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**A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY: AN ANALYSIS OF CHARACTERS OF MARCELLO CLEIRCI AND ESTHER GREENWOOD**

The following paper analyzes the two leading protagonists from “The Conformist” and “The Bell Jar,” to comparatively evaluate their search for the identity and its consequences. “The Conformist” is a 1951 novel that is authored by Alberto Moravia The story revolves around the life and times of Marcello Clerici, who is a government official, and throughout the Fascist period in Italy, he desires to seek his normalcy. On the other hand, the second character is of Esther Greenwood from “The Bell Jar” which was written in 1963 by Sylvia Plath. The book is a semi-autobiographical account of Plath’s real-life miseries, and throughout the narration, Greenwood endeavors to dwell with the social standards. Both dispositions affirm that external pressure, falsely developed social norms, and an attempt to fit within can cause exacerbated damages to one’s psychological condition.

In “The Conformist” Marcello Clerici keeps looking for a normal life in which he supposed to have perceived normal emotions, appearance, behaviors, and lifestyle. The urge to live a normal life becomes intense day by day, and in due course, Marcello mixed up the concepts of normalcy with the conformity. When Marcello was a young boy, he experienced the worst situations and feelings of guilt and trauma because he thought he is not compatible with normal social standards. The subsequent psychological intricacies made him kill rodents and other small animals, and yet he convinced by others that his attitude and actions are not abnormal. Marcello was living in a brutal Fascist period, and all the cruel expressions and unethical demeanor were considered normal in that era, in contrast, people who opted to stay away from all the corruption were taken as socially abnormal. The book explicates that “desire for normality; a longing to adapt to some recognized and general rule; a wish to be like everyone else, from the moment that being different meant being guilty” (Moravia, 1951). As a result, Marcello spends all his life in undue psychological pressure and trauma and feels guilty of things that never happened in reality but only in his mind.

Similarly, in “The Bell Jar” Esther Greenwood is depicted as a young, ambitious, and intellect girl. But throughout her adulthood, she encounters a myriad of conventional impositions that makes her hating her gender and being a grown up. Like many others, girls in that epoch; Esther was also a depended lady, and therefore she had to follow the rules devised by others. The vague traditional and social standards rip her life in two fractions to either start a normal family life or to go for a career. However, the Plath uses the voice of Esther and demonstrates the bravery that provokes her to have a rebel soul even in such chaos. The book says that “I took a deep breath and listened to the old brag of my heart, I am, I am, I am” (Plath, 1963, p.158). The unfair and absurd social standards and traditional boundaries create mental complications for Esther, and she gets depressed by unemotional reactions of her mother on the death of her father, as well her own incompatibility to fit in the culturally and traditionally devised mold of women. In due course, she becomes hugely dishearten and even attempts to suicide.

By analyzing the agony and terrible experiences of Esther Greenwood and Marcello Clerici, it becomes evident that traditions and cultural standards and boundaries are not normal parameters and can ruin the freedom and psychology of an individual. However, Esther was braver than Marcello, and she fights to make her way. But both protagonists suffered exacerbated pressure, and in turn, lost all of their self-esteem and eventually became deprived of their true identities while searching for normalcy.

**Work Cited**

Plath, Sylvia. The Bell Jar. Faber and Faber, 1966.

Moravia, Alberto. The Conformist. Secker & Warburg, 1952.