

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Sexuality used to be considered inappropriate and taboo to be discussed; yet, nowadays it is a popular issue to write about. Sexuality itself is defined as “the feelings and activities connected with a person’s sexual desires” (Hornby 1392). Sylvia Plath and Paulo Coelho use sexuality as one of the main issues in their novels, The Bell Jar and Eleven Minutes. In these two novels, sexuality helps the self-development of the female protagonists. Oxford defines self-development itself as “the process by which a person’s character and abilities are developed” (Hornby 1377). However, the development that I am going to discuss here concerns with the characteristics and ways of thinking.

In The Bell Jar and Eleven Minutes, both women protagonists’ characteristics develop through sexual issues. Sexuality here lends them a hand to reach that stage. Esther in The Bell Jar is an intelligent young woman who lives in America in 1950’s. Knowing that her boyfriend has already lost his virginity, she decides to lose hers as well with another guy. Maria in Eleven Minutes is an uptown girl whose fate has brought her to Rio de Janeiro and in the end, she ends

up as a prostitute by her own decision. Although they encounter different sexual experiences, I find sexuality helps them to develop their characteristics and change their ways of thinking.

The Bell Jar is Sylvia Plath's one and only novel. Although she was well known as a poet, this semi-autobiography of hers is worth reading. Almost every part of the novel reflects her life. Plath made The Bell Jar "an important novel of the era" (D'Elia). Despite the fact that she was dead by committing suicide, her work remains alive until now. "... [Plath] resonates so powerfully because of the modernism of her life story. She was a genius surely, but still faced the questions women of the era started to ask: Am I going to be me, or am I going to be a mother? Am I going to be me, or am I going to be a wife?" (Arnold).

Meanwhile, Paulo Coelho is a best-seller author. "Eleven Minutes topped all lists in the world..." ("Biography"). Unlike many authors who include sexuality in their novels without any specific purposes, Coelho stated that "I wrote Eleven Minutes, in order to find out if, at this stage of life, at 55, I had the courage to learn everything that life has tried to teach me on the subject" ("Paulo Coelho on Eleven Minutes").

According to Roberts in Writing about Literature, a character is "a verbal representation of a human being as presented to us by the authors..." (66). That is why I find that analyzing a character is something challenging as "reading for character is more difficult than reading for a plot, for character is much more complex, variable, and ambiguous" (Perrine 67). Both Plath and Coelho have their own intention to form such characters. Thus, in my thesis, I am going to analyze

the portrayal of protagonists in The Bell Jar and Eleven Minutes. To be more specific, I am going to analyze how sexuality plays an important role in the development of both protagonists.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

The problems that I am going to analyze in my thesis are:

1. How are the protagonists portrayed in the novels?
2. How do the protagonists develop throughout the novels?
3. What are the purposes of the authors in creating such characters?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aims of this analysis being constructed are:

1. To show how the protagonists are portrayed in the novels.
2. To show how the protagonists develop throughout the novels.
3. To show what the purposes of the authors are in creating such characters.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

In writing this analysis about these two novels, Plath's The Bell Jar and Coelho's Eleven Minutes, I apply the library research method to find some books to help me in gathering information I require. The novels that are mentioned above are the primary texts for this analysis. Having read the novels, I collect some references and criticisms regarding the novels from the Internet websites in order to support this analysis.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problems, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two contains the portrayal of the protagonist in The Bell Jar. Chapter Three contains the portrayal of the protagonist in Eleven Minutes. The last chapter is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which contains the synopses of the two novels and biographies of the authors.