

**PATRIARCHAL GENDER CONSTRUCTION AND
THE DISINTEGRATION OF ESTHER'S ANIMUS
IN SYLVIA PLATH'S *THE BELL JAR***

Caroline Febriyanti^{1*}, Thohiriyah²

¹carolinefebri17@students.unnes.ac.id, ²thohiriyah@mail.unnes.ac.id

UNIVERSITAS NEGERI SEMARANG

Received: February 19, 2026; Accepted: March 30, 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines how patriarchal gender constructions influence women's psychological development, particularly the formation and disintegration of the unconscious animus archetype. The research aims (1) to analyze how patriarchal gender constructions shape Esther Greenwood's resistance and autonomy, and (2) to investigate how the manifestation and disintegration of her animus contribute to her internal psychological conflict. This study employs a qualitative literary analysis using thematic textual interpretation of selected passages from *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath Novel. The analysis is guided by Carl Jung's archetypal theory of the animus and supported by feminist gender perspectives to examine the relationship between social structures and psychological processes. The results show that women are subjected to patriarchal expectations about their roles, especially in marriage, purity, and household life. In this context, Esther demonstrates her independence as a woman by expressing her aspirations for autonomy, education, and writing. The rigid patriarchal society, on the other hand, made it hard for her archetypes to work together, which causes Esther's animus to disintegration and her psychological identity to break down. This study finds that the interplay between patriarchal gender constructs and Esther's animus disintegration profoundly affects her psychological distress.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Gender construction, Social Expectation, Animus, Psychological conflict.

A. INTRODUCTION

Gender issues are invariably linked to societal expectations that influence individuals' perceptions of their identity, goals, and acceptable roles in society. Gender issues often happen in patriarchal cultures, limiting women's autonomy and causing internal conflict between ambition and socially enforced femininity (Joseph, 2025; Rutherford, 2017; Fels, 2004; Varghese, 2025, Patterson, 2024). The tension may result in psychological conflict when individuals are unable to balance external rules with internal motivations. In order to understand how patriarchy and its social expectations affect women's psyche, it is important

to know how gender is constructed. Shepherd (2015) explains that gender is not biologically created but are instead the outcome of a multifaceted process of social construction influenced by culture and ideology. The process of gender construction is a cultural process establishes and internalizes specific norms to influence individuals' thoughts, behaviors, and identities (Butler, 1990; Ashari, 2025; Adhikari, 2024; Gurung, 2025). Gender identity is the fundamental unit that shapes individual self-perception and external perception by others. Individuals are differentiated into categories such as feminine, masculine, and other identities (Clayton & Tannenbaum, 2016; Mommersteeg et al., 2023; Prasetya & Thohiriyah, 2024). Society creates gender stereotypes that establish what is considered the proper standard for each gender (Eagly et al., 2020; Mommersteeg et al., 2023). Consequently, a significant gap exists between men and women's roles, as dictated by the cultural standards of each civilization.

Generally, individuals of both genders affirm their gender identification. Men embody masculinity characterized by a strong notion of "agency," whereas women exhibit femininity associated with submissive traits of "communion" (Eagly et al., 2020; Nielsen et al., 2021; Tadiri et al., 2021; Marceline & Satria, 2023). At the communal level, society started to shape the norms and roles for men and women (Schiebinger & Hinds, 2010; Tadiri et al., 2021). Men's agency is linked to their roles as the main providers in families, attributed to their perceived traits of leadership and authority. Conversely, women are framed in the role of homemaker because of their caring and empathetic nature (Levanon & Grusky, 2016; Cortes & Pan, 2018; Tadiri et al., 2021; Clayton & Tannenbaum, 2016; Nielsen et al., 2021; Marceline & Satria, 2023). In a conducive environment, these gender constructs mutually enhance each other's roles. In patriarchal society, gender construction frequently engenders gender inequality due to the substantial gap of roles between men and women. The idealization of men as breadwinners and women as homemakers is the major issue that strengthens the gender inequality. The feminine ideal of domesticity, stemming from gender constructs, significantly restricts women's independence in their careers (Sengar & Shah, 2024; Castillejos et al., 2024; Crabtree & Shiel, 2019). Patriarchal society also constricted women's worth to sexual purity and reliance on men (Rutherford, 2017; Ediana, 2024; Ullah et al., 2025). In the end, women encountered psychological discomfort as their personal ambitions clashed with socially mandated responsibilities.

Cultural society in America around the 1950s is the example of a patriarchy that strengthens the gender constructional landscape. Women were praised for their responsibilities as housewives and mothers to preserve the post-war stability (Rutherford, 2017; Carlstein, 2023; Eagly et al., 2020). *The Bell Jar*, portrays a patriarchal social landscape similar to the ideals of 1950s American culture. This novel describes the life of a young woman in the patriarchal society of America at the end of the 20th century. Esther Greenwood reflects a woman with great intellectual ambition and independence that unfortunately must conflict with patriarchal norms. The romanticism of marriage and motherhood in society suppresses her autonomous personality and her aspirations for liberty. Throughout the story, Esther faces difficulties in becoming her authentic self while contending with societal expectations. The struggles Esther experienced made her feel unable to accept any result in her life anymore. The incapacity of humans to accept certain results and process the problems resulting in doubts about their ability to manage their lives (Lieder et al., 2018; Appel & Gerlach, 2025). The impact of an individual's faith or incapacity can eliminate motivation to achieve goals due to a lack of a shared perspective of other objectives (Larasati & Thohiriyah, 2025). Consequently, individuals experience numerous psychological

distresses, including overload, tension, and depression (Desyana, 2022; Yazid & Thohiriyah, 2024; Marcarian & Wilkinson, 2017). Esther's situation can be understood as a conflict between internal psychic and external social dynamics. Esther illustrates the experience of a woman who ran from individuals who were restricted by societal norms.

Esther's desire to autonomy and resist traditional patriarchal norms demonstrates that she had a stronger masculine aspect than her feminine counterpart. Masculinity is often associated with men as opposed to women's femininity (Cerdán-Torregrosa et al., 2023; Hristova, 2024; Eagly et al., 2020). However, in Carl Jung's analytical psychology, masculinity is not only constructed in male stereotypes but is also present in the female psyche through the animus archetype (Jung et al., 1964; Ellenberger, 1970; Marceline & Satria, 2023). All males and females possess an unconscious archetype known as anima/animus. The anima/animus archetype is examined with other archetypes, including persona, shadow, and self, which contributing to final-complete individuation (Jung et al., 1964; Stein, 1998). However, this research will solely look at the anima/animus archetype, specifically animus, which is tied to Esther's inner psychology. Anima/animus represent counter-sexuality in males and females; anima is the man's feminine aspect, and animus is the woman's masculine aspect (Jung et al., 1964; Ellenberger, 1970; Marceline & Satria, 2023). Jung explained that animus drives the female thinking with logic, strength, and rationality (Jung et al., 1964; Stein, 1998; Marceline & Satria, 2023). Jungian analysis indicates that women possessing strong animus exhibit elevated rational thinking and professional autonomy.

The formation of a strong animus is significantly influenced by internal awareness and external environmental support. The development of animus means that the masculine archetype in the female psyche undergoes a process of integration to achieve a whole individuation. When the animus is completely integrated, it may affect the conscious behavior of women with an autonomous soul and full self-control (Pertiwi, 2021). Animus has positive and negative side; the positive side manifests in a woman's logical and objective thinking. On the other hand, the negative side manifests in sarcasm, cynicism, brutality, objective brutality, and recklessness (Marceline & Satria, 2023). Nevertheless, the development of animus in a woman may remain unintegrated if internal and external causes disrupt its integration. Consequently, negative qualities may dominate a woman's consciousness rather than positive qualities. In Esther's case, patriarchal society and its rigid gender construction were the most significant obstacles to a woman's animus growth. Esther's quest for self-identity in a patriarchal context provides compelling evidence of the obstructed evolution of her animus.

Most prior research on *The Bell Jar* has focused on identity crises, sadness, or feminism. Nevertheless, few academics have looked at Esther's position from the perspective of gender formation and Jungian psychology. Moreover, contemporary Jungian literature often examines the formation of animus without taking into account how patriarchal gender norms distort its origin. This study aims to explore how patriarchal gender construction creates difficulties for Esther in integrating her unconscious animus archetype and leads her to psychological distress. In this context, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) How does patriarchal gender construction influence Esther Greenwood's resistance in *The Bell Jar*? and (2) How is Esther's animus represented, and how does its disintegration contribute to her internal psychological conflict in *The Bell Jar*? Using Carl Jung's archetypal theory, this research will focus on understanding Esther's animus archetype, which drives her resistance to constraining patriarchal gender constructs. Combining feminist and

archetypal Jungian frameworks, this study also seeks to provide a new reading in understanding the relationship between women's psychology and social expectations.

B. METHOD

The study applies qualitative research methods. It was chosen because it provides an in-depth understanding of Esther Greenwood's experiences and how social standards influence her psychological conflict. It requires systematic textual analysis by compile explanations, summaries, analyses, and interpretations of the literary texts (Mwansa et al., 2022). The primary data of this study is Sylvia Plath first published's novel in 1963, *The Bell Jar*. The novel provides textual material that depict Esther Greenwood's psychological conflicts with the weight of social expectations, particularly those placed on women in American culture. The collected data contains dialogues and narrative passages that depict patriarchal culture and Esther Greenwood's psychological state, which reflects her interactions with male characters and her perceptions of traditional gender expectations. For thematic analysis, a total of twelve passages were chosen as representative textual evidence. The data were selected by carefully reading the book repeatedly to identify and analyze the passages that depict patriarchal gender construction, animus manifestation, and Esther's mental reactions to the social pressures. Secondary sources were used to support theoretical interpretation and historical contextualization. This study was analyzed using a deductive thematic approach, in which gender construction theory and Jung's concept of animus were used to analyze the findings theoretically. The research was conducted followed several steps: (1) close reading of *The Bell Jar*, (2) identification and extraction of textual excerpts related to gender construction and animus, (3) thematic categorization of the excerpts based on research variables, and (4) interpretative analysis using Jungian animus archetype theory. The research findings are presented in the form of descriptive analysis to achieve the objective of exploring the relationship between gender construction and its influence on women's psychology supported by textual evidence from the novel and supportive sources.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings addressing RQ1 demonstrate that patriarchal gender constructions in *The Bell Jar* constrain Esther's autonomy and shape her resistance. In response to RQ2, the analysis reveals that Esther's animus manifests in multiple stages but remains fragmented due to external patriarchal constraints, leading to psychological conflict. Thematic findings are presented in Table 1 using selected textual evidence from the novel with their analytical interpretations based on the main thematic categories.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis of Patriarchal Gender Constructions and Animus Disintegration in *The Bell Jar*

Theme	Textual Evidence	Analytical Interpretation
Patriarchal Gender Expectation	"Man's and woman's worlds are different; only marriage can bring the two worlds together properly" (Plath, 1963, p. 84)	Patriarchal idealism that separates the function of men and women that increases the value of marriage for women
Esther's Resistance to Patriarchal Norms	"Woman having to have a single pure life and a man being able to have a double life" (Plath, 1963, p. 43)	Emphasising the double standard in a patriarchal culture that mandates women to retain their

		sexual purity while males receive more freedom
Animus Development	"I did everything pretty well and got all A's and All my life I told myself to study hard, read, write, and work like mad" (Plath, 1963, p. 34)	Represents the growth of animus attributes, including Esther's strong intellectual ambition and desire for independence and competence
Animus Disintegration and Psychological Conflict	"I felt myself like the negative of a person I'd never seen before in my life." (Plath, 1963, p. 16)	Represents Esther's crisis identity conflict as she constantly feels confuse with her aspirations that does not allign with the social expectations

1. Patriarchal Gender Construction and Esther's Resistance

The social process of gender creation is intricate and interconnected. Gender construction generates not just gender identities but also societal regulations, roles, and expectations tied to women. Shepherd (2015) explains the substantial distinction between being born a woman and the means of becoming a woman. This means that gender is not formed at birth, but is formed by the social system. Gender is characterized as an instrument of acculturation that connects people with social norms, thereby influencing the behavioral standards embraced by society (Ashari, 2025; Adhikari, 2024; Gurung, 2025). Butler (1990) underlines that gender is not just a cultural construct but a process of self-construction. Individuals' repeated actions develop shared habits and norms within historical and cultural settings. This construction produces the establishment of particular ideals and norms that society endorses as social truths. Consequently, when the values derived from this gender construction are patriarchal norms, the society will support those patriarchal values as standards and rules for social interaction.

In 1950s America, patriarchal gender constructs served as a symbolic mechanism that influenced the pre-war gender hierarchy by designating women as the ideal homemakers (Carlstein, 2023; Rutherford, 2017; Ghandeharion et al., 2016; Ruggles, 2015). Patriarchal gender constructs provide societal standards that pressure women to conform to expectations by attaining the idealized standard of femininity. Consequently, this structure results in a male-centric workforce, restricting opportunities for women. Consequently, the division of roles becomes imbalanced, leading to the emergence of gender inequity within society. Ultimately, women were frequently oppressed, regarded as inferior to men, and restricted in their pursuit of intellectual or professional aspirations. Sylvia Plath effectively illustrated a comparable scenario in her semi-autobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar*, by assuming the viewpoint of a woman inside a patriarchal framework.

Marriage and Motherhood as Patriarchal Expectations

Esther Greenwood is depicted as an exemplar with a strong dedication to her academic career. At the outset of the narrative, she is chosen as one of five candidates granted the opportunity to intern at the fashion magazine Ladies' Day in New York. This achievement indicates that Esther has significant intellectual potential that corresponds with her aspiration

to be a writer. Instead of feeling inspired to pursue a higher aspiration, she encounters obstacles when faced with societal standards that hinder her objectives. Societal expectations that associate a woman's success with marriage restrict Esther's career aspirations. In a patriarchal culture, marriage is credited as a requirement for the fulfillment of a woman's identity (Carlstein, 2023). The social system argues that "*man's and woman's worlds are different; only marriage can bring the two worlds together properly*" (Plath, 1963, p. 84). Esther recognized the insidious message that a woman is highly valued when she enters into marriage and meets her household responsibilities.

The ideal of marriage was still rigidly enforced on women during the late 20th century. The prevailing postwar gender narrative that linked women's value to marriage and motherhood served as a substantial mechanism of social control inside the societal framework (Rutherford, 2017; Carlstein, 2023; Rovira et al., 2022). The patriarchal system inhibits the formation of women's own identities and forces them to accept conformity to norms and regulations as a virtue. Marriage conventions impose a challenging situation for women, since they are required to fulfill their roles as mothers and "submissive wives" to their husbands. In actuality, women confined to domestic chores often encounter psychological discomfort while doing these duties. Regarding child-rearing, women generally have more symptoms of depression and psychological stress compared to men (Mayor, 2015; Mommersteeg et al., 2023). This signifies that societal expectations imposing home responsibilities on women persist even post-marriage. Women regularly experience oppression inside the family relative to males, attributable to a patriarchal system that promotes dependent conduct and reliance on men (Pietra & Suganda, 2021). Consequently, women collectively lose their agency as a whole person when society restricts their freedom, obstructs professional opportunities, and obliterates their dreams for autonomy. As a result, the frequency of depression in women is repeatedly documented to be markedly greater than in men.

In *The Bell Jar*, Esther recognizes that gender beliefs profoundly impact the weakening of women's societal positions. The patriarchal system has exploited women's positions and liberties. Marriage results in women giving up their autonomy and authority owing to the obligations they undertake as homemakers. Meanwhile, men can preserve their professional autonomy and independence post-marriage while fulfilling their roles as providers. This difference serves as the foundation for issues inside every patriarchal household and the oppression of women. Nonetheless, if society could see women's roles as domestic agents as equally significant as men's, oppression would not appear (Rutherford, 2017). Unfortunately, society has accepted the patriarchal social system and has normalized it as a natural order. The mother of Esther's former fiancé stated, "*man is an arrow and woman is the place the arrow shoots off from*" (Plath, 1963, p. 58). This remark, originating from another woman, suggests that the social structure has gone beyond mere systemization and has been established in the awareness of each individual. Society depicts the contrasting roles of women and men in marriage, with men characterized as the agents who "pursue" women and women as the "objects" of pursuit. The arrow metaphor positions males as the household's drivers and women as targets, with their destinies dictated by the arrow's path. In conclusion, women are expected to depend on the notion that their lives are dictated by the men they marry.

Marriage forces women to sold their femininity in order to find a partner who would provide them with a lifestyle that aligns with cultural expectations. As a result, pregnancy and childbirth become repressive events for women rather than strengthening their femininity. Marriage transforms into a constraint for women when they are compelled to sacrifice their authority and autonomy. Esther said, “*when you were married and had children it was like being a slave in a totalitarian state*” (Plath, 1963, p. 80). Esther's remark about marriage illustrates the viewpoint of a woman influenced by the patriarchal societal structure. Esther's assertion that being a housewife resembles enslavement indicates a moral dilemma in which she can no longer perceive marriage favorably. Moreover, her dissatisfaction with a system that constrains women's roles results in restricted options for defining her goals. Esther's statements epitomize the genuine struggles of women inside the patriarchal framework that Plath aims to illustrate in this novel. Ultimately, Plath illustrates that marriage and motherhood are excessively idealized by patriarchal society, which imposes moral standards, responsibilities, and positions considered acceptable and suitable for women.

Sexual Double Standards and Gender Inequality

In patriarchal societies, marriage is regarded as the union that connects men and women. Gender construction highlights the roles of men as providers and women as homemakers in a patriarchal society (Levanon & Grusky, 2016; Cortes & Pan, 2018). This reinforces gender role disparities and inequality, as the workforce becomes male-centric, resulting in a male-dominated societal structure. As a result, women's roles are restricted, and they are perceived as less competent than men. The patriarchal system not only constrains duties but also hinders women's capacity for self-determination, since it systematically subjugates their positions. Moreover, the patriarchal framework establishes inequitable sexual double standards for women. Patriarchal norms force women to maintain purity and morality, whilst men are afforded greater sexual freedom (Rutherford, 2017; Ediana, 2024; Ullah et al., 2025). Social consequences will designate a woman as having committed a moral violation if it is discovered that she cheated. Conversely, when a man exhibits similar behavior, society typically imposes lower standards and seeks to normalize such conduct. This double standard engenders unfair treatment by designating men as the authoritative figures who dictate women's behavior. Gender is used as a cultural imposition that underscores the ways in which patriarchal norms restrict the possibilities for women's bodies and identities (Butler, 1990). The consequences are obvious in the unequal moral burden and the preoccupation with women's purity and subordination.

In *The Bell Jar*, the patriarchal society honors women's purity and femininity as essential for marriage, “*A woman must have a single, pure life, while a man can have a double life*” (Plath, 1963, p. 43). This sexual double standard promotes gender inequality by constraining women's sexuality while legitimizing men's autonomy. Consequently, gender inequality encompasses a wider spectrum within personal interactions and cultural conventions. Esther's personal encounter with her former fiancé, Buddy Willard, illustrates the gender inequality inherent in a patriarchal culture. Buddy Willard, portraying himself as an example of virtue, embodies the ideal masculine archetype that endorses conventional patriarchal ideals. This notion is promptly questioned by Esther upon her discovery of Buddy's premarital sexual activities. This revelation exemplifies the sexual double standard representative of gender inequality within the narrative. This illustrates that patriarchal norms no longer serve as universal ethical standards, but instead operate as a means for men to exert control over women. This gender inequality and double standard initiate Esther's

confrontation with the patriarchal ideology that establishes inconsistent norms, roles, and standards.

3 Esther's Resistance to Patriarchal Norms

The Bell Jar demonstrates how patriarchal gender stereotypes constrain women's autonomy, encompassing both the social realm and personal relationships. The ethical demands, societal norms, and double standards imposed by the patriarchal system inhibit women's ability to exercise personal autonomy and authority. Patriarchal gender constructs have fostered a culture that dismisses moral violations by men while imposing unequal moral standards on women. Esther critically evaluates the gender inequality inherent in a patriarchal culture that dictates what is deemed "appropriate" for women. As a woman living in a patriarchal society, she is bound by societal expectations since her social environment does not allow her to be an ambitious woman committed to her career. The 1950s in America were characterized by societal bias against women, especially those who were educated and pursued advanced careers (Ghandeharion et al., 2016). Rutherford (2017) contends that the post-war gender atmosphere perceived women's ambitions as a threat to male dominance and the societal moral framework. The beliefs and practices imposed in this patriarchal culture aimed to subordinate women within marital and domestic roles. Consequently, women's decision to adhere to societal norms unintentionally stifled their ambitions for autonomy.

Esther Greenwood firmly challenges the patriarchal idealism that regards marriage as the singular standard for valuing women. Her opposition arises from the notion that marriage will result in the the loss of the autonomy and authority essential for the pursuit of her aspirations. In the narrative, Esther encounters a difficult situation when confronted with the option of marriage against the pursuit of a career. Esther views marriage as an intricately designed trap, wherein romantic narratives are constructed to lure women into regarding marriage as the ultimate goal of a woman's existence. Unfortunately, these compelling narratives concerning marriage fail to acknowledge the domestic responsibilities and career independence that may be lost as a result of marriage. Buddy Willard stated, "*after I had children, I wouldn't want to write poems any more*" (Plath, 1963, p. 69). Buddy believes that women will ultimately abandon their professional pursuits for family responsibilities, regardless of their prior jobs. As a woman respected in the literature field, Esther perceived Buddy Willard's viewpoint as representative of the patriarchal figure who dominates household existence. Buddy's viewpoint demonstrates that the societal framework has underappreciated women's duties, ambitions, and freedoms. As a result, the patriarchal gender constructs substantially restrict the opportunities for women to attain acknowledgment for their achievements.

Esther Greenwood challenges the patriarchal system that constrains women's autonomy in meeting societal expectations of femininity. Within the patriarchal framework, femininity is defined as submissive, nurturing, and entirely dependent on men. Meanwhile, Esther recognizes that the social system has undermined women's authority by imposing double standards on men while failing to relieve women of the moral burdens imposed upon them. This sparks Esther's resistance on a broader level. She rejects the unbalanced social expectations placed on women and realizes that the patriarchal social system structurally continues to oppress women. Moreover, she explicitly refuses society's obsession on domestic roles, "*I hated the idea of serving men in any way*" (Plath, 1963, pp. 72–73). As one of the products of the patriarchal social system, marriage remains something glorified

by patriarchal culture and norms. Unfortunately, patriarchal norms and values make Esther fearful of marriage, especially since all the men she has encountered have been products of patriarchy and have contributed to the oppression of women. In conclusion, patriarchal standards, expectations, and norms become the beginning point of Esther's psychological conflict since her internal desires continue to fight with exterior patriarchal forces.

2. Animus Representation and Psychological Conflict

The Bell Jar illustrates the psychological conflict of a woman inside a patriarchal framework, intricately influenced by the discord between societal expectations and personal psychological functions. Esther Greenwood's psychological conflict embodies the clash between societal standards and her desires for authority and autonomy, which cannot coexist harmoniously. In this setting, Esther's desires reflect the unconscious archetype of the animus. Carl Jung defines the animus as a representation of masculine impulses that encourage identity development and self-awareness in women. Although Jung did not consistently define these stages with accuracy, Von Franz (1980) classified the animus into four principal stages: Man of Power, Man of Action, Man of Word, and Man of Meaning. Man of Power signifies a commanding and authoritative entity. Man of Action reflected in strong ambition and personal goals. Man of Word characterized by thoughtfulness and intelligence. Man of Meaning refers to integrated with self-autonomy and consciousness (Franz, 1980; Yu et al., 2024; Marceline & Satria, 2023). The theoretical model remains a valuable interpretative framework for discerning Esther's psychological patterns, despite varying perspectives among Jungian academics on the stages of animus development.

Manifestation of Esther's Animus

The animus represents a masculine archetype that arises within the feminine unconsciousness. Jung (1964) asserts that the animus evolves through many stages, first with a perception of physical power, advancing to action and initiative, intellectual abilities, and culminating in spiritual meaning. Moreover, the animus motivates women to cultivate a rational identity, to esteem intellectual aspirations, and to achieve personal independence. These stages denote the gradual internalization of conventional masculine traits, such as authority, autonomy, rationality, and wisdom (Yu et al., 2024; Marceline & Satria, 2023). As conceptualized by Jung, the manifestations of Esther Greenwood's animus can be observed through several stages of development. However, in her development, these stages are not fully integrated into her psyche. In Esther's experience, the pressure of patriarchal expectations clashes with aspects emerging from Esther's animus, causing her development to become unstable.

Man of Power, emerges in Esther's perception of male authority, particularly through Esther's admiration towards Buddy's dominant masculine authority yet she renounced it due to his betrayal. Yunara & Kardiansyah (2017) illustrated this stage as reflection of admiration for male authority. Man of Action, is reflected in Esther's strong appreciation for intellectual aspiration and rationality. These attributes enhancing individual capacity to assess and challenge external standards (Yunara & Kardiansyah, 2017; Yu et al., 2024). Esther exemplifies her intellect through her strong academic aspirations, "*All my life I've told myself to study hard, read, write, and work hard*" (Plath, 1963, p. 34). Man of Words, is defined by the desire to express arguments questioning on femininity (Yunara & Kardiansyah, 2017; Yu et al., 2024). Esther's logical and critical thinking dismisses male-centric romanticism and imposes the ideals of the perfect marriage upon women. Esther's

critical and argumentative concerning the surrounding society serves as the focal point for addressing this stage. The final stage, Man of Meaning, emerges in the individual's effort to achieve identity wholeness. Unfortunately, Esther has not yet reached this stage because the manifestations of the previous three stages have not shown progress toward a positive direction. This occurs because these animus stages encounter obstacles when confronting social expectations and external pressures.

Esther's animus development struggles to achieve complete integration due to the ongoing conflict between social pressures and her internal aspirations. Esther's aspiration to pursue her career ambitions is, regrettably, at clashes with patriarchal feminine standards that emphasize marriage as the primary objective of a woman. Moreover, societal double standards and patriarchal norms have intellectually influenced society to such an extent where men traits are no longer perceived as reliable for women to rely upon. This is particularly relevant to Esther, who experienced betrayal from her fiancé as a result of the double standards around sexuality maintained by the patriarchal framework. Instead of cooperating to patriarchal norms, Esther rejects a system that diminishes women's autonomy and authority. Esther's will to transcend traditional feminine duties, including marriage and children, illustrates that her agency serves as a catalyst, heightening her awareness of gender inequality and the persistent sexual double standards in society. Unfortunately, despite these qualities, Esther perceives herself as restricted by the constraints and societal expectations of patriarchy that confine women to domestic responsibilities. Esther recognizes that society does not assign equal significance to women's roles in the workforce compared to men's. This arises from a societal structure that continues to regard women solely as "complements" to men. These societal circumstances hinder Esther's career growth in her literary profession. As a result, her aspiration to be a successful writer and the intellectual drive arising from her animus get obscured and fail to materialize into actual action.

Esther's standstill, stemming from the clash between her internal impulses and external demands, signifies a breakdown in the integration of her animus. Despite Esther's strong animus characteristics, her animus manifests sporadically and is frequently accompanied by uncertainty and ambivalence. Society fails to offer social support for Esther's ambitions, restricting her ability to completely integrate her animus. Her aspiration for autonomy and independence conflicts with her anxiety of social isolation and failure, generating psychological tension that is hard to reconcile. This suggests that while the animus is evidently present in Esther's mind, it has not evolved into a coherent integrative process, thereby establishing the foundation for the psychological fragmentation and conflicts she encounters. The emergence of the animus within Esther signifies not completeness, but the beginning of intricate psychological conflicts arising from her difficulty in consistently integrating this part into her personality.

Fragmentation of Animus Development

Esther Greenwood's animus in *The Bell Jar* has a fragmented development, as it gets more fractured due to the clash between her internal aspirations and exterior societal expectations. Carl Jung recognized that an integrated animus emerges in a woman's psyche as she progresses towards rationality, autonomy, and inner power. This progression occurs in many phases, transitioning from impulsive, action-driven manifestations to elevated stages linked with intellectual achievement and the realization of significant self-integration (Yu et al., 2024; Marceline & Satria, 2023). In Esther's situation, the development of the animus is interrupted. Characteristics related to the intellectual aspect of the animus, including critical

thinking, ambition, and the pursuit of independence, failed to achieve stable integration due to societal expectations that constrained Esther's self-actualization. The interruption of Esther's psychological growth was intensified by the patriarchal limitations influencing her social circumstances. A patriarchal culture imposes societal expectations on women's household responsibilities, which Esther perceives as an obstacle on her ambitions. As a result, she chooses to separate herself from the system and attempts to maintain her independence, "*I'm never going to get married*" (Plath, 1963, p. 87). Nonetheless, despite her decision to disconnect from the system, gender inequality and societal constraints remain intrinsically connected to the deeply rooted social structure.

In Esther's situation, her cognitive recognition of gender inequality does not strengthen her; instead, it worsens her internal turmoil. This resistance arises from her recognition that the constraints placed upon her are unbearable. The intense internal struggle with societal expectations perpetually drains Esther's energy, hindering her from achieving her fundamental ambitions. Esther's difficulty in expressing her independence as a woman creates significant discomfort in her environment. This discomfort with the social environment results in enduring psychological problems for individuals (Gusti et. al., 2024). Esther's aspirations, formerly driven by academic ambition and independence, now diminish due to the disintegration of her animus. She neither responds to nor confronts her internal turmoil, remaining trapped in a blankness, "*I felt very still and very empty*" (Plath, 1963, p. 10). The aspiration that supposed to have driven Esther toward ambition in writing now results in her paralysis.

The impasse in life choices results in Esther's animus being progressively entrapped in a divided condition between self-affirmation and self-doubt. Esther's animus experiences disintegration, marked by her failure to express her own aspirational urges. Putrayuda and Thohiriyah (2024) say that persons grappling with self-discovery are vulnerable to role confusion, leading to ambiguity about their life objectives, as their ambitions for autonomy and authority are consistently undercut by pressure, uncertainty, and the fear of conformity. Ultimately, rather than progressing towards self-realization through the actualization of her animus, she encounters an impasse over her identity, "*I felt myself like the negative of a person I'd never seen before in my life*" (Plath, 1963, p. 16). This state signifies an identity crisis when the individual cannot harmonize opposing aspects of the self. In Esther's situation, the inability of the animus to evolve into a completely cohesive entity hinders the establishment of a meaningful identity. The splitting of her animus signifies psychological struggle and the consequences of unresolved conflict between her autonomy and the limitations enforced by patriarchal gender constructs.

Psychological Consequences of Animus Disintegration

Esther's psychological conflicts demonstrates that external expectations greatly influence her own psychological growth. Her internal struggle arises not just from a singular external occurrence but is also influenced by the disintegrated condition of her animus. The developmental phases of her animus have not succeeded in attaining full integration and a comprehensive sense of identity. Her internal condition is perpetually and intensely at conflict with patriarchal gender constructs. Patriarchal gender constructions impose restrictive standards and duties onto women. Men derive advantages from the system due to their dominant masculine authority, whereas femininity is perceived solely as a passive element within that framework. Social systems restrict the development of the animus, which ought to serve as a source of authority and internal direction. Rather than emerging as a

cohesive personality, Esther's animus fails to assimilate and deliver the required potential.

The psychological struggle generated by the disintegration of her animus leads her to experience a feeling of restlessness. The fig tree, with its branches representing the numerous life choices she considers, exemplifies Esther's ambiguity over her life's purpose. Esther articulates her sorrow in the following monologue, "*to choose one means losing all the others*" (Plath, 1963, pp. 73–74). In her dispassionate quest for the meaning of life, Esther perceives the falling leaves as unfulfilled choices. Esther's psychological fragility confines her to a life filled with choices. Esther maintains a depressing mentality, convinced that selecting one life path will inevitably result in the loss of alternative options. This ambiguity over life decisions arises from external influences that force women to select among job, romance, family, or autonomy. The psychological stress faced by women in a patriarchal setting arises from an inability to conform to traditional feminine duties and a deficiency of alternatives to domestic responsibilities (Ghandeharion et al., 2016). The symbol of the "fig tree" signifies the height of Esther's uncertainty. She recognizes her incapacity to align her aspirations with reality as an actual representation of an identity crisis and depression.

The fig tree symbolizes both the ambiguity of Esther's fragmented identity and her psychological consequences arising from the imbalance of her animus. Esther's internal drive seeks autonomy and authority. Nevertheless, cultural norms force her to conform to the standard of the ideal woman who relies on men. Moreover, the strain from her unsuccessful engagement and an ongoing of distressing interactions with men persistently diminishes her belief in marriage. The internal conflict and opposing ideals result in psychological stasis; "*unable to decide, the figs begin to blacken*" (Plath, 1963, p. 74). Esther's portrayal of the fig tree symbolizes not only indecision but also a deep internal conflict. In Jungian philosophy, animus energy turns inward, reducing its intellectual potential and resulting in confusion and stagnation for the person (Jung et al., 1964). The results in this part demonstrate that the limitations imposed by patriarchal gender norms resulted in the disintegration of Esther's animus, inflicting persistent psychological harm. The tension between internal autonomy and external societal pressure led to identity fragmentation and heightened psychological instability. This study concludes that animus breakdown is a crucial factor connecting patriarchal pressure to Esther's psychological conflicts.

D. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between patriarchal gender constructions and the disintegration of Esther Greenwood's animus that leads to her psychological conflict in *The Bell Jar*. The findings indicate that inflexible patriarchal gender constructs limited women's autonomy and intellectual ambition. Specifically concerning marriage, sexual purity, and femininity, which constrain Esther's aspirations. The cultural expectations generated by these constructs influence Esther's unconscious animus archetype, which seeks authority and autonomy but faces challenges. Consequently, Esther's animus grew challenging to cultivate and ultimately disintegrated. The disintegration of Esther's psyche ultimately results in psychological difficulties, including identity crises and an incapacity to make life decisions. This research combines gender studies with Jungian archetypal theory to illustrate how external patriarchal structures are mirrored in internal psychological processes. Esther's psychological conflict is depicted not just as an internal struggle but also as a reflection of the interplay between societal oppression and individual psychological processes. This

analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of women's psychological struggles within post-war American gender ideology.

Theoretically, this study illustrates the influence of socio-cultural pressures on internal psychological processes as represented in literary texts. The findings suggest that patriarchal gender constructions are depicted as contributing to identity conflicts and psychological distress in female characters. This study is limited in that it focuses on a single literary work, *The Bell Jar*, and relies solely on Jungian psychoanalytic theory, which may not fully capture the complexity of Esther Greenwood's psychological experience across various cultural contexts. Future studies may conduct comparative analyses of female characters experiencing similar psychological struggles in different socio-cultural contexts. The integration of additional psychological frameworks, such as trauma theory or feminist psychoanalysis, could further enrich the exploration of identity fragmentation. Moreover, contemporary gender discourse may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how patriarchal systems shape women's psychological experiences across time.

E. REFERENCES

- Adhikari, A., & Sigdel, B. R. (2024). How Gender is Constructed through the Activities of Everyday Life: A Justification with Number of References. *International Journal of Atharva*, 2(2), 42–59. <https://doi.org/10.3126/ija.v2i2.69829>
- Appel, H., & Gerlach, A. L. (2025). Intolerance of uncertainty causally affects indecisiveness. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 64(3), 806–816. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjc.12534>
- Ashari, A. (2025). Dimensions of Gender Construction and Its Implications in Promoting Women's Empowerment Policies. *Jurnal Administrare*, 65-70. <https://doi.org/10.71309/administrare.v12i1.8489>
- Shepherd, A. (2015). *De Beauvoir and 'The Second Sex': a Marxist interpretation* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Hull).
- Butler, J., & Trouble, G. (1990). Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. *Gender trouble*, 3(1), 3-17.
- Cortes, P., & Pan, J. (2018). *Occupation and gender*. In S. L. Averett, L. M. Argys, & S. D. Hoffman (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of women and the economy* (pp. 425–452). Oxford University Press.
- Carlstein, E. (2023). *Marriage and Motherhood in Sylvia Plath's The Bell Jar: An Analysis of Gender Expectations and Poetic Language*. Linköping University Press.
- Castillejos, A. M. M., Tur, S. M., & Jareño, I. M. (2024). Challenging domesticity. *International Journal of English Studies*, 24(1), 153–170. <https://doi.org/10.6018/ijes.532881>
- Cerdán-Torregrosa, A., La Parra-Casado, D., & Vives-Cases, C. (2023). “It is what we have been told to do”: Masculinities and femininities crossing with sexual orientation and feminist activism in Spain. *PLoS ONE*, 18(5), e0285544. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0285544>
- Clayton, J. A., & Tannenbaum, C. (2016). Reporting sex, gender, or both in clinical research? *JAMA*, 316(18), 1863. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2016.16405>
- Crabtree, S. A., & Shiel, C. (2019). “Playing Mother”: Channeled Careers and the construction of gender in academia. *SAGE Open*, 9(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019876285>

- Desyana, V. N. (2022). Esther Greenwood Mental Disorder in Sylvia Plath's novel *The Bell Jar*. *Jurnal JOEPALLT (Journal of English Pedagogy Linguistics Literature and Teaching)*, 10(2), 144-150. <https://doi.org/10.35194/jj.v10i2.2164>
- Eagly, A. H., Nater, C., Miller, D. I., Kaufmann, M., & Sczesny, S. (2020). Gender stereotypes have changed: A cross-temporal meta-analysis of US public opinion polls from 1946 to 2018. *American psychologist*, 75(3), 301-315. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000494>
- Ediana, A. R. (2024). Gender Construction, Stereotype, and Power Dynamics in Stroma's *Tous Les Mêmes*: Critical Discourse Analysis. *Rainbow Journal of Literature Linguistics and Cultural Studies*, 13(2), 96-103. <https://doi.org/10.15294/rainbow.v13i2.3452>
- Ellenberger, H. F. (1970). *The discovery of the unconscious*. Basic Books.
- Fels, A. (2004). Do women lack ambition?. *Harvard Business Review*, 82(4), 50-60.
- Ghandeharion, A., Bozorgian, F., & Sabbagh, M. R. G. (2016). Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*: A mirror of American fifties. *KATA*, 17(2), 64-70. <https://doi.org/10.9744/kata.17.2.64-70>
- Gurung, N. G. (2025). Construction of gender Stereotypes and its implications in development practices. *NPRC Journal of Multidisciplinary Research.*, 2(2), 147-159. <https://doi.org/10.3126/nprcjmr.v2i2.76189>
- Gusti, N. G. A. I. N., Intarini, A., & Thohiriyah, T. (2024). Social Avoidance in Modern Society In Sad Girls By Lang Leav. *Eltin Journal: Journal of English Language Teaching in Indonesia*, 12(2), 235-246.
- Hristova, G. N. (2024). Masculinity and femininity. *Postmodernism Problems*, 14(1), 116-134. <https://doi.org/10.46324/pmp2401116>
- Joseph, A. M. (2025). Bound by tradition: Women's identity and cultural expectations in Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupé*, Alice Walker's *The color purple*, and Amy Tan's *The joy luck club*. *Int J Sci Res Eng Manag*, 9 (4), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.55041/ijrsrem45737>
- Jung, C. G., von Franz, M.-L., Henderson, J. L., Jacobi, J., & Jaffé, A. (1964). *Man and His Symbols*. Anchor Press.
- Larasati, S. K. (2025). Helplessness Effects on The Main Character's Fate Acceptance in *Never Let Me Go*. *Esteem Journal of English Education Study Programme*, 8(2), 248-258.
- Levanon, A., & Grusky, D. B. (2016). The persistence of extreme gender segregation in the twenty-first century. *American Journal of Sociology*, 122(2), 573-619. <https://doi.org/10.1086/688628>
- Lieder, F., Shenhav, A., Musslick, S., & Griffiths, T. L. (2018). Rational metareasoning and the plasticity of cognitive control. *PLoS Computational Biology*, 14(4), e1006043. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pcbi.1006043>
- Marcarian, H., & Wilkinson, P. O. (2017). Sylvia Plath's bell jar of depression: Descent and recovery. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 210(1), 15. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.116.189068>
- Marceline & Satria, T., & Mandala, R. (2023). Re-reading archetypes: The animus and the evolving representation of female subjectivity in modern literature. *Journal of Analytical Psychology and Culture*, 18(2), 111-128. <https://doi.org/10.1080/analpsych.2023.00112>
- Mayor, E. (2015). Gender roles and mental health: Comparative analyses of stress and depression among men and women. *International Journal of Mental Health and Gender Studies*, 7(1), 25-42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/ijmgs.2015.00421>

- Mommersteeg, P. M., Van Valkengoed, I., Lodder, P., Juster, R., & Kupper, N. (2023). Gender roles and gender norms associated with psychological distress in women and men among the Dutch general population. *Journal of Health Psychology, 29*(8), 797–810. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13591053231207294>
- Mwansa, B., Mwange, A., Matoka, W., Chiseyeng'I, J., Chibawe, O., Manda, R., Mutambo, N. (2022). Research methodological choice: explaining research designs; qualitative and quantitative sample size determination, sampling, data collection, and analysis techniques. *Journal of Marketing and Consumer Research. <https://doi.org/10.7176/jmcr/87-06>*
- Nielsen, M. W., Stefanick, M. L., Peragine, D., Neilands, T. B., Ioannidis, J. P. A., Pilote, L., Schiebinger, L. (2021). Gender-related variables for health research. *Biology of Sex Differences, 12*(1), 23. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13293-021-00366-3>
- Patterson, N., & Mavin, S. (2024). When patriarchy and individualism collide: experiences of women entrepreneurial leaders. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship, 17*(1), 116–134. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijge-02-2024-0053>
- Pertiwi, D. K. (2021). Anima and animus personality of the main characters as seen in Collins' *The Hunger Games*: An archetypal study. *Komunikata, 1*(3), 1–11.
- Pietra, J. L., & Suganda, M. T. (2021). Kesehatan Mental Pekerja Perempuan Urban Milenial di Era Pandemi COVID-19: Studi Eksploratif Konektivitas Antara Norma Gender Tradisional dan Produktivitas Kerja. *Prosiding Konferensi Nasional Psikologi Kesehatan, 168-178. <https://doi.org/10.33476/knpk.v4i1.5330>*
- Plath, S. (1963). *The Bell Jar*. Harper & Row.
- Prasetya, A. Z., & Thohiriyah, T. (2024). Social identity and its impacts on Yozo Oba's alienation in No Longer Human. *Jurnal BASIS, 11*(2), 161–172.
- Putrayuda, A., & Thohiriyah (2024). The Development of Psychosocial Characteristics in John Steinbeck's "The Pearl". *Philosophica: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Budaya, 7*(1), 1-15.
- Rovira, M., Lega, L., Suso-Ribera, C., & Orue, I. (2022). The role of women's traditional gender beliefs in depression, intimate partner violence and stress: Insights from a Spanish abbreviated multicultural measure. *BMC Women's Health, 22*(1), 17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-021-01572-2>
- Rutherford, A. (2017). "Making better use of U.S. women": Psychology, sex roles, and womanpower in post-WWII America. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences, 53*(3), 228–245. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jhbs.21861>
- Ruggles, S. (2015). Patriarchy, power, and pay: The transformation of American families, 1800–2015. *Demography, 52*(6), 1797–1823. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-015-0440-z>
- Sengar, N., & Shah, S. R. (2024). Examining the domestic adversities imposed by patriarchy on working women: A Sociological perspective. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management, 11*(4), 95–105. <https://doi.org/10.3126/ijssm.v11i4.68209>
- Shepherd, A. (2015). *De Beauvoir and 'The Second Sex': a Marxist interpretation* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Hull).
- Schiebinger, L., & Hinds, J. L. (2010). *Gendered innovations: Methods of sex and gender analysis*. Stanford University.
- Stein, M. (1998). *Jung's Map of the Soul: an Introduction*. Open Court Publishing.
- Tadiri, C. P., Raparelli, V., Abrahamowicz, M., et al. (2021) Methods for prospectively incorporating gender into health sciences research. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology, 129*, 191–197.

- Ullah, N., et al. (2025). An analysis of gender construction and gender performativity in Sindu's *Marriage of a Thousand Lies* (2017). *The Critical Review of Social Sciences*, 3(3), 1034–1045. <https://thecrsss.com/index.php/Journal/about>
- Varghese, N. T., & Rajesh, A. (2025). Eclipsing Oppression: Unravelling the labyrinth of patriarchal hegemony in Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe*. *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation*, 12(7), 968–974. <https://doi.org/10.51244/ijrsi.2025.120700100>
- Von Franz, M. L. (1980). *Projection and re-collection in Jungian psychology: Reflections of the soul*. Open Court Publishing.
- Yazid, S., & Thohiriyah, T. (2024). The process of self-acceptance after grieving in Michelle Zauner's *Crying in H Mart*. *Philosophica: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Budaya*, 7(1), 44–56.
- Yu, K., Syam, E., & Hutahaeon, S. (2024). Jung's Animus of the Female Main Characters in *The Woman King* Film. *Elite: English and Literature Journal*, 11(2), 188-198.
- Yunara, Y. Y., & Kardiansyah, M. Y. (2017). Animus Personality in Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire: A Game of Thrones*. *Teknosastik*, 15(1), 7-13.