

# Bell jar analysis

Business



The presentation and significance of moments when light and dark imagery are brought to the fore. Light is a motif encountered in *The Bell Jar* and *Therese Raquin*, used to illuminate true human nature. In *The Bell Jar*, Sylvia Plath's use of mirrors conveys Esther dissociated identities; the mirror is a reminder of her inability to understand herself, and presents the difference between her inner self and the person she exhibits to the outer world.

Similarly, Emile Zola uses light in *Therese Raquin* to reveal Laurent and Therese's true nature, which is usually concealed in the dark. In the introductory paragraphs of both texts, Zola and Plath use light imagery to establish the context in which these novels take place. Early on in *The Bell Jar*, Plath uses lights to portray the vigor and exuberance of New York City, where the verb "moving" and adjective "bright" are used to describe the "red and white" lights. These colorful and vibrant light images, give a pulsating atmosphere and symbolize opportunity and glamour. However, Esther is unable to grasp this light, unlike her vivacious friend Doreen, who has fused into the New York glamour lifestyle, and radiates light, as seen when Esther says, "It was so dark that I could hardly make out anything except Doreen", Esther in contrast, "[melts] away into the shadows".

Esther compares herself to the "eye of a tornado.. moving dully along in the middle of the surrounding hullabaloo. Evidently, she feels alienated and doesn't fit in New York, and this feeling applies physically too, as she complains of dust blowing into her eyes and down her throat. Through Sylvia Plath's use of mirrors, the difference between Esther's outer and inner self is illustrated.

Esther's outer self is habitually playing roles that others would want her to play, for example, for her mother, Esther plays the role of the ideal daughter who was "trained at a very early age" and had "given her no trouble whatsoever. For Doreen, she plays the role of Elly Higginbottom, a confident outgoing girl, which is the opposite of the real Esther, who is often nervous and insecure. This character that Esther's outer self has created is not only because of what Doreen would like her to be like, but also because, Esther wanted to strip herself from her identity and wants to be a completely new person with no past or expectations, as she demonstrates when she says, "I didn't want anything I said or did that night to be associated with me and my real name". As the night progresses, Esther feels herself "shrinking to a small black dot" and then eventually she felt like "a hole in the ground". As Esther returns home, she sees her reflection in a mirror, she notices a "smudgy-eyed Chinese woman staring idiotically into my face. It was only me, of course.

"Initially Esther fails to recognize her own reflection and the person her outer self has become, she says that she was "appalled to see how wrinkled and used up". Her observations are commentary to her outer self, as she realizes that she is not Elly Higginbottom, that's not who she is. The light from the reflection of the mirror shows Esther, that what her perception of herself is, is not what reality is. Esther does not fit in with Elly's personality. Esther's self delusion is to the extent, that she even forgets her fake identity, when Doreen is at her door exclaiming, "Elly, Elly, Elly, let me in" Esther thinks "I didn't know any Elly. A blind date- Marco- assaults Esther and draws two stripes of blood on her face, Esther then returns to her hotel and

feeds her clothes away to the wind, which symbolizes Esther killing her Elly identity.

Thus Esther is getting rid of the outgoing confident girl who lived a glamorous world of parties and pretty clothes. On her way to Boston, Esther thinks that her “ face in the mirror looked like a sick Indian. ” Once again, Esther’s reflection in the mirror is unfamiliar