

**Perception toward Women and Their Roles
in the Novel “The Bell Jar”**

Thesis

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the *Sarjana Pendidikan* Degree in
English Language Teaching Faculty**



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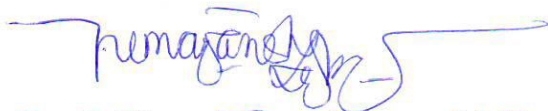
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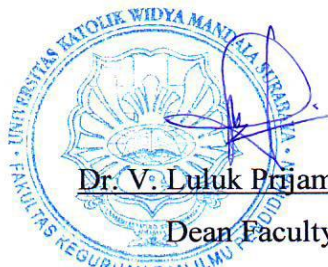
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ABSTRACT

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Advisor: Drs. Basilius Himawan Setyo Wibowo, M.Hum.

Literature is an interesting topic for study because literature is a mirror of real life in the form of words. A novel is the most popular kind of literary work that is able to portray culture and social value through its characters. In the novel, readers can see the cultural aspects that happened in different settings. One of the cultural aspects which can be found in some novels is gender roles that exist in the society. Different societies in different places and times have different ways to perceive woman and their roles in the society.

This thesis entitled *Perception toward Women and Their Roles in the Novel "The Bell Jar"* attempts to answer the following research problems. They are: "How does society perceive woman and their roles to serve?" and "How does Esther Greenwood perceive woman and their roles to serve?" This thesis is a qualitative study in the form of descriptive analysis. The data of this study are taken from a novel entitled *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath. The instrument in this study is the writer herself who used feminist literary criticism by Robert DiYanni and feminist existentialism by Simone de Beauvoir as the base theories to analyze the novel. This thesis focuses on the way the characters perceive woman and their roles in the society. The characters' perception is divided into two parts: the minor characters' perception which is concluded into society's perception and the main character, Esther Greenwood's, perception. The result of each perception is divided into five aspects: beauty standard, sexual double standard, object, marriage, and career. The study found out that Esther's perceptions of woman in all aspects are contrasted with societal perception. For example in the aspect of sexual double standard, society perceive that women are expected save their virginity until marriage, while men can have sexual experience before marriage and society will not judge them. Esther perceives that it is not fair for men to have a double life, while women can only have one pure life. She believes that if it is alright for man to have sexual experience before married, then it is alright for woman to do the same. This research and thesis are still far from being perfect. The writer suggests the future research to study other aspects like inner conflict or cause of the protagonist's mental illness from this novel. The writer also expects the reader of this novel to realize the difference between the perception of woman in the past and in the present, so the reader, especially woman, can be grateful of the privilege they get which are not available for woman in the past. The writer also gives suggestion for teachers who teach literature to analyze the intrinsic elements of literary works first before move to analyze other aspects in the novel to get better understanding of the work.

Keywords: perception, woman, gender roles, *The Bell Jar*