

'My mother and grandmother were such good cooks that I left everything to them'- has been so nurtured my these stereotypical housewives that she has no initiative of her own, has been so looked after that she struggles to look after herself.

'My mother kept telling me nobody wanted a plain English major. But an English major who knew shorthand was something else again. [...] She would be in demand among all the up-and-coming young men and she would transcribe letter after thrilling letter.'- cynicism evident

'I hated the idea of serving men in any way. I wanted to dictate my own thrilling letters.'- dictate-clear power, connotations, she wants to be in control.

'I didn't know shorthand [...] I was a terrible dancer. I couldn't carry a tune. [...] I couldn't ride a horse or ski [...] I couldn't speak German or read Hebrew or write Chinese.'- counting the ways she is inadequate, Esther begins with the activities more traditionally associated with women, cooking, shorthand, performing arts- she feels like a failure as a woman.

'I saw my life branching out before me like the green fig tree in the story. From the tip of every branch, like a fat purple fig, a wonderful future beckoned and winked. One fig was a husband and a happy home and children, and another fig was a famous poet and another fig was a brilliant professor, and another fig was Ee Gee, the amazing editor, and another fig was Europe and Africa and South America, and another fig was Constantin and Socrates and Attila and a pack of other lovers with queer names and offbeat professions, and another fig was an Olympic lady crew champion, and beyond and above these figs were many more figs I couldn't quite make out. I saw myself sitting in the crotch of this fig tree, starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my mind which of the figs I would choose. I wanted each and every one of them, but choosing one meant losing all the rest, and, as I sat there, unable to decide, the figs began to wrinkle and go black, and, one by one, they plopped to the ground at my feet.' - housewife, poet, professor, editor, traveller and lover are just some of Esther's options.- her problem, perhaps, is not that she is incapable but that she is too capable, she has the potential to go in all different directions and thus experiences a divided sense of self. In a society that demands women be one thing only, Esther wants it all and thus suffers a crisis. She is a not, as she believes, 'a racehorse in a world without race tracks', but rather a race horse in a world with many, many race tracks. Not that there's no outlet for Esther's potential, but rather too many outlets- figs- virility, fertility, her future obviously promising and full.

'sleeping with Buddy wouldn't count though, because he would still be one person ahead of me'- + counting up her inadequacies, winning' scholarships and race horse + footballer metaphor (champion college footballer lost on main street)- competitive nature of American society. / protagonist herself, Esther wants to outdo everyone else.

'This boy- his name was Eric- said he thought it was disgusting the way all the girls at my college stood around [...] in plain view, necking madly [...] one Saturday Eric and a few of his classmates [...] visited a notorious whorehouse. Eric's whore [...] was a fat, middle-aged woman with dyed red hair and suspiciously thick lips and rat coloured skin [...] he had her under a fly-spotted twenty-five watt bulb.' - SO HYPOCRITICAL DOUBLE STANDARDS

'if he loved anybody he would never go to bed with her'- sexual double standard, the splitting apart women have, like Esther and her figs women can only be one thing, forced to make a choice, men cant see them as multi-faceted individuals.

'In Defence of Chastity' article - women cant handle sex emotionally, men might but women must not have sex before marriage, men want to be the ones to teach women about sex, cant respect an unmarried woman they have sex with- unmarried sex = no respect for women. compares sex wit going to europe- world divided in virgins and non virgins.

'I never wanted to get married. The last thing I wanted was infinite security and to be the place an arrow shoots off from. I wanted change and excitement and to shoot off in all directions myself, like the coloured arrows from a Fourth of July rocket.' - this is what Esther wants, doesn't want to get married yet marriage still a fig, feel inadequate sometimes wants to be like Betsy- societal pressures, cause a divided sense of self, doesn't know what she wants.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40267609>

Kate A. Baldwin- 'The Radical Imaginary of *The Bell Jar*'