's quintessence of dedicating and devoting himself towards the 'greater good' of projecting himself as the shield of the helpless and hapless is no short of a benefactor in one way or another; a pristine pure thought as being downright active for such an important cause remains unnecessary and inessential in the eyes of the society where only status, money, wealth and fame take the centre-stage of attraction. Human relationships are based on face-value and the double standard structure of hypocrisy where physical intimacy, temporary flings and short-term relations for the sake of keeping up appearances and adhering to the trend of the day no matter how immoral and morally degraded it is, steals the show as is evinced in Stradlater, Maurice and Sally Hayes.

Stradlater was more of a secret slob. He always *looked* all right, Stradlater, but for instance, you should've seen the razor he shaved himself with. It was

always rusty as hell and full of lather and hairs and crap. He never cleaned it or anything. He always *looked* good when he was finished fixing himself up, but he was a secret slob anyway, if you knew the way I did. The reason he fixed himself up to look good was because he was madly in love with himself. He thought he was the handsomest guy in the Western Hemisphere. (Salinger,2010,28)

Being a ‘slob’ is another of those many traits Holden is disgusted with where his roommate is obsessed with himself and his looks almost to the extent of tipping everyone over for it. Narcissism was pretty much evident in society which slowly became rampant in the post-modern era of intellectual upliftment, technological advancement, innovation followed by massive moral erosion. Becoming a ‘slob’ apart from being a ‘phony’ was what became of one in order to score higher above others as Holden remarks on Stradlater as kind of a “guy that if your parents saw his picture in your Year Book, they’d right away say, ‘Who’s *this* boy?’” (Salinger,2010,29) Despite being roommates and students from the same school, Holden as a result of which could never go along with these narcissist and exhibitionist people which made him stand out as a social pariah who according to his history teacher at Pencey, Mr. Spencer could not understand if at all he felt “absolutely no concern for your future, boy?” Holden’s reply being, “Oh, I feel some concern for my future, all right. Sure. Sure, I do...But not too much, I guess. Not too much, I guess.”(Salinger,2010,15) Holden’s immaturity at not being able to understand the brevity of life and the gravity of the situation is juxtaposed against the mature and materialistic psychology of his peers where guys like Stradlater and Ackley come to elite prep schools like Pencey to take and make the best out of what is being offered to them and get into ‘hot-shot’Ivy colleges to brag and boast about the same and get into the world of ‘corporates’ like Holden’s father.

"Some game. If you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it's a game, all right – I'll admit that. But if you get on the other side, where there aren't any hot-shots, then what's a game about it? Nothing. No game." (Salinger,2010,9)

Esther Greenwood, in a very similar manner is the poster-child of teenage angst just like Holden but in her own uniquely confessional tone where her deep, contemplative and retrospective manner of reflecting upon her life and people around her highlights upon the transition the society was undergoing as intellectually gifted yet socially handicapped individuals like her were gradually coming to the fore. Esther's internship at the *Ladies' Day* magazine becomes the turning point of her life as she struggles to come to terms with the way the bigger world operates beyond her safe zone of Connecticut.

These girls looked awfully bored to me. I saw them on the sunroof, yawning and painting their nails and trying to keep up their Bermuda tans, and they seemed bored as hell. I talked with one of them, and she was bored with yachts and bored with flying around in airplanes and bored with skiing in Switzerland at Christmas and bored with men in Brazil. (Plath,2019,3)

Boredom and passivity seemed to be at the height of everything as luxury and comfort came to the hands of people pretty much without sweating nothing as United States as a nation back then, was fairly new and on a growth spurt with inventions cropping like surplus, hence as Holden would say people had a lot of 'dough' to spend like anything. Hence, the lack lustre tendency of the well-off class to encroach, expand and exploit.

Esther's association with girls at 'the big apple' made her 'sick' literally as well as metaphorically as the banquet organized by the magazine served putrefied 'crabmeat', 'chock-full of ptomaine' which badly affected all those who attended except Doreen. Besides, the depressing events that occurred to her from being abandoned by Doreen for a night of

wild adventure with Lenny Shepherd to being almost raped by a masochist, Esther had had it all.

Holden and Esther's lack of faith in humanity is evident from their taking up aliases like Rudolf Schmidt, Jim Steele and Elly Higginbottom respectively as they meet people unwilling to repose their faith in strangers and putting up a façade of posing as someone else as they navigate through the spiralling path of their momentous life.

### 3. Sexuality, love and marriage

Standing out because of their individualistic idealism is symbolic of their existential framework of mind and body, while Holden stands out for his non-conformist attitude towards majority of the societal standards and double-dealing, Esther does the same by resisting towards those same shackles of age-old beliefs on sexuality, love, marriage and individual growth. Holden's view on sexuality and marriage although different from Esther's since the segregation and compartmentalization comes into play due to the gendered divide, converges upon the common fact that love and sex cannot be aligned together due to reasons peculiarly moral and innocent to their own cause.

Holden like many other teenage boys of his age is curious about sex and aspects related to it and as per him he had even been close to having sex with one of his dates. As he recounts having "had quite a few opportunities to lose my virginity and all, but I've never got around to it yet." (Salinger,2010,100) As in his case, "something always happens. For instance, if you're at a girl's house, her parents always come home at the wrong time-or you're afraid they will." (Salinger,2010,100) Holden can be ridiculously funny, serious and satiric at the same time which is reflected in his humorous manner of relating events to his 'horsing' around with his dates.

“The thing is, you didn’t know Stradlater. I knew him. Most guys at Pencey just talked about having sexual intercourse with girls all the time--like Ackley, for instance--but old Stradlater really did it.” (Salinger,2010,51)

While sexually frivolous guys like Stradlater actually invested and indulged in such sport to the extent of being provided the perfect medium of such perversely gallant adventures as Ed Banky, one of the faculty members of Pencey does by letting him take his car, Holden keeps on missing out owing to his “I stop” everytime “a girl that isn’t a prostitute or anything, I mean-she keeps telling you to stop.” (Salinger,2010,100) As a result of which even to this day as he narrates his story Holden is a virgin. Despite ‘horsing’ around with Sally Hayes before taking off for the show of the Lunts he does not quite go beyond kissing or holding hands as he finally comes to term with the fact that Sally is not what he has been looking for her actions and behaviour of putting him off through her ‘grand’ and phoniness was evident enough to make him understand.

Esther who had a flower sweet imagination of having Buddy Willard as the only love of her life and marrying him and finally giving him her virginity hit the ultimate rock bottom when she comes face to face with the innocent and sexually naïve façade of her boyfriend who had already had affairs with several other women, the ones to having had confessed being a waitress ‘on the Cape by the name of Gladys’ and Joan.

It seemed to me Buddy Willard and I were like that Jewish man and that nun, although of course we weren’t Jewish or Catholic but Unitarian. We had met together under our own imaginary fig tree, and what we had seen wasn’t a bird coming out of an egg but a baby coming out of a woman, and then something awful happened and we went our separate ways. (Plath,2019,46)

Buddy’s non-virginal state apart from his two-timing with Esther and Joan at the same time, had been no less of a major shock for Esther who had unfalteringly succeeded in

preserving herself for her love. She “felt dull and flat and full of shattered visions” (Plath,2019,50) as she realized how foolish she had been to pin her hopes on a person as hypocritic as Buddy.

I almost fell over. From the first night Buddy Willard kissed me and said I must go out with a lot of boys, he made me feel I was much more sexy and experienced than he was and that everything he did like hugging and kissing and petting was simply what I made him feel like doing out of the blue, he couldn't help it and didn't know how it came about. Now I saw he had only been pretending all this time to be so innocent. (Plath,2019,57-58)

“After that something in me just froze up.” (Plath,2019,58) Esther's love for Buddy might not have been that homogenous as one would expect to be as since inception Esther had never loved Buddy whole-heartedly either he cheated or not. It is as if she had always been in some kind of competition like the battle of the sexes, who gets to conquer before. Neither of them tried to understand each other as partners although here to some extent Buddy's willingness and interest in Esther might be a viewed as a positive sign of the remaining rays of light towards the end of the day. But Esther's seat of affection had forever been blackened due to the imbalance in her mental sanity. She hardly put any effort in their relationship as “while he kissed me I kept my eyes open and tied to memorize the spacing of the house lights so I would never forget them” (Plath,2019,51), as if she knew they as a couple was doomed from the very beginning. Esther, like Holden has a bizarre sense of comparison as she compares Buddy's penis to “turkey neck” and “turkey gizzards” reducing the masculine symbol of pride and prestige to a mere avian ugliness of utter humiliation. This in fact bears witness to the fact that Esther is not swayed by the epitome of masculinity, that which makes a man physically and politically domineering over a woman. In Beauvoir's analysis it could be interpreted as being the reason of “indifference and even disgust”

(Beauvoir,2011,53) repelling the least bit of curiosity and interest she might have had harboured.

### 3.1 Virginit

Virginit and association with it over what it entails to be a virgin, when all around the protagonist(s) promiscuity is making a statement of ultra-modernity, brings with it an extra baggage on both Esther and Holden. Holden during his adventurous streak of quitting school and fleeing to Vermont, is approached by a crook of a pimp Maurice who swindles money out of him in the name of illegal sexual service. Holden's demeanour screams of inexperience and ineptitude in sexual matters even though he might brag about going close to having committed the actual deal. His disinterest and lack of arousal when Sunny, the prostitute finally shows up for a five dollar show for some time. Holden, from an emotional perspective makes the best decision as he refuses her service instead asking her to talk to him. This is a potential evidence to establish that Holden by nature is an emotional boy who does not want to give away his virginit however provocative the opportunity might be. On top of that, the girl kept on asking him whether he had a watch or not as her only interest was to have a quickie with him and sex was a time-bound service. For an experienced girl like her sex seemed to be piece of cake, but for a teenage boy like Holden who had never had his first experience would never be lured by such a moment devoid of the beautiful essence of physical intimacy and the enjoining of two bodies that desire and yearn for each other. The entire encounter made him feel "much more depressed than sexy." (Salinger,2010,103) Emotional connection and attachment is so essential to him that even when the girl comes and sits on his lap he feels terribly scared as how to face her and keeps on making excuses of having undergone surgery in his spine as a result of which he was in no position to have sex with her. Although the girl leaves with the promised five dollars Holden is physically

assaulted by Maurice and made to forcibly cough up an extra five against his will. This leaves him physically and mentally exhausted and scarred. Holden is witness to the perverted side of humanity in the hotel as he witnesses a man dressing and dolling up as a woman while in another room a man and a woman are seen squirting water from their mouths, at each other. Jane Gallagher seems to be the only one he had set his heart on although he never gets to talk to her, as the one time he does muster courage to give 'her a buzz' her mother answers the call making his plans go all berserk.

Esther meets an array of men throughout the novel but loses it to Irwin, a Mathematics professor she met "on the steps of the Widener Library." (Plath,2019,188) Buddy Willard after shattering Esther's close to pristine, pure image of him, contacted tuberculosis which more or less cut off any chance if at all there had been, met Constantin a translator at the United Nations through Mrs. Willard but all they did was dine together and sleep on the same bed sans physical contact. Marco, a Peruvian man she met at a party she went at Doreen's utmost insistence turned out to be the nightmare of her life. The man was a "woman-hater" as he not only forced her to dance with him but also went as far as to assault her by forcing himself upon her. Marco had taken her for an easy prey but she put up a courageous fight by fisting "my fingers together and smashed them at his nose." (Plath,2019,90) Esther refused to be a damsel in distress by defending herself to the extent of getting injured. Esther could not help but be bothered by the awful lot of clothes she had received during her stay for the internship programme so when she finally comes back after being almost raped and her dignity besmirched to the extent of an eerie nonchalance she caught hold of the bundle "waved it, like a flag of elasticity,...Piece by piece, I fed my wardrobe to the night wind, and flutteringly, like a loved one's ashes, the gray scraps were ferried off, to settle here, there, exactly where I would never know, in the dark heart of New York." (Plath,2019,92) This is a kind of leave-taking as Esther's one facet of identity wears

off disenchanted and crest fallen with the harsh and crude reality of life as a woman. Her 'loneliness and despair' (Laing,2010,39) as suggested by Laing compels us to struggle in order to come to terms with and recognize their distinctiveness. In *By Sanity, Madness and the Family* (1964), he asserts, 'the experience and behaviour of schizophrenics is much more socially intelligible than has come to be supposed by most psychiatrists(Laing,2010,V), hence Esther being called a 'neurotic' by Buddy just because she simply wants two mutually existing things of being somewhere between the city and the country relays the fact that even though the onset of such instability had been there in its nascent form there is no way to suggest that she was potentially mad, which she was not.

#### 4. Death

The common aspect that bears testimony to the interestingly intersecting lives of two disturbed and perplexed adolescents is their shared obsession over death. Both Holden and Esther from time to time have thought of dying in one way or another. Holden's detachment from society and its constituents is similar to that of Esther's as their situation to some extent has been created as a result of their own antics and beliefs making them aloof and moored away from people surrounding them. First, neither of them makes any positive effort at building relationships with their peers and second, all they do is push away the pretentious lot which on an emotional level is justified as it is better to keep toxic people away but as a societal being it is not wise to behave in this individualistic manner. Holden might come off as a tough guy with a rough exterior who is all about being pushy and a rogue in his parents' eyes and Mr. Spencer, but that is a fraction of a whole of who he is in reality. One has got to look beyond what Holden is willing to show which is unearthed and revealed by his little sister Phoebe and Mr. Antolini. These are the only two, who in reality make an ounce of an effort in understanding the affected and emotional Holden just as Doctor Nolan does in case

of Esther. Phoebe in her own sisterly, affectionate way helps Holden in realizing the preciousness of life as she offers to accompany on his trip to Vermont, where he dreams of settling and beginning a new life. Mr. Antolini, Holden's favourite teacher at Elkton Hills confronts him with his self-destructive behaviour which will sooner or later have a snowball effect as the:

Fall I think you're riding for- it's a special kind of fall, a horrible kind. The man falling isn't permitted to fell or hear himself hit bottom. He just keeps falling and falling. The whole arrangement's designed for men who, at some time or other in their lives, were looking for something their own environment couldn't supply them with. Or they thought their own environment couldn't supply them with. So they gave up looking. They gave it up before they ever even got started. (Salinger,2010,202)

Not as a teacher but as a counsellor and confidante he tries to break away Holden from the path of self-induced isolation and individual erosion as he emphasises upon, "The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the mark of the mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one." (Salinger,2010,203) Hence, Phoebe and Mr. Antolini succeed in steering Holden away from the path of death and despair into becoming a mature man. His saviours become 'the catcher(s)in the rye' by holding onto the last bit of hope that had become of him. Holden is a highly emotionally disabled child whose emotional outbursts become the prime cause of misunderstanding as after Allie, his brother's death he in a fit of uncontrollable rage had broken the "windows on the station wagon". His sauciness and lack adaisical attitude come from his inability to control his feelings which are all over the place, majority of the time. His anxiety regarding every minute atom around him gets him "bull" crazy, so much so that on street "every time I came to the end of a block and stepped off the goddam curb, I had this feeling that I'd never get to the other side of the street. I thought I'd just go down, down, down, and nobody'd ever see me again."

(Salinger,2010,213) Over-thinking is a trait common to both, where Holden imagines his life as part of an action film where he is off to shooting people effortlessly while Esther is obsessed with foetuses in jars and the execution of the Rosenbergs.

“It was a QUEER, sultry summer, the summer they electrocuted the Rosenbergs, and I didn’t know what I was doing in New York. I’m stupid about executions. The idea of being electrocuted makes me sick, and that’s all there was to read about in the papers.”

(Plath,2019,1)

New York, the centre of achieving the American dream is viewed in bad light both by Holden and Esther.

New York was bad enough. By nine in the morning the fake, country-wet freshness that somehow seeped in overnight evaporated like the tail end of a sweet dream. Mirage-gray at the bottom of their granite canyons, the hot streets wavered in the sun, the car tops sizzled and glittered, and the dry, cindery dust blew into my eyes and down my throat. (Plath,2019,1)

The cold feeling of being alone and cast away is profound in a major city as Holden remarks:

What made it worse, it was so quiet and lonesome out, even though it was Saturday night. I didn’t see hardly anybody on the street. Now and then you just saw a man and girl crossing a street, with their arms around each other’s waists and all, or a bunch...New York is terrible when somebody laughs on the street very late at night.(Salinger,2010,88)

The void and vacancy one feels for one self, is reflected upon the macrocosm reverberating the same emptiness back.

“I climbed up on the examination table, thinking: “I am climbing to freedom, freedom from fear, freedom from marrying the wrong person, like Buddy Willard, just because of sex...”

(Plath,2019,186)

Esther's freedom as a woman comes to her when she donned the weapon of contraceptive but even that encounter with a man where she finally loses her virginity goes against her plans as she instead of feeling pleasure is met with a 'sharp, startlingly bad pain'(Plath,2019,191)which brings blood gushing out down her legs. In a strange turn of events, her first night of enjoyment goes down the sewers as she is forced to visit the hospital to get patched up.

Both are essentially sentimental beings as is evinced from the way Holden and Esther would bear a pessimistic and cynical outlook towards life be it Holden's sadness for leaving a place, he had become used to as it happens when he is expelled from Pencey or Esther's long streaks of reflection from visiting the sea-side to the point of embracing the same for her bodily escape. Their pain and misery at not being understood more so in Esther's case as she did not have an angel like Phoebe Caulfield in her life which Holden had been fortunate enough to have, made their soul rebel against the confines of their flesh and blood so much so that all they could gasp for was some leeway into a world devoid of all those earthly sufferings just as Keats yearned for from the nightingale's song, in his final years of consumption.

## 5. Conclusion

Both individuals suffer within a suffocatingly congested framework that restricts them, according to critic Diane Bonds Esther's streak of madness was caused due to her ambitions failing to materialise against the set of expectations and abilities she had always believed in to be thus restraining her from breaking the bonds imposed upon up on femininity and her dreams related to it.(Bonds,1990)Holden is the exact opposite of Esther in matters of ambition and academics as the steadily and easily available money which is a necessity and inheritance to Holden is a luxury to Esther hence the dearth of impetus to study. Wealth

related inequality and similar lifestyle patterns comes to the forefront. While Holden can dare to waste his days slacking off Esther cannot do the same coming from a middle-class background. Holden, who at one point of time had ‘really felt like, though, was committing suicide’ (Salinger, 2010, 113) was ultimately rescued by his ‘kid sister’ Phoebe and his teacher Mr. Antolini. Alluding to Robert Burns’ poem “Comin’ thro the Rye”, ‘Gin a body meet a body, comin thro' the rye’ Holden finally becomes the one to be caught before he met with his ultimate fall. Esther’s condition remains somewhat doubtful and ambiguous if at all she was able to escape the confines of ‘the bell jar’ she had been trapped in for a long time, the consequences of which had been her impulsive behaviour in attempting suicide by overdosing upon pills and sealing away herself in a hole to being treated for schizophrenia and related mental disorders.

“But I wasn’t sure...the bell jar, with its stifling distortions, wouldn’t descend again?” (Plath, 2019, 202)

There exists a fine line between sanity and insanity, which under time’s pressure and various other factors keeps shifting and morphing, dissolving into a hybrid calamity which at times poses risks to the individual. For the time being, despite being cured of the bouts of instability Esther had to some extent a faint hope of recuperating with the same and recovering in toto, despite the uncertainty and unpredictability that looms about in future.

As individuals manifesting with the philosophical trait of standing out is associated with Existentialism it is very important to note that:

Existentialism is known as an ‘individualistic’ philosophy... It is in this respect that Kierkegaard refers to the ‘plebs’, Nietzsche unflatteringly speaks of the ‘herd’, Heidegger of ‘*Das Man*’, and Sartre the ‘one’. In every case, the reference is to thinking, acting, dressing, speaking, and so forth as ‘they’ do. In Leo Tolstoy’s short story *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, the speaker, a conformist and social climber, frequently

refers to behaving '*comme il faut*' ('properly'), even to the point of using the French phrase preferred by the better levels of society to which he aspires. In that sense, becoming an individual is a task to be undertaken and sustained but perhaps never permanently achieved. (Flynn,2006,24)

Nietzsche has spoken and emphasised upon the loneliness borne and suffered by the one who has risen above his herd as was also the case with the great philosopher as well. Voltaire had suffered being ostracized by members of his own society due to his ideas and preaching. This bears true to the fact that non-conformist ideals have always been frowned upon and individuals related with such would be castigated as well as was the case of Defoe for being a dissenter. Beliefs and ideals are subjective and relative, applicable to changes and transformations as an individual deems fit, hence despite this society must try to adapt according to the changing times and people as people adjust and adapt in a similar way. The gruelling force of an inner turmoil was within and without eating away at them as a tone of melancholy soaked in utter helplessness due to the chaos and tempest both were undergoing resulting in a state of complete confusion associated with a feeling of being an outcast has been all pervading and a dominant theme through out the texts.

In conclusion, Holden and Esther prove to be protagonists portraying the turning point in the history of literary science where psychological shifts and dynamics became of prime importance to the analysts as greater emphasis was laid on to investigate, research, protect and preserve the mental integrity of the youthful mind that paved the road down adulthood. Judging from the way both Holden and Esther behave it can be concluded that a kind of existential crisis had evolved like a wildfire and had been on the rise like a tide that kept the potential to wipe them off in the storm of their own creation. The fragile and volatile state in which an adolescent mind is supposed to being moulded provides every opportunity to lead

one astray due to lack of care hence care must be taken to look after the sensitive state of beings.

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