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J.D. SALINGER : HIS LIFE AND WORKS

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INDEX		Page
INTRODUCTION		4
SECTION 1	“A Literary Characterisation of Holden Caulfield”	5
SECTION 2	“ A Psychological Approach to Holden Caulfield’s Transition into Adulthood”	40
SECTION 3	“ The Question of Innocence in The Catcher in the Rye”	70
SECTION 4	“ Brief account on Cult Literature and its Relation with J.D Salinger”	111
CONCLUSION		153

INTRODUCTION

The object of study in the present work will be the novel of Jerome David Salinger, American writer, who has become one of the icons of contemporary literature. This controversial writer was born in 1919, New York City, he is the son of a Jewish father and a Christian mother. He lives in a self-imposed isolation in U.S. and he won critical acclaim and devoted admirers, especially among the post- World War II generation of college students, after the publication of his novel "*The Catcher in the Rye*" in 1951.

It is on this work where most part of this analysis will be focused. Firstly, there will be an analysis of the literary characterisation of Holden Caulfield, an adolescent who narrates his story during two days of wandering in New York City after he has been kicked out from school. Secondly, different psychological aspects of adolescence will be used to understand his transition to what he considers a "phony" adult world. In the third place, there will be a discussion about the question of innocence in "*The Catcher in The Rye*". In the last chapter of this work, the theme of cult literature will be discussed, its relationship with 'cults' proper and the role of Salinger within the cult phenomenon.

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A LITERARY CHARACTERISATION OF HOLDEN CAULFIELD

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A mis padres por su eterno apoyo y confianza. A mis hermanos y sobrinos por su ayuda y finalmente a mis oscuros camaradas por estar siempre ahí.

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Patricio David Aránguiz Rojo

INDEX	Page
Introduction	8
1. Characterisation Approaches	10
2. A Review of Holden Caulfield's Past as a Literary Character	13
3. Physical Features of Holden Caulfield	17
3.1. The Young Man	17
3.2. The Fall	21
4. Holden's Socio-economic Situation and Background	23
4.1. The Family and its Meaning	24
4.2. The Setting	28
5. Psychological Aspects of Holden's Characterisation	30
5.1. The Personality	30
5.2. The Speaking Mannerism	34
6. Summary	36
Conclusion	37
Bibliography	39

INTRODUCTION

Fictional characters are usually the most interesting as well as the most profitable source of study in any type of literary work. A character is an artistic endeavour in the process of recreating the human personality with literary purpose. Aristotle defined characters as creatures in art that seem to be human beings of one sort or another. In J.D. Salinger's "*The Catcher In The Rye*", Holden Caulfield, the protagonist, has been created with such convincing features that any adolescent would probably be able to identify with him. E.M. Foster defines characterisation as *the creation of imaginary persons so that they seem lifelike, real human beings*¹. Salinger gives Holden a variety of features as regards the character's personality that he can be classified as a full-flesh character. A full-fleshed character, strictly from its literary construction, is one who displays many different aspects of his or her personality. A novel usually takes its characters over a critical period of their lives and shows the effects of the dramatic circumstances of the story upon them. Full-fleshed characters show some sort of growth and development as the plot advances; in other words, they undergo changes. The full-fleshed character exhibits multi-dimensional traits in the sense that the character displays a variety of features that are exploited and changed in some way or another. There is no exclusion of any aspect of the character's personality. If only one characteristic is highlighted, we are in the presence of another type of character, the flat one. Instead, full-fleshed characters seem more human and real than flat ones and yet it is easier to come across flat characters than full-fleshed ones. There are changes in the physical, mental, emotional or spiritual features of Holden as a literary

¹ Foster E.M. 1927 Aspects of the Novel. London, England. Harcourt Brace and Company.

Character that the present report will deal with his characterisation and his changes throughout the novel and how they affect him.

1.CHARACTERISATION APPROACHES

According to Foster², there are three fundamental approaches to characterisation:

- a) The explicit presentation by the author of the character through direct exposition, either in an introductory block or illustrated by actions carried out by the character.
- b) The presentation of the character in action, with little or no comment by the author, in the expectation that the reader can deduce the attributes of the character from the actions in the story, like, for example, dialogues.
- c) The presentation from within the character, without comment by the author, of the impact of actions and emotions on the character's inner self.

In "*The Catcher In The Rye*" Salinger presents his character in action throughout a dramatic experience of two days of wandering in New York City and it is related to the presentation from within the character since the story is presented in the first person point of view, with Holden's comments and opinions.

There are, of course, other ways to reveal a character, as the ones proposed by Boas and Smith³:

- d) Revealing a character by description, which is a word picture of the character's appearance. To reveal the character, a description must do more than tell us what people look like; it must suggest the qualities, which go with outward appearance.

² Foster E.M. *ob.cit.*

³ Boas R. and Smith E. 1938 Enjoyment of Literature. New York, U.S.A. Harcourt Company

- e) Revealing the character through a psychological analysis, which tells us what people are thinking and why they do so, often in detail.
- f) Revealing the character through conversation is a useful way of showing what people are like. What people talk often shows what they are like. Salinger, in fact, literally transcribed the commonplace language of everyday life in his novel.
- g) Revealing the character through incidents, troublesome or pleasant ones, even slight ones, will also reveal the character. Particularly actions at a crisis period in the character's life.

Salinger uses these approaches, perhaps in an intertwined manner, though number one is not suitable for the present work, I think Holden is revealed in action, from within himself, through descriptions, through his psychological reactions in conversations and incidents. These approaches have been applied in the characterisation of Holden. Anyway, there is still one more approach, which, in my opinion, is shown through some autobiographical elements of the author in the novel. There are several aspects taken from Salinger's life that give Holden his human-like dimensions as a literary character. Therefore, I think it is useful to divide the present report into themes in order to see how the characterisation approaches were applied and to ascertain if, in fact, there are elements of Salinger's life included in the novel. The themes to be developed are the physical changes during the puberty period that affect Holden and also the physical changes that he undergoes during his two days of wandering in New York City. Secondly, I will present Holden's socio-economic situation and his past experiences in order to see how they influence on his personality. Thirdly, I will expose Holden's psychological aspects, such as attitudes or feelings towards other characters, dialogues and his speaking mannerisms. The

names of the story have an interesting meaning, therefore they will also be discussed in this section. Finally, I will present a conclusion about the effects of these characterisation approaches and their interrelationships as regards Holden Caulfield and Salinger's life.

First of all, I think it is pertinent to develop a review of Holden's background as a literary character, because, curiously enough, he was introduced by Salinger years before the publication of *The Catcher in the Rye* in 1951 in the U.S.

2. A REVIEW OF HOLDEN CAULFIELD'S PAST AS A LITERARY CHARACTER.

According to literary researches, Holden Caulfield has appeared in at least seven short stories, under different names and circumstances. They affirm that Salinger worked on Holden for at least ten years before the publication of his most famous novel "*The Catcher in the Rye*". For example, Holden appears in Salinger's first short stories published by "The New Yorker" and "The Collier's" between 1941 and 1946⁴. Consequently, it is important to note how Holden was introduced and how he evolved from these first sketches in the short stories into the final character as presented in the novel in order to see his development as a full-fledged character.

In some of these short stories we find a Holden vaguely described as a minor character, it is not until later that he appears with his own identity as a protagonist. An early mention of it as a character occurs in a short story called "The Last Day of the Last Furlough" published by "The New Yorker" in 1941, although he doesn't appear, he is recognisable in spite of the fact that he is just mentioned by another character, his older brother Vincent Caulfield, the actual protagonist. In this story Holden has been declared missing in action during the Second World War, in other words this seems to be the death that the author chose for his character⁵. This fact also occurred to some extent to Salinger himself, due to the fact that he went to the Second World War where he saw the horrors of it. Salinger entered the war with a special affection about militia but soon he was right in

⁴ French W. 1969 J.D. Salinger: vida y obra del autor del cazador oculto. Buenos Aires, Argentina. Fabril Editora

⁵ French W. ob.cit.

the middle of some of the most intense, savage warfare of the century. Here we have a similarity between the character and the author, it is even said that Salinger was recovering from this traumatic experiences for a long time.

In this story Holden is defined as a troublesome and determined 20 year-old individual of a bar frequented by University students in New York City, facts that I think cohere with the final features of the character in the novel. We find that although Holden does not appear, his features are given through a description made by other characters and the incidents in which Holder is involved.

Later in another short story called "This Sandwich has no Mayonnaise", Vincent Caulfield is depressed and deeply affected because of his missing brother. Again Holden does not appear and he is only mentioned. Salinger reveals Holden's features by means of a description made by another character and by the incidents such as the war and the emotional state of Vincent.

In 1945 a short story called "I'm crazy" was published by "The Collier's". Holden is presented as the protagonist, that is to say, he displays more distinct features such as his speaking mannerism, his own opinions, which shows some further traits of his personality. Here we can find the characterisation approach of the character in action, interacting with other characters such as his little sister Phoebe. Also some aspects of his personality can be revealed from within the character, especially when he expresses his own opinions. Holden can also be revealed through psychological analysis, his conversations and his reactions towards some incidents. Several of the characterisation approaches show up in this short

story, narrated in the first person point of view making easier for us to see how Salinger's characterisation works, how Holden's human traits are successfully created. The story is about the conversation with his History teacher, Mr. Spencer, later included as the initial chapter of the novel. We find a boy who dislikes school and lacks interest in all his subjects. This story also includes the episode in which Holden has an important conversation with his sister Phoebe about his future. He talks with her and afterwards he finds himself at Central Park wondering where to go. Curiously enough, Holden is already feeling lost, confused and depressed. In this story Holden becomes a real and dynamic character for he is no longer a person spoken about. The first person perspective allows us to see reality through his own eyes although here he doesn't express his opinions as rudely and openly as he does in the novel. Swear words and terms such as "moron" or "phony" do not appear, although he uses a sarcastic tone when he refers to others. The boy in this story is not as complex as the one in the novel, but rather normal or ordinary, with no worries about his life, his future or his family. In "*The Catcher in the Rye*", Salinger modified Holden's personality from this story into a more complex one.

Then a short story called "Slight Rebellion off Madison" published 1946 by "The New Yorker". It is an episode also included in the novel. It is about Holden's date with Sally Hayes, a former girlfriend, but this Holden is entirely different from the one in the novel. This story is narrated in third person and this eliminates the effective first person point of view as regards the characterisation from within the character, as a result, we are not able to realise what he thinks or feels about her, his friends or the environment. The setting is similar to the one in the novel, beginning at Pencey Prep., continuing into several bars in New York and ending up with Holden drunk and cold looking for a place to go or,

what is more dramatic, for a place where he can feel he belongs to. Another factor is the one that it takes place during Christmas vacations, making his loneliness even worse. Holden's personality is revealed by means of the incidents in which he is involved and the effects that they may have upon him. Also, the use of dialogue allows us to acknowledge traits of his personality, although the third person point of view does not make things easier to know Holden by means of the sort of stream-of-consciousness as presented in the first person point of view. Psychological traits can only be inferred by the reader. In this short story Holden is not fully described, either; the reader is only able to see a common boy on Christmas vacation looking for adventure with no worries or in crisis.

By examining these early sketches of Holden Caulfield, we can see that he was created through a huge process of development and that this is one of the reasons of his perfect characterisation, which, after all, defines him as a full-fleshed character in "*The Catcher in the Rye*". Almost all works of fiction contain the literary elements of full-fleshed characters. They are the ones that move the plot and interact with the setting and, as we learn to recognise them, we can always learn more about us in the sense that the experiences that characters face most of the times are similar to the ones that we must face in our lives. The human characteristics that full-fleshed characters present are taken from us, so, if we realise how these characters react, evolve and grow, we will easily find aspects of our own selves in them.

3. PHYSICAL FEATURES OF HOLDEN CAULFIELD IN J. D. SALINGER'S "*THE CATCHER IN THE RYE*"

In this section I will deal with the physical changes that Holden experiences as regards both the puberty period and his crisis situations throughout the novel; especially how Salinger uses his techniques to achieve a convincing characterisation from the physical point of view.

3.1. The Young Man.

Holden is a 16 year-old young man from New York City who experiences the difficulties inherent to puberty as part of human growing up to become autonomous and self-sufficient individuals. This period is characterised, as it is well-known, by drastic changes in the physical and psychological development of the individuals. During this period there are no great changes in the intellectual functions due to the fact that the capacity to solve complex problems is developed gradually; nevertheless, it is a period of emotional stress and this sometimes leads from conflicts of communication with parents, relatives, teachers, etc, to extreme conflicts where some people become misfits, criminals, anarchists, etc., for their failure to cope with reality.

The physical appearance changes: pimples, hair growth , muscular shape, development of the sexual organs etc., and they affect the behaviour of young people. Physical and psychological changes are interrelated and affect each other in the sense that physical changes could be traumatic in some cases because sometimes the child will not be

able to cope with them and will react in a negative attitude towards almost everything around. This negative attitude arises from the fact that the youngster is no longer under the protection of his family and he will have to face the world by himself. He will have to handle all sorts of situations: money, responsibility, jobs, sex, drinking, etc. The psychosocial objective of these changes in teenagers, although they may be unaware of it, is the mature evolution from a dependent situation into a self-sufficient one. This new identity will allow him or her to relate with others in an autonomous and, hopefully, healthier way, notwithstanding the fact or possibility that emotional troubles are likely to occur as it is the case of Holden. The affective support is of much importance to reach a state of personal responsibility and self-acceptance. Another reason for young men to behave in a difficult or negative way is the fact that they are expected to behave like adults, but youngsters usually do the contrary in order to feel free from adult impositions. For Holden these changes are very difficult to accept and maturation is a serious problem both, physically and emotionally speaking.

At the beginning of the novel he seems to be in a healthy physical state, since he is part of the fencing team in his school, but from an intellectual point of view he is affected. One of the reasons for this is that he doesn't want to grow up because he doesn't know what his role in the adult world could be⁶. Salinger was the manager of the fencing team when he was at school, as Holden is, so this is another point that both stories share.

⁶ French W. ob. cit.

As regards his physical state during puberty, the characterisation is done by means of the presentation of the character in action. Holden feels weak despite the fact that he is the manager of the fencing team but his weakness comes from the fact that he doesn't belong to the football team where the strong boys are. Everybody goes to the football games, but he seems to feel that fencing is unimportant, so he does not worry about neglecting the equipment in the subway and being hated by the rest of the team. That feeling comes from within the character, he shows a lack of security about himself:

"I was the goddam manager of the fencing team. Very big deal. We'd gone in to New York for this fencing meet with McBurney School. Only, we didn't have the meet. I left all the foils and equipment and stuff on the goddam subway. The whole team ostracised me the whole way back on the train. It was pretty funny in a way."

Holden is worried about his own and his classmate's appearances, as most teenagers normally do. He is always highlighting other people's features whether he finds them good or bad. He uses physical features like pimples or beard in order to describe his classmates. The physical shape is always present to compare himself with others. This point is interesting because there is an indirect way of characterisation from within the character. Holden describes other physical traits in order to characterise his own, he talks about how others look like in order to ascertain how he does not look like:

"He was a very strong guy. I'm a very weak guy. He started shaving himself twice, to look gorgeous."

The quote above shows the way in which Holden describes his classmate Stradlater. By applying the approach of characterisation from within the character, I think Holden admires his roommate for three reasons: one is the theme of beards, chins and moustaches, which is a very common reason for jealousy among teenagers because it makes a difference

between kids and grown-ups. Second, it is a matter of strength that Holden wants to prove, but he lost when he fought against Stradlater. Third, it is a kind of envy because his classmate is very handsome, has a date and has been successful with girls in the past, facts about which Holden seems to be envious although he openly admits it. Holden is worried about the physical aspect of his peers and while he admires or envies some of them, he may speak in a derogative way about those boys who have more physical problems than himself and he makes it explicit, that he doesn't suffer from these defects as to reassure himself and the reader what sort of individual he really is or how he really looks like:

“That guy had just about everything. Sinus trouble, pimples, lousy teeth, crumby fingernails, halitosis. You had to feel a little sorry for the sonuvabitch.”

Holden is used to describe people in terms of their physical appearance:

“I wouldn't describe her as strictly beautiful. She was sort of muckle-mouthed.”

Therefore, by analysing his way of thinking about others, I can infer that he is an ordinary guy as regards his physical appearance: he is not so handsome but he is certainly not an ugly boy because he has also had some success with a few girls in the past. If compared with Stradlater, he is weak, but he belongs to the fencing team, so he must be in a regular muscular shape, otherwise he couldn't be its manager. He defines himself as being quite skinny and very tall for his age, he says that he has grown nine inches and a half last year and he considers himself to be pretty healthy, at least from a physical point of view.

Holden is a 16 year old boy, he must look like one with a child-like face, in spite of the fact that he has grey hair in the right side of his head, that makes him look older. His

classmates are always saying that they are older than he is because in fact they are, or because they look older, Ackley says:

"Stop calling me Ackley kid, I'm old enough to be your lousy father".

But Holden does not seem to worry about looking like a beardless junior when he goes to a dancing place. He cannot look so infantile. He can invite any girl and she will accept, but his face denotes his age, so he is not able to buy any drinks in most of the bars he visits in New York, he is always asked about his age. Sometimes he even changes his voice in order to look older. In one occasion he invited three girls of around thirty for dancing and they accepted. Also a prostitute says that he looks like a movie star.

3.2. The Fall.

Up to this point, we have a healthy boy, thin, perhaps a little skinny. He is in regular muscular shape, rather weak but without any physical hindrance, like pimples. But he has been wandering in a big city for two days; he has not eaten well since he left school two days ago and he is a strong smoker, which makes him have an ill respiratory system and he likes drinking alcohol. Moreover, he has been in two fights, one against Stradlater and the next one against Maurice, the pimp in the hotel, in both he was the loser. Holden has not slept well and has been walking a lot because he has no place to go, therefore he begins to feel tired and depressed, walking to different places without knowing where to go, facts that affect his physical appearance and health.

In the final chapters of the novel we find Holden tired, sick, vomiting, sweating, scared, feeling that he is falling apart. This is acknowledged by means of his

characterisation in action. He is walking on the street feeling that he is falling, and at a certain moment he feels that he is going to die and asks his dead brother Allie for help:

"Allie. I'd say to him: Allie don't let me disappear, Allie don't let me disappear please!"

Holden is falling in front of his enemy: adulthood. The same adulthood that creates wars and that seems to have destroyed Salinger's faith in innocence. Holden is becoming an adult and he seems to realise it in the final scene with his sister Phoebe in a carousel and by looking at her, he realises that he cannot fight against his destiny; childhood is no longer an everlasting sanctuary, and he cannot really protect the children:

"The thing with kids is, if they fall off, they fall off, but it's bad if you say anything to them."

The quote above explains Holden's defeat. He feels his own expulsion from the rye and ends in a hospital recovering from a physical collapse and a nervous breakdown. Something changes in Holden, he acknowledges that children must grow up, that maturity is something that a catcher cannot stop and that it is impossible to preserve children's innocence. His perseverance is what saves him from an ultimate disillusionment in the end. He will accept maturity, he will leave his self-destructive behaviour and will look for true happiness from within by accepting to become an adult. Holden must have changed, at the end of the novel he must have a different expression on his face, the expression of experience after two terrible days in New York gazing at the corruption of the adult world, that of an adult because in the end Holden realises that he has grown up,

"I feel so happy all of a sudden, if you want to know the truth. I don't know why. God, I wish you could've been there."

4. HOLDEN'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION AND BACKGROUND IN "*THE CATCHER IN THE RYE*"

In this section I will present the influence of the socio-economic environment on Holden's characterisation. The setting of the story will be detailed, also Holden's past experiences in order to draw a general picture of the situation in which he is and the effect of that situation upon him. Past experiences are important in the sense that their effects may be the reason for the current behaviour of the character in question. The characterisation approaches, such as the presentation of the character in action, presentation from within the character and revealing the character in incidents are useful to accomplish this end and will be detailed when it is pertinent.

Holden belongs to a wealthy family. Characterisation by incidents is achieved. For example, in the span of two days he spends a very huge amount of money before coming home for holidays. Wherever he goes, he always takes taxies, he checks in hotels, he goes to several sophisticated bars where all the movie stars go, he attends a Broadway show, he goes ice skating, shopping, he wears expensive clothes, he even pays for the services of a prostitute. He also describes himself as a great golfer, a sport largely associated to the higher classes. Holden plays golf since he was ten years old. He is aware of the fact that money is important in his current socio-economic situation:

"In New York, boy, money really talks, I'm not kidding."

More descriptive is the fact that he has been expelled from four high schools and he does not seem to worry about it. Even more, after being thrown out for the forth time, he

goes to the centre of New York City to take easy his last expulsion from an old, private and very expensive high school: Pencey Prep. in Agerstown, Pennsylvania, where he failed four subjects out of five. It is a place where the socio-economic position is one, if not the most important aspect of any individual. Holden does not worry about his school situation:

“One of the biggest reasons I left Elkton Hills was because I was surrounded by phonies.”

That is his reason for leaving one of the schools he used to attend. It seems a very childish reason, obviously he couldn't care less about his future scholarship. One reason is the fact that he has never suffered from an economic problem. His father is a successful lawyer and Holden has always had whatever he wants. He thinks he will probably have to attend a sort of military school. It does not matter to Holden.

“A lot of people keeps asking me if I'm going to apply myself when I go back to school next September. It's such a stupid question, in my opinion. I mean how do you know what you're going to do till you do it? The answer is you don't.”

Salinger also had some academic troubles when he was young. He also flunked out of a few private schools for not even trying to do the work. After being thrown out, he entered a military academy before going to war.

4.1. The Family and its Meaning

The first member to deal with must be Holden Caulfield. He feels that he is the only failure in his family, in his opinion the rest are good people. It seems that Salinger selected this name because it means “cold field”, which can be a cemetery or it may also imply “grave” or “abyss”. “Caul” is the skin that protects babies before birth. Therefore it seems

that Holden Caulfield means the one that *holds in the cold field*.⁷ Holden wants to become a catcher in the rye to protect children from falling from innocence, so the name fits very well to his character.

A significant secondary character is his little sister Phoebe, who is considered by Holden a “*personality*”, he means that she is successful in everything she does, she gets high marks at school, she is very intelligent, sensitive, etc. That is why Holden visits her for advice when he feels lost in New York. She represents the innocence and honesty of childhood in contrast to the corruption of the adult world. The meaning of her name could come from the Greek “*phoibus*”, meaning radiant . She functions like an oracular figure, someone to consult because she knows the truth, she is a priestess of Phoebus Apollo, the oracle at Delphi. It seems that her name is not chosen at random because Salinger makes her function as a wise character. Holden trusts her and when he is lost and confused, he comes to visit her and she already knows that he has been thrown out from school. She is the one that helps Holden to grown up at the final scene at the carrousel, she shows him the path, it means that children grow up and become adults, a fact that Holden refuses until she teaches him the truth.

D.B. is the oldest brother, a movie scrip writer in Hollywood. Holden does not like his work, he considers it a sort of corruption of the soul, in the sense that his brother is selling his art. Holden hates movies, Salinger has also proved to reject this art by refusing to sell the rights of the novel to make a movie or a play based on it. D.B. is working where

⁷ Holden Caulfield: Salinger’s ironic amalgam. <www.uchile.cl/biblioteceas/basesdedatos/ebsco >

all the movie stars are, so, in a way, he must have achieved a certain success in order to make a living in that place. Holden's favourite book is "*The Secret Goldfish*", written by his brother, fact that reveals Holden's contradiction. D.B. only appears at the beginning and at the end of the novel, in fact Holden tells his brother all this story for him to write it. The meaning that can be given to D.B.'s name is that the letter D stands for *death*, the death of innocence that Holden wants to prevent to happen, and the B stands for *birth*, therefore we can think of D.B. as a character that represents the everlasting circle of life, to bring a new life, a birth, something has to die. To be born to the adult world, Holden has to die in childhood. That is what happened to D.B., he entered the adult world, he died in childhood, he works and has a life far away from the family household. D.B. represents what Holden has to do in order to grown up and that is Holden's reason to dislike him.

Holden describes his siblings as marvellous people, and I think that his siblings are revealed by means of description made by Holden, and it is very interesting because although they do not appear very often in the novel, D.B. only appears at the beginning or birth of the novel and at the end or death of it, Holden describes them very well and we can draw some aspects of their personalities from Holden's descriptive way of speaking about them. It is an indirect description of some characters done by another one, in this case the protagonist.

Another important factor as regards Holden's situation is the death of his younger brother Allie, he describes him as being terribly intelligent, more intelligent than himself. Allie dies of leukaemia, the first reason for Holden to become a catcher or saviour of children. He seems to feel that Allie's death is unfair because he never did anything wrong

or bad as Holden does; otherwise Allie would also have been expelled from several schools. A description through incidents proves it. The night Allie dies, Holden breaks all the glasses of the garage with his fists, permanently injuring his right hand. It is Holden's anger towards life. This incident or act of grief and anger is associated to Allie's left-handedness. Holden ruins his future possibilities because he does not want to grow up, on the contrary, he wants to stay in childhood where Allie was :

"I'm not going to be a goddam surgeon or a violinist or anything anyway."

The description of this act makes explicit the close relationship between Holden and his brother. In addition to this fact, there is another element that contributes to Holden's characterisation as regards his dead brother, it is the red hunting-hat:

"This is a people shooting hat, I shoot people in this hat"

What this incident reveals is the strong connection between the two brothers. Allie was red-haired, so Holden wants to emulate his brother and to save children from being caught by the corruption of maturity, which is cruel and destroys the innocence of childhood that his dead brother Allie, was not allowed to enjoy.

While Holden is very close to his siblings, the relationship with his parents is practically non-existent. He does not know how to explain to them what his problem is for two reasons: he is afraid about their reactions. That is why he visits his own house like a spy. The second reason is that due to lack of communication, he does not know what is happening to him during the puberty period. He is not aware of his changes and his crisis. There is no mutual or reciprocal trust among them. Holden has to look for answers from other sources, like, for example, from his little sister Phoebe.

4.2. The Setting

One important factor as regards the characterisation of Holden Caulfield is the setting of the story, the time and space where the story occurs. Holden is wandering through New York City. One of the most important economical centres in the world. It has a success-oriented, money-centred urban lifestyle and this fact leads to a self-oriented behaviour in people. Nobody cares about anybody in this big city. Holden feels that loneliness. This feeling comes from within the character, he expresses his disappointment about the big city lifestyle in the New York society.

The other significant point related to the setting is time. The story is placed during Christmas time. During the holiday, the family relations are stronger, the family gets together, also close friends as considered part of the family. Some people travel long distances in order to be with their beloved ones. In this period, in spite of the fact that it is winter and cold, the family communication is warmer than ever. There are no conflicts within the family and a feeling of harmony is everywhere. Dinners with friends, presents for every one. Streets such as Fifth Avenue or Madison Avenue are full of people shopping. The city is coloured with the Christmas decoration of the full-time open shops. Santa Clauses are on the corners ringing their bells. Millions of children with their mothers having the most enjoyable time of the year. The face of innocence is on theirs. But Holden does not participate in the feast. He feels that he is not invited. He feels lost and depressed in the city, where everybody is just concerned about themselves the whole year and the only time in which this seems to change is during Christmas. But in the Caulfield household there is no happiness. It lacks warmth and sincerity. Holden's father is flying to

California, he is not going to attend his daughter's presentation in "A Christmas pageant for Americans". Holden's mother, a nervous, strong smoker insomniac since Allie's death, is complaining about the possibility that her other son, D.B. is not coming home for Christmas dinner. Holden is alone feeling that everything is false and hopeless. Everything around him is feast, the whole city is a party. The Christmas mood, its demonstration of love among people, and the cold and frost, are facts that contribute enormously to Holden's isolation, which is one of his most important characteristics. The power of his setting is undeniable.

"It made you depressed, and every once in a while, for no reason, you got goose flesh while you walked. It didn't seem at all like Christmas was coming soon. It didn't seem like anything was coming."

5. PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF HOLDEN CAULFIELD'S CHARACTERISATION

The most interesting aspect in Holden is his psychological characterisation. Salinger gives to his character several accurate features that contribute enormously to building up Holden's literary personality. Salinger creates the typical teenager of any age and that is why the novel is still being a source of analysis. By creating the prototype of a youngster, Salinger includes elements that may perfectly come from his own adolescence. The characterisation from within the character shows what he thinks, what he says and how he speaks. All this will entirely reveal his personality and, as a result, we enjoy a character that can be a real adolescent telling us his real story. It can even be Salinger during his younger days.

In this section I will deal with Holden psychological features in order to show how the approach of characterisation from within the character gives the lifelike personality that the character in question presents. We are bound to believe that a real Holden is telling us a real story.

5.1. The Personality

I will deal with three main aspects of Holden's personality:

- his criticism towards the "*phony*" things in the New York society.
- his perception about laws.
- his respect for the fellowman.

Holden is a representative of the world of childhood, which is the opposite of what he defines as “phony”. One of the things that Holden calls “phony” is the world of movies and everything around it. An example of this is his anger toward his older brother D.B. because he went to Hollywood to prostitute himself by selling his texts to the movies. I previously said that Salinger also dislikes movies by not selling the rights of the novel for making a movie or a play about it. Also Holden hates the three girls that were at the bar just looking for movie stars that will never look at them.

Also the theatre falls in the category of “phony” because he thinks that instead of demonstrating reality as it is, the emphasis is on polishing theatricality. For Holden it is very important to be honest and real, but he thinks that actors are false and hypocritical because they do not act, but just feel that they are very good at acting. They are “phonies” in Holden’s opinion.

Phoniness is Holden’s nemesis. It is revealed by the many times in which something he dislikes is categorised as “phony”. It means false, untrue, not genuine, fake, artificial, fraudulent, unauthentic, a sham, a lack of sincerity. This is one of his most relevant features that contribute to his personality. He feels that everything is wrong and “phony”, he is always complaining about the phoniness of the adult world, it depresses him and isolates him, it puts him in his crisis throughout the story. He even has the idea of going to the West and becoming a deaf-mute person in order to have no contact with anyone. Salinger also isolates himself from the world by living in Cornish, New Hampshire. His house is surrounded by big walls raised by Salinger himself. He lives without any contact with the world, no interviews, no visits, no friends.

Another factor that makes Holden depressed is rules. For Holden rules are meant to serve the strong, and we have seen in the first part of this paper that he considers himself to be weak. The outcome of this is his permanent attitude to break the laws.

“Life is a game, boy. Life is a game that one plays according to the rules... if you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it's a game.... but if you get on the other side, where there aren't any hot-shots, then what a game about it”

Holden is on the other side, on the weak one. So rules do not mean anything to him. Actually Holden has an ambivalent view on rules because he is always making his own rules, which he immediately breaks up. Therefore contradiction is part of his personality.

Holden cannot stand people who fail to respect their fellowmen and fail to listen to what they say. For Holden it is very important to listen to people and to respect their privacy. Many examples of this can be found in the novel, for example, he stops in the middle of the sexual act because of a girl's request when others wouldn't do so. Also Holden feels respect for the nuns he meets; he feels bad for smoking in front of them. Fellowman is important for Holden, but when someone criticises him, he does not pay attention or he even gets upset. Contradiction is again revealed from within the character and his behaviour.

His contradiction is also present in relation to his teachers because, on the one hand, he is against them for they represent authority and law; but, on the other hand, he seems to respect some of them due to their age like Mr. Antolini or their kind attitude as it is the case with Mr. Spencer.

In relation to his friends, they are represented as negative and selfish characters because it is Holden who presents them. Stradlater and Ackley are opposites: the former is the successful athlete and the latter is the ugly rejected sloth. But both of them hurt other people and obey laws, so Holden rejects them and this fact contributes to his isolation and consequent depression, because he feels that even his peers are dangerous hurting people.

Holden's parents are difficult to deal with because they are unobtrusive characters. They are not developed in Holden's discourse and a reason for that is that, apparently, they are not significant in his life. He seems that he wants to please them by not raising problems to them, but he doesn't do anything to achieve that end. His father is a successful corporate attorney, and Holden is expected to follow his example. But this pressure only separates them. Holden never talks much about him; therefore, their relationship is very poor, and that could be one of the reasons for Holden's depression. In relation to his mother, a housewife, there is no communication at all. When he shows an interest about what the ducks of the lake do in winter, the taxi driver answers to him that Mother Nature will take care of them, perhaps he wants to know if his own mother will take care of him now that he has been expelled from his fourth school.⁸ He is afraid of his parent's reaction about his academic failure and that is why he goes to New York: to postpone his encounter with them. The poor relationship between parents and son stresses Holden's isolation. He feels that he is unimportant to the persons that are supposed to give him all the love in the world, and the pressure of adulthood, the fact of growing up scares Holden, he thinks that maturity will take his parents' love from his life.

5.2. The Speaking Mannerism

Holden uses the American teenage slang. It means that the text is filled with grammatical structures unfamiliar to standard. It contains idiomatic expressions, broken syntax, vulgar words, etc. Elision and assimilation in words are common. Clauses are short, specially when young people speak with each other. The usage of such a language gives Holden his features as a rebel teenager and it shows the way in which he thinks and how he feels.

The language does not always follow the grammatical rules, as Holden does not follow the rules imposed on him. It does not mean that the reader is not able to understand him, for example, Holden describes someone to be *handsomer, instead of more handsome.

Also the personal pronoun "I" is often omitted in short sentences. For example *dunno, which means "I don't know". The auxiliary verb "do" is also omitted in questions. For example: *you wanna try, which means "do you want to try?". Here we also have the elision of the preposition "to". As the novel presents the speech of young people, words and clauses are pronounced carelessly. For example: *didja, which means "did you".

The use of expletives are common in the New York teenage slang. Holden could describe a book as being "a goddam book", but it does not imply that he really dislikes that book. It is the way in which young people want to make a difference between them and

⁸ Caulfield, Holden. Fictitious character. www.salinger.org

adults. Young people create a language of their own and reject the correct standard one because it is considered part of authority.

This novel has successfully described natural spoken language. Salinger puts language in paper as it is, giving more human-like features to his character. Salinger presents not only a story, but also the way of thinking of a teenager. The novel can be considered a remarkable piece of literature and an interesting overview of the language of the young.

6. SUMMARY

By revising Holden's psychological and physical features, as well as the circumstances that affect him, I can say that Holden is suffering from a fear to grow up and to lose childhood's innocence. It is clear that Holden finds many of the changes that he is encountering, as he grows older, difficult. As a result, he refuses to grow up. He shows a remarkable lack of maturity, as demonstrated in the relationship with his parents and friends. He enjoys being with children as it is the case with Phoebe and he dislikes being with adults, as it is the case with his older brother or his teachers. But at the end of the novel, he seems to accept his destiny by giving up the idea of going to the West and he decides to go back home and to accept his responsibility. He has realised that innocence does not last forever when he sees Phoebe in the carousel, he thinks that she will grow up and that he can't prevent it to occur, that everybody has to grow up, even *The Catcher in the Rye*.

CONCLUSION

After revising this novel, I find that the author has applied some of the approaches of characterisation to give his character human-like features and that he has, in fact, used elements taken from his own life to achieve this end, i.e. to give his character human dimensions. From the physical point of view, I find that Holden is experiencing the difficulties of adolescence. He compares himself to others due to a lack of security that many young people have during this period. Also, the physical exhaustion suffered during two days of wandering is completely self-destructive, although it stands for a characteristic of young people to escape from their real problems. Curiously enough, Salinger also had these problems during his adolescence, he had some academic failures and he had to attend a military school as Holden does. In addition to this, the theme of innocence is present in both, because Salinger suffered a loss of it when he entered the war, as any person would have done, and Holden's concern is to protect children's innocence. This loss of faith in innocence is also represented in the isolation in which Salinger lives and that that Holden suffers throughout the novel.

As regards to the socio-economic situation, it is successfully handled in terms of the setting of the story. The place is New York City, where success and money detach people from human interaction. The time is Christmas season, when the self-concern in people seems to change. But it does it in a false way, because everybody is still concerned with no one else. It stresses Holden's isolation and disillusion.

The psychological adolescent features of Holden are perfectly achieved. Any one of us could laugh about Holden's opinions. The way he tackles them reminds us of our own adolescence. The psychological breakdown is fully described, from the academic failure into an erratic and self-destructive behaviour our character becomes an almost real human being.

The speaking mannerism of Holden contributes enormously to the achievement of the human dimensions and also makes the novel a good source to prove the consistency of people's speech in the 50's, to the extent that some of their slang features are still in use nowadays.

Finally I can say that after revising the novel, we can find a story full of human dimensions, in a humorous tone sometimes through which we can see the way human beings grow up, the predicaments of it and yet we can always learn something about Holden and his experiences. The author has presented not just a novel but a complete framework of the human complexity.

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**A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO HOLDEN CAULFIELD'S TRANSITION INTO
ADULTHOOD**

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A mis padres Judith Cotal y Blas Bilbao por el apoyo brindado a lo largo de todo mi proceso educativo y en especial en este paso final. A Dios que me dio las fuerzas cuando me faltaron, Gabriel Brown, mis amigos y, desde la distancia, Maryleen Smith”

INDEX	Page
Introduction	43
1. Adolescence	45
1.1 Common Characteristics of Adolescence Affecting Holden Caulfield	46
1.1.1 Questioning of Values, Behaviors, and Attitudes	46
1.1.2 Group Identity versus Alienation	48
1.1.3 Immaturity	49
2. Transition means Change	54
3. Factors Contributing to Difficulties in Transition	57
3.1 Conflicting Demands	57
3.2 Lack of Motivation for the Transition	61
Conclusions	67
Bibliography	69

INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, Holden Caulfield, the protagonist in 'The Catcher in the Rye' is going through a difficult period in his life, he feels confused, depressed and lonely. Some circumstances contributing to this state could be for instance, the fact that he has just been expelled from school for the third time or that he does not feel able to communicate with others the way he wants. He also shows that he is somehow disappointed with the adult world and with society in general, as he is constantly criticising everything that he considers to be phoney about adults.

Thousands of people around the world, especially young people, feel identified with Holden. One of the reasons for this phenomenon is that this character represents the way adolescents are. By using their language, full of colloquialisms and experimenting with adult behaviour, doing things like smoking and drinking he behaves as one of them. He also shows his rebellion against adult society by breaking some rules and complaining about everything he does not approve. In other words, he thinks and feels, as any teenager would do.

Jerome David Salinger achieves these effects on his audience as a result of his accuracy of observation and portrayal of the characters. This marvellous characterization of the protagonist particularly, is enhanced by his exploitation of the universal ideas of change and mutability related to adolescence. These elements along with the liveliness of its style give the novel its lasting appeal.

In the present work I will analyse Holden Caulfield's transition into adulthood following a psychological perspective. First, I will describe some general characteristics about adolescence and how they affect Holden's behaviour including aspects like the questioning of values, behaviours and morals to others and, on the other hand, immaturity. Then, I will discuss some factors contributing to difficulties in his transition to adulthood. This section will be focused particularly on two aspects: first, the problem of conflicting demands, - which adults exercise on adolescents-, and second, his lack of motivation for the transition based on some of Holden's observations about the world of children and adults.

1. ADOLESCENCE

The word “adolescence” comes from the Latin verb *adolescere*, which means “to grow” or “to grow to maturity”. Adolescence is a very special time in the human life cycle. It is a period of transition between childhood and adulthood, which may vary from culture to culture. Broadly speaking, it begins when individuals attain sexual maturity and ends when independence from adult authority is legally assured.⁹ It seems to me that during this stage of development, adolescents begin to observe their environment and themselves critically. They also conceptualise reality more objectively, while they think about adult’s behaviour more subjectively. There is a need for independence, but always with some guidance and support.

In the American culture, which is the focus of the present study, individuals are legally mature at the age of eighteen years. By this time it is expected that they should have learnt to be socially responsible for themselves and their actions. Within this time, youngsters are affected by various developmental transformations including physical, emotional and social changes. These transformations will create several difficulties for adolescents, as they need to adjust themselves to them.

⁹ Sprinthall Norman; Collins Andrew. 1984. ‘Adolescent Psychology : A Developmental View’. Random House.p.2.

1.1 Common Characteristics of Adolescents Affecting Holden Caulfield

1.1.1 Questioning of Attitudes, Behaviors and Values

Within the social adjustments adolescents make at this stage of development, what seems to affect Holden deeply, from my point of view, is the questioning of attitudes, behaviors and values to other people. This is a common developmental characteristic observed by psychologists in middle school and junior high school students as the Wilmette Advisory Association states.¹⁰

Holden continuously expresses this characteristic as he questions his peers, teachers, and adults in general. He criticizes the way they act their attitudes, and values. James Adams refers to this, saying: 'adolescents find a discrepancy between what they have been taught is right and how people actually conduct themselves'¹¹. I would like to illustrate how Holden expresses this by some examples taken from his conversation with Phoebe. He criticizes his school saying *'it was one of the worst schools I ever went to. It was full of phonies. And mean guys. You never saw so many mean guys in your life.'* (p.199). Then he describes those attitudes he does like about them, for instance, that they use to lock their doors if somebody they do not like wants to come in. In that way they do not let people join their groups, they exclude them. Holden particularly repudiates when these guys indirectly push James Castle, another schoolmate, to commit suicide. I think this is what impresses Holden most because he cannot understand how they can be so mean to someone:

¹⁰ Wilmette Advisory Association Homepage

¹¹ Adams James. 1992 'Understanding Adolescence: Current developments in adolescent psychologies. 13

“There was this one boy at Elton Hills, named James Castle, that wouldn’t take back something he said about this very conceited boy, Phil Stabile. James Castle called him a very conceited guy, and one of Stabile’s lousy friends went and squaled on him to Stabile. So Stabile with about six other dirty bastards, went down to James Castle’s room and went in and locked the goddam door and tried to make him take back what he said, but he wouldn’t do it. So they started in on him. I won’t even tell you what they did to him – it’s too repulsive-but he still wouldn’t take it back.’...’ Finally what he did, instead of taking back what he said, he jumped out the window.’(p.202)

Apart from criticizing his teachers as well as he finds them phony (p.200); Holden also questions lawyers. Perhaps he takes this career as an example only, because I believe he would probably think the same about any other profession. It is people’s lack of authenticity what he criticizes, and that can happen in any other occupation as well.

He tells Phoebe he wouldn’t like to be a lawyer because they do not save innocent people’s lives in their work, but they only ‘*make a lot of dough and play bridge and buy cars and drink martinis and look like hot-shots*’ (p.204).

In this illustration we can observe how Holden rejects inconsistent or hypocritical adult behavior, in the same way he does several times in the novel (p.19, 44, 155, 157). The last example I will discuss here, reflecting this characteristic occurs at the cinema. Holden tells a story about a woman sitting next to him who cries all through the movie.

‘You would’ve thought she was kind-hearted as hell, but I was sitting right next to her, and she wasn’t’. She had this little kid with her that was bored as hell and had to go to the bathroom, but she wouldn’t take him. She kept telling him to sit still and behave himself. She was about as kind-hearted as a goddam wolf. You take somebody that cries their goddam eyes out over phony stuff in the movies, and nine times out of ten they’re mean bastards at heart.’ (p. 166).

I believe that Holden's questioning of attitudes and values to other people leads him somehow to alienate himself from them . It becomes very difficult for him to establish social relations, as he criticizes almost everybody around him. This is probably the price of living according to his ideals, he does not want to give up his search for honesty and truth. Even though he could be considered at times a bit phony himself, for instance when he recognizes he is a terrible liar (p. 22), most of the time he shows himself as a sensitive and honest person. As Grunwald remarks: 'Holden Caulfield is torn, and nearly destroyed, by the conflict between integrity and love. He is driven by the need not to be less than himself, not to accept what he knows to be base.'¹².

1.1.2 Group Identity versus Alienation

During the early years of adolescence, one confronts a new psychosocial conflict in which pressures to ally oneself with specific groups and to learn to be comfortable functioning as a member of a group are major preoccupations. We call this conflict group identity versus alienation'¹³. It occurs to me that it is not easy for Holden to belong to a group of his age, as most of the people he meets do not satisfy his expectations in relation to their system of values and moral behaviour. For this reason Holden somehow shows his alienation from society. Norman refers to this term as 'a sense of social estrangement, an absence of social support or meaningful social connection'. He continues explaining that 'an alienated adolescent does not experience a sense of belonging to a group' .One of the reasons he becomes alienated is because 'he cannot find a group that really meets their personal needs'. From this point of view, Holden is affected

¹² Grunwald Henry Anatole. 1962 'Salinger: A Critical and Personal Portrait' p. 193

¹³ Newman Philip & Newman Barbara. 1997 'Childhood and Adolescence' p.676, 678

by the loneliness and isolation that alienation implies. We can observe this in one of the many times he repeats he feels 'so damn depressed and lonesome' (p.182). Perhaps if Holden opens himself up to others and learns to accept their good things as well as the bad ones, he will be able to establish better relationships and feel happier in his life.

1.1.3. Immaturity

Another characteristic of adolescents I will handle is immaturity. This affects Holden, naturally, a sixteen year-old boy who does not know exactly how to behave as he is caught up between childhood and adulthood. Psychologists have established that this could be explained by the adolescents' hormonal imbalances. 'They react in a particular way, they have emotions that are frightening and poorly understood by others. These may cause regression to more childish behaviour patterns'¹⁴. In this section I will show what in my opinion are some of Holden's difficulties caused by immaturity. This not only produces a problem of identification as a child or as a grown up, but it also seems to create some problems in his relationships with peers. Besides, immaturity could help him to contradict himself between what he says and what he actually does.

There are certain times in Holden's life in which he acts as a grown -up. For example, he decides whether or not to stay at a particular school, whether or not to go home right after he managed to be expelled from school, and things like that. Nonetheless, on other occasions, his behaviour corresponds to a little boy. This fact confuses him as he expresses while he talks to Mr. Spencer, his History teacher:

¹⁴ Adams James.Op.Cit. p16.

'I shook my head. I shake my head quite a lot. 'Boy!' I said. I also say 'boy!' quite a lot. Partly because I have a lousy vocabulary and partly because I act quite young for my age sometimes. I was sixteen then, and I'm seventeen now, and sometimes I act like I'm about thirteen.' (p.14)

Holden not only realizes that he is acting in an immature way for his age, but he also notices that the way he acts does not match his physical appearance anymore because he has changed and he looks like an adult now:

'It's really ironical because I'm six-foot-two-and-a-half and I have grey hair. I really do.' ... 'And yet I still act sometimes like I was only about twelve. Everybody says that, especially my father. It's partly true, too, but it isn't all true. I don't give a damn, except that I get bored sometimes when people tell me to act my age. Sometimes I act a lot older than I am-I really do-but people never notice it. People never notice anything.' (p.14)

The problem for this troubled adolescent is that both adults and youngsters see him and treat him sometimes as an immature guy as he still acts as a child. Some of these people are his father, -as he reveals to us in the example above-, Ackley, the boy who lives next door to his room, and Carl Luce, his Student Adviser in Wootton School. These last two people get irritated by Holden's childish behaviour and ask him to stop it.

The first example happens when Ackley goes in Holden's room and interrupts him while he is reading a book. After they talk for a while Holden starts behaving as a child in front of Ackley who becomes confused and angry because of this. Holden says:

'What I did was, I pulled the old peak of my hunting hat around to the front, then pulled it way down over my eyes. That way, I couldn't see a goddam thing. 'I think I'm going blind'. I said in this very hoarse voice.' *Mother darling, everything's getting so dark in here'. You're nuts. I swear to God,' Ackley said. 'Mother darling, give me your hand. Why won't you give me your hand?.'* *'For Chrissake, grow up'.* (p.28)

A second example of his immaturity occurs when he talks to Carl Luce while they meet at a bar for a drink. It seems to me that the problem this time is Holden's inability to establish a normal conversation with Carl. Apparently, he loses the control of the situation and he starts acting in an immature way. First, he says something to Carl that makes him feel uncomfortable:

'Hey, I got a flit for you', I told him. 'At the end of the bar. Don't look now. I've been saving him for ya.'
'Very funny' he said. 'Same old Caulfield. When are you going to grow up? (171).

Then he continues saying the same kind of comments one after another, even though Carl tells him he does not want to speak about that:

'How 's your sex life? I asked him. He hated you to ask him stuff like that' ... 'How's Columbia? Ya like it? ...What are you majoring in? I asked him. Perverts?'

When they are about to finish having their drinks, Holden makes some questions about Carl's sexual life with his girlfriend, which he refuses to answer. I think Holden's problem at that moment is that he makes too personal questions to someone he hardly ever sees and. Probably, it is because of this that Carl answers him in that way:

'Listen. Let's get one thing straight. I refuse to answer any typical Caulfield question to-night. When in the hell are you going to grow up?' (171).

After Holden confesses he has some troubles with his sexual life, Carl tells him once again he is immature:

'Maybe I'll go to China. My sex life is lousy,' I said.
'Naturally. Your mind is immature.' (p.175)

On the whole, it occurs to me that Holden does not succeed in his desperate search for answers about himself and his sexual life, partly because Carl does not want to help him, and partly because he behaves in a very immature way in front of him. Maybe if Holden were not all the time 'horsing around' as he says, and he acted more discretely instead, he would be able to establish a better conversation with his mate.

In this last part about immaturity I will refer to Holden's contradictions between what he says and what he actually does, especially when he criticizes other people's actions and then he does the same. As Warren French points out 'Holden does precisely what he objects to other people's doing'. He gives some examples of Holden's inconsistencies like the fact that 'He lectures Ackley in the same way he objects to the history teacher's lecturing him'; or that he complains that everybody-especially his father-"think something's all true" when it's only partly true, and he generalizes at the end of the very paragraph saying "people never notice anything", or "people never believe you".¹⁵

In this context I could mention another example that occurs while Holden talks to Mr. Spencer. He criticizes him saying: *'he wasn't even listening. He hardly ever listened to you when you said something'* (p.15), however, he does not pay attention to his teacher either, as he recognizes when he says 'I'm lucky , though, I mean I could shoot the old bull to old Spencer and think about those ducks at the same time...' (p.18).

¹⁵ French Warren, 'J. D. Salinger'. p.109 Twayne Publishers, 1963

On the other hand, we observe how Holden changes his mind quite easily on different occasions such as when he thinks about 'giving old Jane a buzz', but then he decides not to, for several reasons. He also asks Sally very convincingly to go with him in a trip to far away places, but at the end of the conversation with her he declares:

'If you want to know the truth, I don't even know why I started all that stuff with her. I mean about going away somewhere, to Massachusetts and Vermont and all, I probably wouldn't've taken her even if she'd wanted to go with me. She wouldn't have been anybody to go with. The terrible part, though, is that I meant it when I asked her.' (p.166).

As I have shown, all these situations reflect somehow Holden's immaturity as he cannot maintain an agreement between what he says and what he does.

2. TRANSITION MEANS CHANGE

As I have pointed out, adolescence is a period of transition in which many changes occur. Naturally, Holden is not the exception. It is difficult for us to know with certainty whether he is aware of this fact or not, as he rarely refers to this. Nonetheless, I could assume he realizes he is going through this transition as he does not want to become part of the adult world, as I show later, and an example of that could be seen when he wants to run away with Sally arguing he wants to go before they become adults.

For a better understanding of Holden's behaviour, difficulties and views it could be a good idea if we think about our own experience as teenagers and remember the way we were at that age. Holden talks about his experiences as if he were looking at himself in a mirror. His transparency and honesty in the way he deals with the most important thing affecting him, an overwhelming change allows us to analyse some of the factors contributing to difficulties in his transition to adulthood.

To illustrate what I have already said, I will refer to something I consider to be a good example of his transparency when he narrates his story, and also the most persistent symbol in the novel of the change he is experiencing. This occurs when he tells us about his preoccupation with the ducks' welfare. Holden is quite concerned about what happens to them when the winter comes. He mentions this fact three times in the novel, which makes us suppose that this is something important for him. The first time he speaks about it is while he is talking to Mr. Spencer:

'I live in New York, and I was thinking about the lagoon in Central Park, down near Central Park South. I was wondering if it was frozen over when I got home, and if it was, where the ducks go. I was wondering where the ducks went when the lagoon got all icy and frozen over. I wondered if some guy came in a truck and took them away to a zoo or something. Or if they just flew away.' (p.18).

Holden's questioning here reveals to us his transparency and honesty in expressing his doubts and worries about something adults would probably not even think about. He tells us about this in a very natural, genuine way. This example could also be taken as a symbol in which the ducks going away from one place to another would represent Holden's process of change and mutability into the adult world. In other words, it seems to me that he projects himself and his own experience of change in his life into the ducks' experience of change when they migrate every year looking for a place with better conditions to live. In both cases there is a natural process involved.

In addition to this, I would like to comment on another interpretation of this passage, which is part of an essay written by E. Faller. This student analyzes Holden's interest in what ducks and fish do during winter as the protagonist's concern about his own situation at the moment. This approach for the understanding of Holden's concern about them seems very interesting for me as both the ducks, and him are going through the a process of change and at the same time, they both seem unprotected.

E. Faller, the author, states that ' Holden wants to know if he has to get through those years by himself or if anyone will help him get through them, if someone will stand beside him to be a

friend and advisor.’ ‘He is trying to reassure himself that someone will come to assist and guide him through hard times and help him live in a difficult world’¹⁶.

I think that probably he feels safer after the taxi driver tells him that Mother Nature will take care of everything so he would not be alone in his transition to adulthood.

¹⁶ Essay dealing with the symbolism of Holden’s inquiry of the ducks and fish in Central Park. Literature Classics Home Page.

3. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSITION

According to Elizabeth Hurlock, there are certain difficulties in making the transition to adulthood, because as she points out ‘under any circumstances and at any time in life, adjusting to change is difficult’¹⁷. She stresses that ‘growing up is always a problem’, ... ‘it entails abandoning those special prerogatives, world views, insights and pleasures that are defined by the culture as specifically “childish” and substituting them for the rights, responsibilities, outlooks, and satisfactions that are suitable for the culturally defined “adult”’.

In the present section I will refer to some factors contributing to difficulties in Holden’s transition. Hurlock states: ‘how easy it will be for the adolescent to make the transition into adulthood will depend partly upon the individual, partly on the environmental aids or obstructions, and partly on adult expectations’. She distinguishes eight factors, however, I will only handle two of them which I consider to be more relevant for the present analysis. Firstly, I will talk about “conflicting demands” and secondly, about Holden’s lack of motivation for the transition.

3.1. Conflicting Demands

To begin with, I will focus on one of the factors Hurlock refers to as “conflicting demands”. They occur when adolescents are asked to act as adults by their parents, teachers, or the community in general, but at the same time they are not allowed to do certain things which are supposed to be for adults only and they are not such yet¹⁸.

¹⁷ Hurlock, Elizabeth. 1973 ‘Adolescent Development’ p.7, 8, 10

¹⁸ The definition of this concept was taken and adapted from the text ‘Adolescent Development’ p.8 Hurlock Elizabeth.

Common phrases like “You are old enough to know better”, and others like “You are not old enough to do this or that” can make teenagers feel confused and exasperated. Partly as a result of this and partly because of purely physical, bodily and hormonal changes, they often rebel against authority and do the opposite of what is expected of them: they drink, smoke, swear, and sometimes they do not do as well in school as they could do.

Holden and the people around him are the embodiment of these classic behaviours. He is told to take responsibility, to show some judgement, and to make decisions, but at the same time he is treated as a child and is expected to obey his parents and teachers.

An example of what I have noted could be found when Holden talks to his teachers. Although they do not ask him explicitly to act as an adult, they do ask him to be more responsible about his actions. Certainly, responsibility could be taken as a sign of maturity in the individual, and that could be what teacher and parents are expecting from Holden. They want him to show commitment towards his studies, and to do so, they probably want him to leave childish behaviour behind and take his studies more seriously.

Mr. Spencer, his History teacher, asks him about his problems at school, his plans for the future and also advises him to follow some rules,- probably the adults’ rules -given in society in order to be successful in life:

“Life is a game, a game that one plays according to the rules”. (P.13).

It seems to me that Holden is aware of these rules already, however, he does not follow them because he does not want to be part of the system which-as I will show later- he clearly

dislikes. As Holden already knows about what the teacher is talking about, the way the teacher talks to him probably makes him feel he is being treated as a child. This could be the reason why Holden answers very upset:

"Yes, sir. I know it is. I know it." "Game my ass. Some game. If you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it's a game, all right. But, if you get on the other side, where there aren't any hot-shots, then what's the game about? Nothing. No game." (p.13)

Another instance in which Holden is asked to take more responsibility about his studies and act in a more mature way occurs when he visits another teacher, Mr. Antolini. Even though it is late at night, he offers his help and talks to him very kindly. He shows his concern about Holden's situation warning him about the possible consequences of his behaviour. He says:

"This fall I think you're riding for- it's a special kind of fall, a horrible kind. The man falling isn't permitted to feel or hear himself hit bottom. He just keeps falling and falling" (P. 222, 223).

Mr. Antolini wants to make Holden aware of the fact that no matter what reasons he could have to act in the way he does, he cannot continue with that behaviour because he would fail. Probably Mr. Antolini believes Holden belongs to the group of *'those men who, at some time or other in their lives, were looking for something their own environment couldn't supply them with... and they gave up looking'* (p.223), and does not want Holden to go through the same.

He shows his concern about Holden when he tells him:

'I don't want to scare you', 'But I can very clearly see you dying nobly, one way or another, for some highly unworthy cause' (p.223).

What I believe Mr. Antolini wants to emphasise to Holden is that he should concentrate on his studies in the first place, and then in the search for his ideals. To do so, he needs to act as a mature person :

'The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the mark of the mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one'. (p.223).

He encourages him to continue his studies :*'once you have a fair idea where you want to go, your first move will be to apply yourself in a school'* and in that way he would be able to leave a record of what he thinks as many people have done before:

'You'll find that you're not the first person who was ever confused and frightened and even sickened by human behaviour. You're by no means alone on that score, you'll be excited and stimulated to know. Many, many men have been just as troubled morally and spiritually as you are right now. Happily, some of them kept records of their troubles'(p.225).

Thus, if Holden studies he would have a chance to be one of those 'educated and scholarly men', who leave their brilliant records behind *because 'they tend to express their thoughts more clearly, have more passion in doing so and have more humility than the unscholarly thinkers'*. (p.225)

There are some other times in which Holden wants to act like an adult and he is not allowed to. This very common characteristic of teenagers is seen for instance when he smokes, or when he wants to drink alcohol in public places and get drunk, experiment with sex, and all those things that are accessible to adults only. He does all of them anyway, for instance he smokes with friends, he goes to bars and gets drunk, he swears all the time and he is even tempted to have sex with a prostitute. All of these actions are a way of rebelling

against society and showing everybody that he would do anything he wants and nobody would tell him what to do.

3.2 Lack of Motivation for the Transition

The second factor contributing to difficulties in the transition, is the lack of motivation for it. Hurlock explains this in the following terms: 'The adolescent goes through a period of wondering how he will meet the new problems life presents. He would like to grow up but he is unsure of his ability to cope with adulthood. So long as this feeling of insecurity exists, there will be little motivation to make the transition into adulthood'.¹⁹

In this sense, I believe it is quite likely that Holden feels this way, because he shows he is not prepared to take adult responsibilities yet. One could assume this, because Holden has not achieved yet certain developmental tasks common for his age which constitute the basis for his future roles as an adult. The same author points out that there are certain social expectations which are 'expressed in the form of developmental tasks', some of them are: 'achieving new and more mature relations with age-mates of both sexes, selecting and preparing for an occupation, preparing for marriage and family life and desiring and achieving socially responsible behavior'. From what we can observe in the novel, Holden does not develop them fully, as he is not responsible in his studies, he has difficulties in establishing long-term relationships with friends as well as with girlfriends, and he does not show any serious concern about a professional career.

¹⁹ Hurlock Elizabeth. Op.Cit. p. 6, 8

Considering he is a male, there are even more social pressures regarding the accomplishment of these tasks as he should be better prepared to be able to maintain a family in the future. Janice Gibson says 'during early adolescence, boys are expected to become serious students, to develop ways to take care of themselves and, later, to take care of their own families'²⁰. To sum up, I could suggest that Holden's motivation to become an adult are diminished as he probably does not feel ready to cope with the adult responsibilities yet.

In addition to this, there is another aspect of his life that could suggest he does not feel motivated for the transition. I think the fact that he does not like the society where he lives, especially the world of adults, contributes greatly to this state as he considers them to be corrupt and phoney. For this reason, it is difficult to imagine him motivated to become part of what he clearly dislikes. He expresses this feeling in his constant opinions against society throughout the novel. One of the examples could be the following, in which he expresses how tired he is of society in his conversation with his friend Sally:

'Did you ever get fed up?' I said. 'I mean did you ever get scared that everything was going to go lousy unless you did something? I mean do you like school and all that stuff?'

'It's a terrific bore.'

'I mean do you hate it, is what I mean''.

'Well, I don't exactly hate it. You always have to-?'

'Well, I hate it. Boy, do I hate it,' I said. 'But it isn't just that. It's everything. I hate living in New York and all. Taxicabs, and Madison Avenue buses, with the drivers and all always yelling at you to get out at the rear door, and being introduced to phoney guys that call the Lunts angels, ... '(p.155)

Holden also hardly criticizes people worrying too much about material things, which is something that apparently does not interest him too much:

²⁰ Gibson, Janice T. 1978. 'Growing Up: A Study of Children', p. 472

'Take cars,' I said. 'Take most people, they're crazy about cars. They worry if they get a little scratch on them, and they're always talking about how many miles they get to a gallon, and if they get a brand-new car already they start thinking about trading it in for one that's even newer. I don't even like old cars. I mean they don't even interest me. I'd rather have a goddam horse. A horse is at least human, for God's sake...' (p.156).

Holden invites Sally to run away from New York with him, but she refuses. After she rejects his invitation, he feels very sad. Probably, the worst part for Holden is not that they would not go, but it is that they would miss the chance of going away before they become part of what he does not like, the world of adults. He emphasizes to her that he would like to go now, because if they go in the future it will be different. They will be transformed into one of those people who are only interested in making money and pretending to be someone they are not. He answers :

'No, there wouldn't be oodles of places to go to at all. It'd be entirely different,' I said. I was getting depressed as hell again...', 'Open your ears. It'd be entirely different. We'd have to go downstairs in elevators with suitcases and stuff. We'd have to phone up everybody and tell'em good bye and send'em post cards from hotels and all. And I'd be working in some office, making a lot of dough, and riding to working cabs in Madison Avenue buses, and reading newspapers, and playing bridge all the time, and going to movies ...' (p.158).

This example illustrates Holden's protest against modern life, its phoniness, hypocrisy and consumerism.

As I have shown, Holden's dislike about the adult world is another reason influencing his lack of motivation for the transition. He would rather remain as he is than becoming part of what he does not like. It seems to me, that due to this, Holden does not like the idea of change, because children lose their innocence and become part of the corrupted world of grown-ups. The following examples could illustrate the fact that he does not like change:

'The best thing, though, in that museum, was that everything always stayed right where it was'. Nobody'd move. You could go there a hundred thousand times, and that Eskimo would still be just finished catching those two fish... '...Nobody'd be different. The only thing that would be different would be you'. (p.144).

Then as he continues walking in the street, he reflects about how Phoebe would be different as well when she goes to that place next time, and how he would like to put her in a place where she could stay in the same way for a long time:

'I kept walking, and I kept thinking about old Phoebe going to that museum on Saturdays the way I used to. I thought how she'd see the same stuff I used to see, and how she'd be different every time she saw it. It didn't exactly depress me to think about it, but it didn't make me feel gay as hell, either. Certain things they should stay the way they are. You ought to be able to stick to them in one of those big glass cases and just leave them alone. I know that's impossible, but it's too bad anyway.' (p.145).

I believe Holden admires children as we can notice every time he speaks about them. He does it in a tenderly way, glorifying their actions, especially with his sister Phoebe. One can very often hear him saying phrases like 'that kills me', or 'you should've seen her', (p.194). Probably because he sees in them, and his sister the personification of love and honesty. In fact, the only two people he trusts most are children: his brother Allie who is dead now, and Phoebe.

Holden expresses his concern for children in one of the most commented parts of the novel the one where he confesses Phoebe his desire of being 'the catcher in the rye' to protect children from falling off a cliff. He tells her:

'I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around-nobody big, I mean except-me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do. I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff-I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's

the only thing I'd really like to be, I know it's crazy.'
Old Phoebe didn't say anything for a long time. Then, when
she said something, all she said was, 'Daddy's going to kill you.' (p.205)

I agree with Warren French²¹ who interprets this fall as the borderline between an innocent childhood and a “phoney” adult world where Holden does not want to go in. So, once they make the transition they cannot come back to childhood again, and he wants to prevent this by catching them before that happens.

Arthur Heiserman and James Miller, on the other hand, interpret this as Holden’s search for stability and love. ‘To be a catcher in the rye in this world is possible only at the price of leaving it. To be good is to be a “case”, a “bad boy” who confounds the society of men. So Holden seeks the one role which would allow him to be a catcher, and that role is the role of the child’. The problem for him is that he cannot be a child now, he is sixteen. ‘In childhood he had what he is now seeking- nonphoniness, truth, innocence. He can find it now only in Phoebe and his dead brother Allie’s baseball mitt, in a red hunting cap and the tender little nuns. Still, unlike all of us, Holden refuses to compromise with adulthood...’²²

To conclude, I could say that although Holden lacks of motivation to make the transition and wants to protect children’s innocence, he finally realizes that change cannot be resisted, it is something inevitable and no one can prevent children from becoming adults. There are two events in the novel that could show us how come to this conclusion. First, when he realizes his impossibility to erase the swear words from all the walls (p. 220); and second, when he

²¹ French Warren . 1963 ‘J. D. Salinger’ . p.163

²² Grunwald Henry Anatole, 1962 ‘Salinger: A Critical and Personal Portrait’, p.198

consciously lets his sister grab the gold ring in the carousel (p.251). Here he realizes he cannot do anything about it, and that she would have to take the risk of falling off, because adults cannot intervene at that moment in that children's experience.

CONCLUSION

After a close reading and a careful analysis of Salinger's novel 'The Catcher in the Rye', I could observe that its protagonist, Holden Caulfield, is going through a hard time in his life. My interest arose as I wanted to discover some of the reasons for this situation.

In doing so, I began searching for some psychological causes for his behaviour that could have triggered somehow his emotional problems. At this point, I realized that the main factor affecting him was his transition to adulthood, as it brings many changes for the individual.

Throughout this work, I have attempted to analyse Holden's experience as an adolescent based on some common characteristics affecting people his age, particularly those I considered relevant for the present study. Among these characteristics, I included the questioning of values, immaturity and the problem of alienation. On the other hand, I analysed some of the factors contributing to difficulties in Holden's transition into adulthood, such as the problem of conflicting demands and his lack of motivation for the transition.

On the whole, I could say that Holden is affected by several problems characteristic of this age, that, together with his own personal problems, -such as his brother's death or the lack of attention and support from his parents-, make him feel depressed and lonesome as he constantly tells us. Besides, he cannot find what he is looking for, -love and honesty- in a society where apparently all human values are lost. He keeps searching for his ideals

and that makes him feel disappointed and frustrated sometimes, however at the end we observe he changes his attitude and hopefully, he will meet happiness.

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THE QUESTION OF INNOCENCE IN THE CATCHER IN THE RYE

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INDEX	Page
Introduction	72
1. Historical Background	74
1.1. Politics	74
1.2. Economy	77
1.3. The Civil Rights Movement	78
1.4. Culture	80
1.4.1. Music	80
1.4.2. Literature	81
1.4.3. Film-making	82
1.4.4. Art	84
1.4.5. Underground Cultural Movement	84
2. Adolescent Character and Personality	89
2.1. Community Factors Influencing Personality	89
2.2. Social Adjustment and Character Reputation	91
2.3. Character and Personality Types	93
3. The Question of Innocence in The Catcher in the Rye	95
3.1. Style of J. D. Salinger	96
3.2. Characterization of Holden Caulfield	98
3.3. The Innocence of a Catcher in the Rye	102
Conclusion	108
Bibliography	110

INTRODUCTION

The Catcher in the Rye, a novel written by J. D. Salinger, has enthralled thousands of readers throughout the world since its publication in 1951. Much has been written (and said) about this novel: hundreds of papers have commented upon the relations between parents and children as derived from the plot; on the reality of the 50's in the USA and how it affected the lives of the people; on the adolescents and their motivations and worries and hopes in life. Holden Caulfield, as the main character, has been studied and discussed in terms of his position in the universal literature, being compared to Huckleberry Finn (both are adolescents, runaways from society, seeking independence, growth and stability in their lives), to Joyce's Stephen Dedalus. Even to Hamlet.

Many critics have also tried to establish a relationship between Holden and Salinger (something which, to a certain extent, is quite viable). Some reviewers have also discussed the length and melancholy nature of the novel, within the framework of the over-development of the main character, or its unique style that made of Salinger the writer that best understood the world of youth in those years.

In his interpretation of the teenage world, Salinger creates Holden Caulfield, a sixteen-year-old boy who has just been kicked out from school. Salinger introduces him as a good and candid boy who is stuck in a bad, sordid world. And yet, the reader comes across a few very pertinent questions: How true and good is this person? How much innocence there is in a guy who doesn't hesitate lying to others ("Once I get started, I can

go for hours if I feel like it” (Salinger 62)²³? How innocent can a person be if he thinks of everybody else as a phony and a fake?, or swears and envies others just because they seem a little bit happier than him. In other words Holden, without knowing, decides that almost everyone he meets in his life is a phony, and in doing so one would think that he condemns himself to lose innocence and hope in the world.

The goal of this paper is to discuss some key elements in The Catcher in the Rye, as those mainly related with a long-held concept of innocence and naiveté in its main character, a point that perhaps has made the whole book still stand as a favorite of many people, all of which will help to enrich the value of the novel in the present time.

²³ Salinger, J. D. 1986. The Catcher in the Rye. London, Penguin Books, p. 62.

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. Politics

In 1940 the Democratic Party nominated Roosevelt for a third term. This broke the long precedent that had held presidents to a maximum of two terms in office. After Roosevelt's re-election, the Congress in March 1941 passed the Lend-Lease Act. This act empowered the president to transfer, sell, lend, or lease war supplies to any nation, the defence of which was vital to U.S. security. The year 1941 was marked also by a heated nation-wide debate between the "isolationists," who opposed both U.S. participation in World War II and aid to Great Britain, and the "interventionists", who felt that victory over the Axis powers was essential for U.S. security and were prepared for the United States to enter the war at an appropriate time.

On December 7, 1941, while a special Japanese envoy was in Washington, ostensibly on a mission to negotiate an understanding over affairs in the Pacific, the Japanese government launched a surprise bombing attack by air on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbour in the Hawaiian Islands. On the following day, at the request of the president, Congress declared a state of war between the United States and Japan. On December 11 Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.

President Roosevelt, in addition to supervising the entire U.S. war effort, made extraordinary efforts to cooperate with the other powers fighting against the Axis. Several other conferences laid the foundation for the organisation of the United Nations (U.N.)

and for other forms of worldwide co-operation after the war.

Roosevelt was succeeded by Vice President Harry S. Truman. His first problems as president were the conclusion of the war and the establishment of world peace. The increasing difficulties in Soviet-U.S. relations, however, became evident at the Potsdam Conference in Germany in July. The spirit of wartime co-operation increasingly gave way to mutual suspicion, misunderstanding, and recrimination, leading to the era of conflict known as the Cold War.

On August 6, 1945, during World War II, the United States dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, a Japanese city and military centre. About 130,000 people were reported killed, injured, or missing. Another 177,000 were made homeless. It was the first atomic bomb used against an enemy. The Japanese surrendered on August 14. With the conclusion of hostilities, reconversion of the U.S. economy to peacetime conditions and demobilisation of the troops became the paramount issues in U.S. domestic policies. The economic situation became further complicated when almost 5 million workers struck for wage increases to meet the rising costs of living. In 1947 Congress responded to this strike activity by passing the Taft-Hartley Act, which placed limitations on the freedom to strike.

The United States continued its unprecedented participation in international affairs, through membership in the UN and other groups and through Allied conduct of

war crimes trials of former enemy leaders, chiefly Germans and Japanese. In August 1946 the United States joined the International Court of Justice.

In 1947, during the period known as Cold War, and in an effort to halt the advance of communism in Europe (especially in Greece and Turkey), President Truman announced the policy known as the Truman Doctrine, by which the United States furnished military and economic aid to countries threatened by aggression and subversion. The USSR responded to the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan with the formation of a new Communist International. A further disturbance of public opinion occurred in September 1949, when Truman announced that the USSR had developed an atomic bomb.

In June 1950, when South Korea was invaded by the forces of Communist North Korea, Truman announced that the United States would intervene to assist the South Koreans. The conflict in Korea produced profound repercussions on U.S. domestic affairs, including the doubling of military and related expenditures. The Korean War also led to severe psychological dislocations as concern about Communism within the United States . As early as 1947 President Truman had set up a nation-wide system of loyalty boards to investigate government employees. The government also prosecuted 11 leaders of the Communist Party, U.S.A., under the Smith Act of 1940, which prohibited groups from conspiring to advocate the violent overthrow of the government. In 1950 Congress passed the McCarran Internal Security Act, which established a permanent Subversive Activities Control Board to follow Communist activities in the United States and barred

from admission into the country any person who had been a member of a Communist organisation. Truman vetoed the bill on the ground that it represented “a suppression of ideas in disregard to ideals which are the fundamental basis of our free society”, but his veto was overridden by Congress. The activities of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin aroused considerable controversy over the degree of Communist influence in the United States. Exploiting highly dubious evidence, McCarthy led a campaign of persecution against various government and military officials, entertainment figures, and others. The fear instilled in people’s minds by what were called the McCarthy witch-hunts, however, lingered throughout the 1950s.

In July 1952 the Republican Party nominated General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Senator Richard M. Nixon of California as candidates for president and vice president. Eisenhower won easily, and the Republicans captured control of Congress.

1.2. Economy

The United States has been the world’s leading industrial nation since early in the 20th century. The most important development in the economy since World War II (1939-1945) has been the tremendous growth of service industries, government, professional services, trade, and financial activities. By the end of the 1930s the labour union movement in the United States had become widely accepted. In 1945 about 36 percent of all nonfarm employees belonged to labour unions.

The last years of the sixties were marked by the rise of desocupation, due to the developments in technology, and also by the retreat of the troops from Vietnam. Unemployment affects to more than 5.5 millions of Americans, and it is especially hard for the Afro-American (15-20%), the ex-soldiers (14.2%) and young population. Inflation was no more a menace but a reality, and the situation becomes so complicated that President Nixon was forced to freeze the wages and prices for three months (August 1971). The new technologies applied to the industry reduces the vacancy for more workers, and it also demands more and more specialised workers, with the result of desocupation, mechanisation of people; the plastic society turns the man into a simple robot, he becomes just a gear for the machine.

1.3. The Civil Rights Movement

The most urgent domestic issue of the period was the struggle of American blacks to end segregation and secure their full rights as citizens. Congress had opposed Truman's moderate civil rights program, and although the Eisenhower administration completed the desegregation of the government and armed forces, it was unwilling to initiate more radical programs. Blacks, led by the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, increasingly turned to the courts for assistance. On May 17, 1954, in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously outlawed racial segregation in public schools. This decision reversed the principle of "separate but equal" that had been the basis of black-white relations since the *Plessy v/s Ferguson* decision of 1896. Subsequent decisions in 1955 and 1956 called on local authorities to

submit plans for desegregation and also ended racial segregation in intrastate transportation.

In many southern states, attempts were made to circumvent these rulings. In September 1957 Governor Orval E. Faubus of Arkansas defied the call to integrate when he ordered the National Guard to prevent nine black students from attending Central High School in Little Rock. On September 23, following attacks by whites on black students and adults, President Eisenhower dispatched federal troops to restore order and help black students attend school safely.

Meanwhile, many blacks became increasingly active in the civil rights movement. In December 1955 clergyman Martin Luther King, Jr. led a highly effective boycott that resulted in desegregation of the bus system in Montgomery, Alabama. Many other organisations and individuals actively worked for racial equality, including the Southern Christian Leadership Conference , and Malcolm X, among others. Largely as a result of their activities, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1957, establishing a Civil Rights Commission to investigate the denial of voting rights or equal protection of the laws.

In 1956, despite a heart attack, Eisenhower announced that he would run for a second term, winning the elections. Early in 1958 a nation-wide recession began, and the number of unemployed people rose in June to more than 5 million, the highest level since World War II. By the end of 1958 the recession had been brought under control, and the value of U.S. manufactures returned to their prerecession levels.

1.4. Culture

1.4.1. Music

The dominant type of popular music from 1935 to 1945 was big band swing, a style modelled on the innovations of black jazz orchestras. The big band era ended after World War II (1939-1945), when pop singers became more popular than bandleaders did, although the influence of swing music could still be heard in “jump band” rhythm and blues and western swing music.

Important shifts in popular music after World War II were tied to social and technological changes. The massive migration of Southern musicians and audiences to urban areas and the introduction of the electric guitar were particularly influential. These changes set the stage for the hard-edged Chicago blues of Muddy Waters; the honky-tonk, or “hard-country,” style of Hank Williams; and, in the mid-1950s, the rise of rock and roll music.

Rock and roll grew out of the intermingling of several streams of post-war popular music, including “jump band” rhythm and blues, the recordings of blues “shouters” such as Big Joe Turner, gospel-based vocal styles, boogie-woogie piano blues, and honky-tonk music. The pioneers of rock and roll came from varied backgrounds. Bill Haley, whose “Rock Around the Clock” (1955) was the first rock song to gain wide popularity, was a country-and-western bandleader from Pennsylvania; Chuck Berry was a hairdresser in St. Louis, Missouri; and Elvis Presley was a Memphis, Tennessee, truck driver. The peak period of rock and roll—defined by the exuberant recordings of Haley, Berry, Domino,

Presley, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Buddy Holly—lasted from 1954 to 1959. The most successful artists wrote and performed songs about love, sexuality, identity crises, personal freedom, and other issues that were of particular interest to teenagers.

1.4.2 Literature

Hemingway and Faulkner remained leading writers into the 1950s; they were joined by John Steinbeck (The Grapes of Wrath, 1939; Nobel Prize, 1962), James Jones (From Here to Eternity, 1951), and Vladimir Nabokov (Lolita, 1955; Pale Fire, 1962). William Faulkner, whose innovative techniques and thoughtful characterisations in such novels as The Sound and the Fury (1929), Light in August (1932), and Absalom, Absalom! (1936) won him the Nobel Prize in 1954. Also Ernest Hemingway, Nobel Prize winner in 1954, is noted for his terse, carefully crafted prose in works such as The Sun Also Rises (1926), and A Farewell to Arms (1929).

The extensive fictional literature that arose out of World War II (1939-1945) lacked the tendency to shock that had energised previous war novels. Perhaps authors were able by this time to regard armed conflict with greater philosophical detachment. The most impressive novels of World War II were From Here to Eternity (1951) by James Jones and The Naked and the Dead (1948) by Norman Mailer.

The post-war southern writers who continued the tradition of Faulkner—sometimes referred to as “southern Gothic”—included Carson McCullers (The Heart Is a Lonely

Hunter, 1946), Truman Capote (Other Voices, Other Rooms, 1947), Eudora Welty (The Ponder Heart, 1954), and Flannery O'Connor (The Violent Bear It Away, 1960). Best known for his novel All the King's Men (1946), a powerful characterization of a southern politician, Kentucky-born Robert Penn Warren was also a noted poet, critic, and literary historian.

Several novels dealing on a personal level with the long-standing American problem of racial prejudice were set against the background of the transition from the Great Depression to the American involvement in World War II. The novel Native Son (1940) and the autobiographical Black Boy (1945), both by Richard Wright, are powerful statements written in a starkly realistic manner. Passionate indignation about the black experience was voiced again in the novel Invisible Man (1952), by Ralph Ellison and in the novel Go Tell It on the Mountain (1953) and the essay collection Nobody Knows My Name (1961), both by James Baldwin.

1.4.3. Film-making

During World War II Frank Capra, John Ford, William Wyler, John Huston, and other Hollywood directors joined the armed forces and made war-related documentaries. Capra supervised the *Why We Fight* series (1942-1945), seven films that sought to explain the war's background and the reasons for U.S. involvement, and Huston's *The Battle of San Pietro* (1945) depicted the grim consequences of warfare in the Italian campaign.

In 1939 Orson Welles, a 24-year-old prodigy, arrived in Hollywood following a spectacular career in theatre and radio to produce, direct, co-write and star in *Citizen Kane* (1941), by critical consensus the most significant commercial American film ever made.

Although American movies reached the peak of their popularity in the United States in 1946, changed circumstances soon brought difficulties that were to shape the next quarter century of motion-picture history. Shortly after World War II, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that the Hollywood studio system constituted a monopoly in violation of antitrust laws and ordered the studios to give up ownership of theatres.

At the same time, committees in the Congress of the United States began investigating alleged “infiltration” of the motion-picture industry by members of the American Communist Party, who were accused of being disloyal to the United States and under the control of the Soviet Union. Movie companies fired or refused to hire writers, directors, actors, and others who had been accused, in an atmosphere of political repression that has come to be known as McCarthyism, after U.S. Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, who repeatedly accused numerous government officials of taking part in Communist activity. This era of so-called blacklisting brought further turmoil to the film industry. But this was not to be the worst thing to happen: the advent of television caused the greatest disruption. Although motion-picture attendance had begun to decline before television became widely available, the rapid spread of home television sets in the 1950s was accompanied by a steady decline in movie going, until movie attendance levelled off in the 1960s at about one-fourth the total prior to 1946.

1.4.4. Art

Following World War II (1939-1945), New York supplanted Paris as the leading centre of the art world; innovative painting exhibited and often produced there has included works by the abstract expressionist painters Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Robert Motherwell and the sculptor David Smith; and by the painters Andy Warhol (motion-picture director and producer, and publisher), and Roy Lichtenstein, who ascribed to the pop art movement, which based artwork on images taken from mass, or popular, culture.

1.4.5. Underground Cultural Movement

The roots of the underground movements are placed during the years right after the Second World War, and especially during the 50's. (The true cultural and political matrix of the underground culture is located within the Beat Generation) The term underground began to be used around the year 1963, and it was used to refer to a certain kind of newspapers, films and magazines, and the name made reference to its irregular and clandestine character. But from 1963 onwards the term extended its meaning to a more vast field, which included mainly a part of the youth culture of the United States and, consequently, of other countries. In this way, the underground movement began to mean this new sensitivity, and their cultural products were turned in the following decades into 'new culture', 'alternative culture', 'counter culture'.

The true cultural and political matrix of the underground culture is located within the Beat Generation. The fifties were years of uneasiness, of sickness and fear, and the beat were the antennas that perceived that reality. The Cold War, the unbearable and persistent memory from Hiroshima (and from this, the constant menace of the atomic bomb), the Witch-Hunt, the post-war violence (represented by motorcycle gangs as the 'Hell's Angels' in the States, or the 'Teddy-Boys' in UK), the economic misery after the war, the new coming technology (which increasingly became a menace for thousands of workers all over America), the mass-media, the progressive discontent towards politics and politicians, the racism against everybody and everything that was different... This was the scenery which an adolescent grew up during the fifties: social, racial, psychological, generational tension.

As a consequence from this, the reaction was a mixture of cynicism and external hardness, of bitterness and will to fight only for oneself, of search for the inner truth, of fight against ambiguity and phoniness of the adult world, using a variety of weapons that included from provocation to negation, from attack to self-destruction. Thus, the reclusion into an inner world provokes the crash against the others, instead of the contact with others.

It was in this miserable scenery where a new man was born: the 'hipster', the existentialist, the 'white nigger', a man who knows that if his destiny is to live under the threat of an instantaneous death in the hands of the atomic bomb, if his destiny is to live with death by his side from adolescence to adulthood, then the only valid answer is to accept the conditions of death, to live with death as an immediate danger, to divorce from society, to exist without roots, to embark in an unknown voyage without accepting rules from a society that is already dead.

Along with the hipster, there arises another kind of person: the 'beatnick', the intellectual adolescent trying to get his message through with a more existentialist and poetic way than political. Often Jewish, he usually belongs to the middle class, and because of this he uses leisure as a response to his parents' conformism. The beatnick, an alien to the concept of race, is often a radical pacifist who has defined himself against violence; in fact, his violence has been repressed internally and with no way to express it, or to express it in the only way he knows: suicide. In this way, the hipster with his world of violence and the beatnick, a torn-apart and misunderstood poet, lived together side by side listening to the be-bop of Charlie Parker, the jazz of Archie Shepp, in places like Greenwich Village of New York, or North Beach of San Francisco.

This reality, this state of affairs during the fifties, the sense of sickness that arose from the recognition of the real face of the 'American Dream' provokes the distrust and the horror towards the eastern rationale and, as a consequence, gives birth to the attraction for the Western culture and its philosophy of life like the Zen and Buddhism doctrines, it allows the existence of Ginsberg's 'Howl' and its earthly mysticism, of Kerouak's 'Let's Go' and its vitality, the lucid and terrific vision of the world disintegration by William Burroughs. These are the themes of the new poetry and prose that, even technically, desired to break their bonds with the past. The literary production in those years is, to sum up, a scream of anguish and despair and euphoria, and the poets' words fight against two hells: the personal hell on the one hand, and the hell of society on the other, a blind society which is an accomplice of the most savage crimes. It is in this period during the

sixties when the underground culture is born, when denunciation and discontent become a more general experience instead of a feeling reserved only for a closed circle of artists.

During the seventies the melting pot became more a fermenting pot: the pot in which ethnic, religious and social differences should be nullified did not work; instead, American society continued to be a society full of islands where these differences remained irreconcilable. Every group is a closed group, and tensions among them are still present, the individual is alone amidst the crowd, he feels lonely and he needs the group to feel secure, protected, loved. And during the seventies, though the dark period of McCarthy's persecutions had ended, American society did not stop glorifying violence: in the past against the red skinned people/native American, the negro slaves, now against the immigrants, the Latin American countries, the unions, the Ku Klux Klan, Hiroshima, etc. America was born thanks to violence, and it cannot live without it ("...the game known as 'American Football' has a rate of 3-4 deaths per year, every year 19000 people die due to shotguns, every week 1000 die and 70000 are injured in American highways, a typical American citizen spends 9 years of his life in front of a T.V., watching more than 300000 violent incidents and 100000 murders". (Berke 15-16)²⁴.

This is, in a nutshell, the cultural movement known as underground between the fifties and seventies. There were mixed up feelings of cultural revolution, of social renovation, of anarchism, and a total loss of confidence regards traditional politics. Those were the years of the no-violence, of the flower power, of optimism, of illusion given by

new religions (Buddhism, Chinese philosophies, and indigene mysticism), of the solution of problems through drugs...It influenced arts, theatre, film-making, literature. It rediscovered popular music: the blues, the jazz, and over these basis it created a new musical form of communication. It destroyed any barrier that separated painting from theatre and films, creating new artistic formulae (as in the 'happenings, where the participation of the audience was essential, taking them out from the passive condition of the classical theatre) and including other techniques (surrealism, expressionism, abstract art, pop art) into films to renovate completely the Hollywood way of making movies.

2. ADOLESCENT CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY

2.1. Community Factors Influencing Personality

²⁴ Berke, Joseph. 1969. The Creation of an Alternative Culture. London, p. 15-16.

The child learns values from two general sources: from the adults who have prestige in his eyes and from his own age group. Some of the values that the boy or girl learns are community wide. They are held by all persons, regardless of social or economic status. Such variations as occur in these values are individual and not the result of systematic group differences. Other values learned by children are characteristic of smaller groups within the community, such as social classes, churches, ethnic groups, and the age group to which the boy or girl belongs.

Recent studies of adolescents have emphasised the fact that boys and girls in their teens have a culture of their own with moral standards and moral pressures behind those standards. This culture has been called the 'adolescent peer culture'²⁵. Boys and girls, desiring the approval of their age mates, follow the fashions of the peer culture in morals, dress and speech; and the moral standards and practices of the adolescent peer culture are probably an important factor in character formation.

The high school is the principal place of the adolescent peer culture. School dances, athletic contests, and club activities, as well as study halls and classrooms, are the places where boys and girls learn how to behave socially and morally as young men and women, are the places where boys and girls learn how to behave socially and morally as young men and women. To achieve success in the adolescent peer culture, a boy or girl must stay in school, be a reasonably good student, take part in school activities, and go to the school dances and parties. In the process of adjusting successfully in these ways, he would be

²⁵ National Society for the Study of Education. 1994. Adolescence. Chicago, University of Chicago.

learning middle-class morality. The majority of young people attempts to fit themselves into this situation.

Undoubtedly the most important single influence on character is the home, and, along with this, differences regarding the social classes to which adolescents belong can be seen. As to the upper middle-class, a family of this group has allies in the school, church, and youth organisations. The child belonging to this social class spends relatively more time than others in activities of boy and girl scouts, in school activities, in the public library, and in the church. His/her family is supplemented by the school, church, and character-building organisations which reinforce their values. Thus, the upper middle-class child finds little or no conflict between the standards of his home and the expectations of his teachers, Sunday school, and club leaders.

As a conclusion, it is through home, church, youth organisations, recreational agencies, and the informal 'peer culture' of the children's own world, that values and moral standards are taught to boys and girls by their parents, teachers, and other adults in positions of prestige, and by leaders of their own age groups.

2.2. Social Adjustment and Character Reputation

Human behaviour, including those aspects we call character, is influenced by the social milieu within which the individual develops. This is particularly true of moral behaviour or character since the latter is constantly subject to approval or disapproval by the members of the social groups with which the individuals comes in contact. If the

behaviour is approved by the particular group, it is reinforced by a system of rewards; if disapproved, it is inhibited by a system of punishments. What behaviour will be rewarded and what will be punished will depend upon the moral values of the particular group in which the individual is participating. Many research studies have demonstrated that character reputation is very closely related to the individual's success in adjusting to the dominant social situation, and also that for most adolescents the dominant social situation is the school. The boy or girl who enjoys a good reputation in the community or school is often described as 'better adjusted', both to himself and to society, than the boy or girl of unfavourable reputation. This may mean several things: the well adjusted individual behaves in accordance to the expectations of responsible people; his goals and aspirations are likely to be socially approved, and the means and techniques s/he employs to secure them are not expected to lead him/her into unexpected trouble. ; he is not likely to feel disliked or ridiculed and hence not likely to feel inferior or worried. All these are types of 'adjustments' and they are part of what we understand by 'good character' and 'good reputation'.

Another component that influences greatly the adolescent's character formation is the presence of adults outside the family members; the 'ideal self' seems to be increasingly influenced during adolescence by adults not belonging to the family itself, especially by attractive and visible young adults.

In relation to their beliefs and moral and ethic codes, adolescents seem to place great importance to friendliness, honesty, loyalty, moral courage, and responsibility. The prevailing concept of friendliness is that of being amiable and accommodating to all people,

being popular, and having many friends. The concept of honesty is dominated by ideas about the use of property and telling the truth. Such acts as borrowing things without permission and using small sums of the family's money without permission are highly disapproved. Beliefs in relation to loyalty seem to be confused and uncertain. Loyalty to personal friends is often subordinated to other values; apparently there is a code of not betraying friends outright. In other respects, but within the same concept, loyalty to school seems to be limited to obeying school rules- attending school parties and activities is not taken very seriously. When it comes to moral courage, the strongest aspect of it is that of defending and protecting one's own rights and those of others. There is practically a unanimous feeling among adolescents that one must defend anyone against gossip, for instance. On the other hand, there is hesitancy in raising questions of rightness and wrongness in criticizing peers, for fear of being regarded a prig. Finally, the standards of responsibility are highly developed, and they are applied under a variety of circumstances. Duties toward school, home, and employment are taken seriously. Punctuality in attending meetings or completing accepted jobs is on the list of approved items.

2.3. Character and Personality Types

According to Havighurst and Taba (1949), personality types can be grouped in five differentiated types, which were named as follows: the Self-Directive Person, the Adaptive Person, the Submissive Person, the Defiant Person, and the Unadjusted Person. This method of delineating personality groups or types ('the Conference Method') is, of course, only one of several possible methods.

The Self-Directive Person is conscientious, orderly, and persistent. They set high standards for themselves and are seldom satisfied with their performance. They are ambitious, strong-willed, and self-sufficient, yet characterised by self-criticism and self-doubt.

The Adaptive Person is sociable, friendly, vivacious, and outgoing in manner. They have what is often called good 'social intelligence'. Usually they are good looking and have great physical vitality. Though they enjoy leadership, they do not strive hard for it. They fit readily into almost any social situation and seem to conform naturally to the expectations of the people they are associated with.

The Submissive Person is one who will not initiate action. They wait for others to take the lead. They never show signs of overt aggression and rarely of covert aggression. They live by authority.

The Defiant Person is openly hostile to society. They show their hostility by doing poor schoolwork, refusing to conform to social expectations, and sometimes by attacks upon property which land them in jail. Because they have been neglected or mistreated by society, they bear a never-ending grudge, which prevents them from making any constructive adjustment to their age mates, to his family, to school, or to a job. They are definitely maladjusted individuals.

The Unadjusted Person is discontented, insecure, frustrated; usually they are having difficulties with their families, in school their work is not up to the level of their abilities.

However they are not openly hostile to society or definitely maladjusted as in the Defiant Person. They are actively but as yet unsuccessfully seeking to establish a satisfactory relationship with their environment. All the profiles mentioned are shown in table n° 1.

Table n° 1

Area	Self-Directive	Adaptive	Submissive	Defiant	Unadjusted
Social Personality	Ambitious, orderly, persistent, introspective	Outgoing, confident, positive	Timid, stubborn, avoids conflict	Openly hostile, blames society for failure	Discontented, complaining, not openly hostile
Moral Beliefs and Principles	Variable, high uncertainty	High, little uncertainty	High, some uncertainty	Low	Low to average
Family Environment	Strict family training, some conflict with family	Permissive family, no conflict with family	Severe family, no conflict with family	Family training inconsistent, provides no basis for constructive character formation	Variable family training, conflict with family
Social Adjustment with Age Mates	Leader, active in school affairs	Very popular, social skills well developed	Follower, non-entity, awkward in social skills	Unpopular, hostile to school activities, quarrelsome	Unpopular, hostile or indifferent to school activities
Intellectual Ability	Average to high	Average to high	Low to average, seldom high	Low to high	Low to high
Personal Adjustment	Self-doubt, self-critical, some anxiety, average aggressiveness	High on all adjustment measures, self-assured, no anxiety	Self-doubt, self-critical, unaggressive	Hostile to authority, aggressive impulses	Aggressive impulses, feelings of insecurity

3. THE QUESTION OF INNOCENCE IN THE CATCHER IN THE RYE

3.1. Style of J. D. Salinger

To explain how is it that Holden is not such an innocent young man, we have to first realize that Holden is the medium through which Salinger expresses his own view of the world. A brief description of Salinger's style will be of much help to fully understand the character.

Many critics consider J.D. Salinger a very controversial writer, particularly for the subject matter he writes about. Salinger's works were generally written during two time-periods. The first one was during World War II, and the second was during the 1960's. Critics feel that the works that came out during the 1960 time-period were very inappropriate, because of the problems about which he wrote. The Catcher in the Rye was written during the post World War II period, and magnifies some of the problems American youths were going through. Salinger uses everything from comedy and obscenity to violence and death to get his point across. In The Catcher in The Rye he exemplifies the struggles a hopeless and confused youth can go through when trying to survive in this kind of society and find purpose and acceptance as an adult.

The main characters were generally misfits of society. In most of his works, he has the protagonist of the story go on a quest for happiness. Salinger does not conform to material happiness: the characters (Franny in Franny and Zooey, Seymour in A Perfect Day for Bananafish, Holden in The Catcher in the Rye) undergo a spiritual happiness. His

characters generally start out in bad conditions, only towards the ending of his works they experience changes that turn them into better persons.

The works of J.D. Salinger, especially The Catcher in the Rye, show the quest for happiness mainly through the use of three main devices, namely religion, loneliness, and symbolism.

In relation to religion, Salinger often uses it to portray comfort. In a chapter of The Catcher in the Rye, Holden is very much in despair for losing his girlfriend, so he reads a passage in the Bible (Salinger 23)²⁶. In Salinger's Franny and Zooey, Franny Glass keeps reciting the "Jesus Prayer" to, according to Bloom, cope with the suicide of her brother Seymour. Another aspect of religion, but more of an oriental kind, is found in 'Nine Stories', in which Salinger uses much of the Zen philosophy to achieve this liberation.

In many of Salinger's works, loneliness is used to isolate characters from evil. Salinger portrays all of society to be bad, and for much character's isolation from society is the only way to achieve happiness. In The Catcher in the Rye Holden's entire plot deals with him trying to isolate himself from society. Holden realizes that society has become evil, and wants no part in this terrible life. Salinger uses society as the source of discord to be isolated from. Holden is shown as a hermit at the end of The Catcher in the Rye. In Grunwald's opinion, Holden's tranquillity, at the end, can be ascribed to his isolation from society. Holden only wants to be separated from a society, which considers him a misfit. In

²⁶ Salinger, J. D. Op. Cit., p. 23.

Salinger's works a source of unhappiness is usually the fact that society senses the characters are social misfits. The characters can only become happy if they isolate themselves from this society. The characters see that society has become evil, and in order for them to become happy they must get away from society, and live their own lives.

Finally, the use of many lucky symbols in Salinger's works are to show how to fulfill the quest for happiness. The characters in J.D. Salinger's works start out in bad situations. Through the use of lucky symbols their life is changed to what will make them happy. In The Catcher in the Rye, Salinger refers greatly in one chapter to ducks in central park. The ducks, borrowing Galloway's interpretation, are '...in context to a scripture in the Bible, which tells of how the ducks are free. The ducks represented how he would feel, being happy' (Galloway 53)²⁷.

These are, in general terms, the main concerns of Salinger's fiction. These issues are now to be related to the specific character of Holden Caulfield.

3.2. Characterization of Holden Caulfield

The preceding chapters that included definitions of a typical adolescent in terms of their psychological characteristics, along with a social account regarding American reality during the fifties, allow us now to attempt an explanation of how Holden Caulfield behaves and sees the world that surrounds him.

²⁷ Galloway, D. 1966. The Absurd Hero in American Fiction: Updike, Styron, Bellow, and Salinger. Texas, University of Texas Press.

According to Edward Corbett, Holden makes reference to the word "phony" forty-four separate times throughout The Catcher in the Rye. Each time he does it he seems to be referring to as either someone who discriminates against others, or is a hypocrite about something, or has manifestations of conformity. Throughout The Catcher in the Rye, Holden describes and interacts with various members of his family. The way he refers or talks to them gives an idea of whether he thinks they are "phony" or normal. To make this point apparent I will consider a few of his accounts which will help us to discover how he classifies each family member and, consequently, of how he sees ordinary people.

From the very first page of the novel, Holden begins to refer to his parents as distant people and frequently generalizes about both his father and his mother throughout his chronicle. One example is: "...my parents would have about two hemorrhages apiece if I told anything personal about them. They're quite touchy about anything like that, especially my father. They're nice and all – I'm not saying that – but they're also touchy as hell".(Salinger 1)²⁸ Holden's father is a lawyer and, because of this, he considers him "phony" because he views him and his occupation as a parallel of his personality. For example, when Holden is talking to Phoebe about what he wants to be when he grows up, he cannot answer her question and proceeds to give her his opinion about their father's occupation:

'...Lawyers are all right, I guess – but it doesn't appeal to me,' I said. 'I mean they're all right if they go around saving innocent guys' lives all the time, and like that, but you don't do that kind of stuff if you're a lawyer. All you do is make a lot of dough and play golf and play bridge and buy cars and drink Martinis and look like a hot-shot. How would you

²⁸ Salinger, J. D. Op. Cit., p. 1.

know you weren't being a phony? The trouble is, you wouldn't' (Salinger 179)²⁹

In relation to his mother, he always seems to refer to her with a sense of compassion yet also with a mocking tone. Holden makes his mother sound predictable and insincere. These phony qualities are shown in two different examples in chapter 22, when Holden is hiding in the closet of D.B.'s room as his mother walks in to put Phoebe in bed:

'Hello!' I heard old Phoebe say. 'I couldn't sleep. Did you have a good time?' 'Marvelous,' my mother said, but you could tell she didn't mean it. She doesn't enjoy herself much when she goes out. 'Good night. Go right to sleep now. I have a splitting headache,' my mother said. She gets headaches quite frequently. She really does' (Salinger 183- 184)³⁰

The first two examples serve as illustrations of how Holden classifies people as phonies.

Other characteristics that Holden possesses refer to his ambivalence towards sex and his incapability to communicate with others. He lives in a society where human relationships are affected by marketplace values, like status and appearance, which restrain and deny people's self-realisation, rather than accepting them.

With such a dead-end vision of the trap of adulthood and marriage, it is not very surprising that Holden is scared of being initiated into the most involving form of relationship—sex. Holden seeks a deeper, more real relationship with someone, probably anyone who understands him, and accepts him. He does not like to see people hurting. For him, it seemed like sex would somehow integrate him into the world at large, world that he despises. Holden does not want to accept any change in his life. He sees sex as a way that

²⁹ Salinger, J. D. Op. Cit., p. 179.

³⁰ Salinger, J. D. Op. Cit., p. 183-184.

society is using to lure him into being like the people he hates. At Pencey, his boarding school, he equates sex with perversion. He refers to his gorgeous roommate, Stradlater, as a 'very sexy bastard' because of his interest in all things related to sex.

As to his incapability to establish communication with others, it is a fact throughout the whole novel that Holden is not able to establish real conversations between people. Holden feels that no one is able to understand what he feels like and what he is trying to say. His loneliness leads him to invite taxicab drivers out for drinks, call people he hasn't seen in years, and wandering the places he used to walk by - all these facts showing a sense of isolation.

Holden is surrounded by what he views as drunks, perverts, morons and screwballs. He views the world as an evil place where there is no peace, and the more he looks around him, the more depressing he finds it. In this sense, he sees evil all over. To him the world appears completely immoral and unprincipled. These convictions which make him waver momentarily, for instance, in the scene with his teacher. After Mr. Antolini patted Holden on the head while he was sleeping, Holden jumped up and ran out thinking that Mr. Antolini was a pervert, as well as the others (classmates like Stradlater, the owner of the hotel where he stayed, etc). This is the only time along the novel that shows Holden thinking it twice about considering someone as a pervert. After reviewing Mr. Antolini, Holden finally concludes that maybe he was not making anything suspicious. Maybe '...he just liked to pat guys on the head when they're asleep' (Salinger 201)³¹. This is really the

³¹ Salinger, J. D. Op. Cit., p. 201.

only time in the novel where Holden actually considers a positive side. Despite this fact, this event does not constitute a significant change. As Holden himself says, 'It's not too bad when the sun's out, but the sun only comes out when it feels like coming out'. The sun, according to Corbett, is a reference to decency through the common association of light and goodness. This perception of the world does not change significantly throughout the novel. However, as the novel progresses, Holden gradually comes to the realisation that he is powerless to change this corruption. His perception of the world remains the same; the only conviction that does change during the novel is Holden's belief that he can change the world.

3.3. The Innocence of a Catcher in the Rye

To begin with, we find that the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines innocence as '...freedom from guilt or sin through being unacquainted with evil'³². When do humans in general have little or no guilt and worries? In the days of our youth everything is much simpler.

Holden Caulfield, as a character, emphasizes on the loss of innocence in children. Children are the only people with whom Holden can communicate throughout the story, not because they can help him with his growing pains but also because they remind him of a simpler time (his innocence) to which he wished he could return. In a way, he feels that once they lose their innocence, they will soon turn into phonies like everyone else. Holden

³² 1947. The Merriam-Webster Pocket Dictionary. New York, Pocket Books Inc.

discusses the importance of innocence in children's lives. He worries about children because he thinks that once a child loses his innocence, he will soon be led to a life of corruption. Holden also focuses on all the phonies in the world. He feels that phoniness is the reason why children lose their innocence. Holden does not realise that a child is being exposed to the corruption everyday of his life. It may lead the child to a bad life, but to many others it will give them a chance to learn what the world is really like. He defines phonies as people who are liars, corrupted, selfish. However, he does not realise (or does not want to realise) that he is a phony himself since he has also lost his innocence; in other words, he is very sensitive when it comes to the phonies around him but he does not realise that he is part of that too. Holden sees the world around him so cold and impersonal that reactions as lying to people are a way of telling them that he does not want to be hurt anymore. He is also experiencing the feeling about being all-alone in a corrupt world, isolated from everyone, thinking that no one else has experienced what he has gone through. He shows how lonely he is by wandering along the streets of New York by himself and by wanting to be 'loved' by someone, reducing love to having sex with a whore (chapter 13). He tries to escape the realities of life by remembering the past with his brother Allie, his sister Phoebe, and his older brother D.B. Holden does not only discuss innocence and corruption but he also discusses the way how the world changes. He is not able to adjust to things that have changed, instead of this, he feels more comfortable in places that will never change. An example of this is the reaction that he experiences in the Museum:

'The best thing, though, in that museum, was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody'd move. You could go there a hundred thousand times, and that Eskimo would still be just finished catching those two fish, the birds would still be on their way south, the deers would still be drinking out of that water hole, with their

pretty antlers and their pretty, skinny legs, and that squaw with the naked bosom would still be weaving that same blanket. Nobody'd be different.' (Salinger 127)³³

He feels really happy when he sees the Natural Museum of History and realises that the place has not changed since he first went there on a school trip; however, he gets very mad when he sees the graffiti on the side of his sister's school, an example of how phoniness and corruption invade and take places from him that were untouched.

Holden has consumed so much corruption that fears that no one is going to keep him from falling. This particular quote defines the title of the book, and also defines one of the roles (among many others) that Holden possesses. The catcher in the rye is an occupation that only exists in Holden's mind. Holden has this fantasy about being a catcher in the rye only to protect children and himself, and especially the latter because, although he is not aware of the fact that he is a phony, he knows that through protecting others he would redeem himself from this condition. He just does not want young children to see what he is seeing, and that is why he paints over the writing, as in the Museum chapter. He is also trying to keep children from making the same mistakes that he made in the past. He really wants to help them but he does not realise, until the very end of the novel that he will not succeed in it. Children have to learn what they did wrong by themselves, and from that they will learn to avoid doing it again.

³³ Salinger, J. D. Op. Cit., p. 127.

From Holden's account, it is obvious that he views the older members of his family as phonies. Holden is the storyteller in Salinger's novel. Therefore, to what extent can his version be trusted or deemed factual? This idea is addressed through Corbett's elucidation: "Holden is himself a phony. He is an inveterate liar; he frequently masquerades as someone he is not; he fulminates against foibles of which he himself is guilty; he frequently vents his spleen about his friends, despite the fact that he seems to be advocating the need for charity" (Corbett 71)³⁴. This manipulation of information that Corbett mentions only superficially is made apparent in the use of dialogue throughout the novel. Every time Holden talks to someone, he immediately interprets for us what his interlocutor is trying to say, in such a manner that it becomes difficult to differentiate between what the others think from Holden's own thinking:

" 'Dear Mr. Spencer', he read out loud. 'That is all I know about the Egyptians. I can't seem to get very interested in them although your lectures are very interesting. It is all right with me if you flunk me though as I am flunking everything else except English anyway. Respectfully yours, Holden Caulfield'. He put my goddam paper down the nand looked at me like he'd just beaten hell out of me in ping-pong or something." (Salinger 16)³⁵

Along with this, there is little consistency in what he complains about and what he does. For instance, in page 14, while talking to Mr. Spencer, Holden thinks that his teacher is not listening to him, what bothers Holden, while in page 16 Holden congratulates himself for being able to think about something while someone was speaking to him.

Following with Corbett, the constant rejection that Holden feels towards phonies is nothing but a desperate cry for friendship and comprehension. If the world (i.e. the school)

³⁴ Corbett, E. 1963. Raise High the Barriers, Censors. Chicago, Malcolm M. Marsden Inc.

³⁵ Salinger, J. D. Op. Cit., p. 16.

is a horrible place to live in is just because there's no one to share your feelings and ideas with. The fact that Pencey was '...one of the worst schools I ever went to' was only due to the fact that '...it was full of phonies. And mean guys. Even the couple of nice teachers on the faculty, they were phonies too' (Salinger 174)³⁶. The lack of someone to trust in turns Holden into a phony, for not being honest with himself and accepting that he needs people, which is something that he covers and disguises in anger and disdain towards others. This is something very usual among adolescents, the tendency to blame others for their own problems.

If Holden is a liar and a phony, perhaps his portrayal of each family member is totally false. However, his consistent and repetitive accounts at least give the reader some idea of how an adolescent boy, facing the common experiences and troubles of daily life, views each member of his family. In this respect, it is interesting to see how Holden does not interpret any of Phoebe's comments or actions, or if he does, he usually refers to her as good-intended, never malicious:

" 'Old Phoebe didn't say anything, but she was listening. I could tell by the back of her neck that she was listening. She always listen when you tell her something. And the funny part is she knows, half the time, what the hell you're talking about. She really does '"(Salinger 174)³⁷

This reinforces the idea that Holden is not a trustworthy character, since he seems to adopt a different position (or predisposition) depending on whether he is talking to someone he likes or not. In other words, the view he has towards others is influenced (and influences us, correspondingly) by the misconceptions he attaches to them, being all these

³⁶ Salinger, J. D. Op. Cit., p. 174.

³⁷ Salinger, J. D. Op. Cit., p. 174

characteristics very typical in adolescents. This is something that arises clearly from the description of adolescence in the previous chapter: it is hard to find a consistent line of thought, of feelings, of reactions in an adolescent and, in this respect, Holden fits perfectly well into the role of someone who is far beyond an innocence so much desired by him.

CONCLUSION

Holden is represented as a sixteen year-old boy who finds everything pointless. He is trapped between fantasy and despair. Holden has this fantasy of becoming a catcher in the rye so as to save the children to fall from the cliff, although he himself is like one of them. He is headed for the cliff himself but in his case there is no one there to catch him and keep him alive.

Alienation seems to be the main theme of the novel, as presented through the life of a young boy who feels completely isolated from the world around him. No matter with whom he ends up or wherever he goes, he will never feel a sense of belonging. Holden feels that no one is going through what he is going through. I would say that The Catcher in the Rye discusses how a young man like Holden Caulfield feels about a changing world through the storyline of a boy who fears that all children are exposed to the loss of innocence in a world that welcomes corruption.

These aspects of Holden's personality, the feeling of isolation, desolation, despair, total alienation, can be explained, to a great extent, by considering the social, political and cultural issues going on during the fifties. In relation to this, the parallels that can be drawn between Holden's ideas and reality are very self-evident: the racism towards Afro-Americans was transplanted into the novel through the life of school, where some boys were rejected for being 'boring and pimply' (Salinger 174)³⁸. There is also a notorious loss of

³⁸ Salinger, J. D. Op. Cit., p. 174.

confidence in politicians, which Holden clearly expresses towards different symbols of authority: teachers, headmasters, priests, or his own parents.

An adolescent who lived under these conditions had to learn how to treat others without getting damaged in doing so. This led Holden to think that everybody else is 'phony', and that people are his enemies, 'evil doers', who can harm us and hurt us if we show them what we really are like. It is this fact that forces him to see malice and aggressiveness everywhere (even where there is none, as in the chapter with Mr. Antolini), aggressiveness that, in the worst of cases, can lead to the destruction of the weakest (James Castle, chapter 22).

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**BRIEF ACCOUNT ON CULT LITERATURE AND ITS RELATION WITH J.D
SALINGER**

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*“ But I don't want to go among mad people.” Alice remarked.
“ Oh, you can't help that,” said the Cat: “ we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.”
“ How do you know I'm mad?” said Alice.
“ You must be,” said the Cat, “ or you wouldn't have come here.”*

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

To my mom, Maria Elena. Thanks for all the love,
the help and the unconditional support.
To Lorenzo.

Thanks to Isabel Margarita, Maria Cecilia and Veronica
For a friendship that none could ever imagine.

INDEX	Page
Introduction	114
1.A Few Insights on Religion and Cults.	117
1.1 Components	118
1.2 Types of Adhesion	118
1.3 The Role of Myths	119
1.4 Types of Rituals	120
1.5 The Importance of Symbols	122
1.6 Sings and Symbols	123
1.7 Fetishism	125
1.8 Old Cults and New Cults	126
2.New Cults: Cults to Literature and Cinema	128
3.Cult Literature and Salinger's Phenomenon	139
Conclusions	151
Bibliography	152

INTRODUCTION

Since the world began to turn man has tried to understand how everything works around him. As a natural and inner characteristic, the one of wondering about the mystery of life has always been present... It's that need for finding an explanation from the very simple things: How does that flower grow? Why is it dead already, to the most complicated ones; where do we come from? Where do we go? Why do we have to suffer when all we want is to be happy? If that were possible in this world.

It is a fact that sometimes even the simplest questions become difficult if not impossible to answer, this time wouldn't be an exception.

As man looked around in search for an answer, he fixed his attention in the sky. He looked above trying to find an explanation that couldn't be reached here on earth. He saw nature and its magnificent embrace surround him, all this beauty couldn't be so empty as it seemed! Then, he invested nature with meanings that were way beyond its inner self. He mixed real facts such as the influence of seasons over plants and animals and extended it over man himself relating his behaviour to the influence of the moon and other planets. By doing this and by creating new devices as sources for explanations such as the zodiac he could "understand" some of the mysteries that compose this world.

Man saw deities behind the wind, the water, and the earth. Some of these deities were weak, some of them were strong. Those that were more powerful should rule over the weak ones. Through this path, Head or Main deities come up.

Head deities received different names, as there were no agreement in a universal form to designate them. The ways for the establishment of communication with them also were different. Man thought that, if Main deities exerted dominance over the minor ones, they could also intervene in the affairs of the man's world.

As time went by, man saw all these deities as the ones who told them what they could do, what they couldn't, even what they were supposed to. Sadness, deception, peace, happiness, pain, calmness, all human emotions and states were dependent on those imaginary deities. But, above all, they were dependent on the attitude that man held towards their image.

From different attitudes, different cults were drawn. These cults were born in the search for an answer, in the search for an explanation and also in the search for happiness as the final achievement of every human being.

For most of us, the Western- Jewish inheritance is very strong and powerful, due to this term cult usually has got a negative connotation. Being the Roman Catholicism over our heads, the custom to designate as a 'cult' any group which "deviates" from the path of the only "true" religion is deeply internalised. By doing this 'cults' are relegated to a lower stage within the history of religions.

The reason for this research on the subject of 'cults' corresponds to an attempt of pointing out the existent relation between cult literature and religious cults. It is due to this relation that one can refer to literature, as well as to cinema or music, as 'cults' or "new"

types of cults. Here, the emphasis will be on the particular cult professed towards literature. The main example of this particular worshipping will be given by the figure of J. D Salinger, his literary work, and the impact that his narrative has had over thousands of readers throughout history.

To carry out this research accurately, there is a need for detachment that only can be achieved if one sticks to the Secular definition of 'cult'. This definition taken from the Internet denotes as **cult**: *all that is involved in worshipping: rituals, emotions, liturgies, and attitudes toward some element in particular*. Following this, all religious groups of any kind in any part of the world can be considered as 'cults'. Taking always the risk of finding defamers.

1. A FEW INSIGHTS ON RELIGION AND CULTS

“Cult: Any group which has a pyramid type authoritarian leadership structure with all teaching and guidance coming from the person/persons at the top. The group will claim to be the only way to God; Nirvana; Paradise; Ultimate Reality; Full Potential; Way to Happiness, etc, and will use thought reform and mind control techniques to gain control and keep their members.

This definition covers cults within a major world religious, along with those cults which have no OBVIOUS religious base such as commercial, educational and psychological cults”.³⁹

A religious movement of theological nature has its centre on the particular deities. It emerges from the quest for explanations and reasons for the facts of life. Those that still remain as a mystery to human beings; where do we come from? Where do we go?

Religion as defined by the Encyclopædia deals with the mere relation between *man and the divinity*. It implies the belief, either vague or firm, in supernatural beings or divinities, which are beyond the reach of the world of man.

Religions however, cannot be considered in isolation. They are always inserted within a determined cultural and social context which “colour” the actual creeds and rites proper of that religion.

³⁹ Notes from Internet: [Identifying a Cult](#) p, 1

1.1. Components

All existent religions are composed by two basic elements⁴⁰:

- _ A series of **creeds**, which correspond to a list of doctrines and dogmas of the particular religion or church, and
- _ a series of institutions or **practices** (praxis) that these creeds suppose and impose over the followers.

Following the encyclopaedic definition, the correspondent *creeds* of a religion tend to group together myths, principles, symbols and ideologies that are built around the images of supernatural beings of varied types. These elements give the necessary foundation for a religion to exist.

1.2 Types of Adhesion

Religions also imply a certain type of adherence from the followers. This adherence may be divided in two types according to their nature⁴¹:

- _ **Implicit adhesion**: It does not require the knowledge of the entire doctrine by the complete body of followers whose form a particular religion. This knowledge is reserved to ‘special’⁴² people among the congregation. A good example of this type of adherence is given by religions of ethnic or tribal nature.

⁴⁰ Monitor enciclopedia. Salvat S.A. editores. Pamplona. Italia. 1965. Vol. 12. Pp. 5168- 5169.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² This special people correspond to priests of whatever nature whose knowledge of the dogmas is supposed to be beyond the reach of “common” followers.

_ **Explicit adhesion:** It corresponds to the very well known **act of faith**. This emerges from the *possibility* of believing or not in a creed. Religions, which are based on prophets and masters, *require* faith and rest upon the personal decision of believing or not. The proper doctrine for this type of adhesion corresponds to the **dogma of faith**.

Those who embrace the dogma must accept it and adapt their lives to the prescribed customs. These include the complete body of doctrines and practices that are supposed to be carried out by them. For the followers, the created myths gradually take the value of an historical fact; its fictional nature gradually disappears from the followers' memory.

1.3 The Role of Myths

Myths are understood for most people as *a traditional story, usually focusing on the deeds of gods or heroes, often an explanation of some natural phenomenon*.⁴³ But they also correspond to the collection of stories about real or fictitious persons or things and the beliefs or ideals drawn from there.

The narration of myths has had a great deal of importance along the centuries in the creation and foundation of any religious faith. In fact, there is no religion or cult whose foundation is not settled over a mythical base. As Catholics are based on Jesus' mythology, Muslim's are based on Mohammed's.⁴⁴

⁴³ Funk & Wagnals Standard Encyclopaedic Dictionary, J.G Ferguson Publishers. Chicago. 1970. Pp 431.

⁴⁴ The term "Mythology" is used here to make reference to the entire body of myths and stories, which surrounds certain character or element.

The relationships held between myths may be either purely mythical; were those worshipped “beings” only existed in the specific time and place of the myth; for instance Greece, and as time went by they ended up disappearing. Or they may be still related with some cult. This implies that even nowadays these myths are alive either physically or spiritually and they still require some cultural acts to reaffirm their sacred nature. These cultural acts may be for instance, going to mass on Sundays.

Through history different “beings” have been worshiped by man. Some of them have been left aside, some others remain either in memory or in ritual practices: The *Supreme Being* which organises the entire extra-human reality, or The *Mother Earth* that represents fertility and feminine strength. Those *Protecting Spirits* either good or bad and some *Fetish* and the correspondent *Fetishism*. Which is based on these objects that are endowed with a supernatural power and which are worshiped because of the “protection” obtained from them.

1.4 Types of Rituals

Rituals as defined by the encyclopædia⁴⁵, correspond to ceremonies or religious practices that are ordered by specific norms. They are carried out either individually or collectively. Rituals range between very simple practices such as the mere invocation, and very complex ones such as ritual dances.

⁴⁵ Monitor Encyclopaedia. Op.Cit. Pp 5252

Rituals may be divided into:

-**Autonomous:** those that are carried out and obtain their goal without the intervention of any supernatural forces. Those known as rituals of transition give one of the most representative examples of this type of ritual. And

-**Cultural:** which correspond to the actual cult towards deities and supernatural forces. All types of religions, sects and different religious cults are said to belong to the cultural type because some particular deity “gives” men’s desired goal.

Rituals of Transition, as Victor Turner author of Simbolismo y Ritual⁴⁶ points out, correspond to transitions between fixed and stable conditions within the world. For instance, in some cultures, rituals are carried out to establish the transition from boyhood to adulthood. In these rituals the subject, either individual or group, suffers a *transformation*. The transformation would be directly related to the particular symbols that are present within the situation.

Rituals of transition are divided into three stages following Turner’s book⁴⁷:

-The **Separation** in which, it is the individual the one who *removes* himself from the stability that surrounds him through the intervention of different customs and rituals. For instance in some tribes a boy is *removed* from his childhood and is *forced* to move forward into the adulthood and become, for example, a warrior in his tribe.

-The **Border** or **Limen** is characterised by the presence of *ambiguity* within the individual. Here, an ample range of possibilities is given to the individual in order to favour

⁴⁶ Turner, V. Simbolismo y Ritual. Lima: Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Peru. 1973. Introduction.

⁴⁷ Turner, V. Op.Cit. Introduction

the development of new concepts and ideas. *Reflection* has a fundamental importance at this stage. It is through reflection that the individual arrives to profound changes in his way of seeing and dealing with life.

-The **Integration** through which the individual integrates into a *new state* after the assimilation of the past experiences. Turner observed that after the correspondent rituals, boys after *turning into* man start their lives all over now feeling and living as grown-ups.

1.5 The Importance of Symbols

Turner also recognises the existence of certain symbols. The **Symbol**, would be the *minimum unit of the ritual that preserves the inner characteristics of the proper ritual*. Following the definition given by the Concise Oxford dictionary, a symbol corresponds to *a natural standardisation, representation or evocation of another form that possesses certain analogous characteristics, by means of real association or by means of association of thought.*⁴⁸ Some symbols that have been observed correspond to physical objects, activities, relations, gestures as well as the proper space of the ritual situation.

He points out that the actual comprehension of the “religious language” of certain community relies on *our* capacity to understand and decode *their* symbols. These symbols cannot be alienated from the context in which they are present. Their relation to the context is the only media through which their multiple meanings can be decoded. As symbols are an essential part of the social process carried out by the particular society, a de-contextualised symbol loses most, if not all of its value. Turner states that symbols unify in

just one entity the two basic tendencies of human beings; the animal which pursues corporal impulses, and the norm or ideal.

Following Turner, each ritual has its **Main or Dominant Symbol**⁴⁹. Besides having a significant role in the achievement of a specific purpose, it possesses a value that is considered a goal in itself. (Turner's study centres its attention on a specific ritual form proper of the Ndembu tribe that belongs to north Rhodesia, whose dominant symbol corresponds to a tree called "the milk tree").

He also states the fact that generally, there are some serious contradictions between the interpretations given by the informants, mere observers of the ritual, and the actual behaviour of those who are directly involved in the ritual practice.

1.6. Signs and Symbols

Some anthropologists argue that symbols, which are not comprehended, must not be considered, because the importance of a sign lies on its inner capacity to indicate something. If they do not indicate anything for those involved in the ritual, then the symbol is invalid. In order to avoid any confusion respect the validity of symbols, distinctions must be made between the concepts of "sign" and "symbol".

⁴⁸ Turner, V. Op.Cit. Pp 15

⁴⁹ Op. Cit. Pp 16.

Carl Jung postulates that a **Sign** is an *analogous expression of something which is known*, whereas a **Symbol** always corresponds to *the better expression of a fact which is relatively unknown but which is recognised and accepted as existent*.⁵⁰

If one attempts to interpret and understand the symbols of a particular ritual, it is necessary to place that ritual within the significant context. Then, to describe the structure and properties of the actual context. The fact that we cannot decode a particular symbol does not imply that this should be considered as invalid for the ritual purposes.

Ritual symbols, according to Turner, have three main properties⁵¹:

-Condensation: lots of things and actions may be represented in just one unique arrangement.

-Unification of one or more Significant: those dissimilar meanings are interconnected by their common or analogous characteristics, either by association of ideas or by association of properties.

-Polarisation of Meaning: this property has two very distinguishable poles. On the one hand, there are social and moral components: principles of social organisation, norms and values proper of the relations that are held between the individuals of a community. This pole is called the Ideological pole. On the other hand, the Sensitive pole, we find meanings proper of natural processes and phenomena. These meanings are closely related with the exterior form of the symbol.

⁵⁰ Turner, V. Op.Cit. Pp. 23

⁵¹ Op. Cit. Pp. 25.

In the Sensitive pole we find all those meanings that awake one's feelings and desires. In the Ideological pole we find all the norms and values that control and guide people's behaviour within a social group.

Autonomous and Cultural rituals recognise the presence of powerful spirits within material objects. These elements play an essential role in the celebration of the ritual itself. The worshipping of material objects is recognised by some scholars as the lower level of religious evolution and it receives the name of **fetishism**⁵², where the object itself corresponds to the actual **fetish**.

1.7 Fetishism

Fetishism is usually matched to ancient tribes from central Africa. They are characterised by the habitual use of amulets, idols and talismans in their rites. These objects are said to be containers of some deities. One can also find this type of containers among our occidental culture, for instance, the chalice symbolise for the Christian culture the container of the figure of Jesus Christ.

Fetishism is viewed here as the corner stone for a new category called the **new cult**. Despite of having dissimilar drives with the **old cult**, the main characteristics are still shared between them. Those characteristics are the ones that allow making reference to cults properly when one talks of new cult.

⁵² Monitor Encyclopaedia. Op.Cit Pp. 2632.

The new cult would be new not only because it actually belongs to the XX century, as opposed to the old ones that have existed since the beginning of times, but also because its drives differ from those of the old cult. Within this new cult one can find an ample variety of particular objects that arouse necessity of worshipping among people.

1.8. Old Cults and New Cults

Considering the two-dimensionality of rituals; the one of being either Autonomous or Cultural, one can draw a rough division among cults based on: 1) their inclination, 2) reason for their appearance and 3) its final goal.

At the beginning two types of cults would be recognised: the old cult and the new cult.

The old cult has a theological nature. Its principal character corresponds to the actual deity or supernatural force. It would include rituals of the cultural type directed to the correspondent deity. These rituals must fulfil 1) the reason for its appearance: the quest for reasons and explanations for the mysteries of life, natural questions of the type, what is the purpose of life? And 2) their goal: the achievement of answers for those questions.

The new cult has a humanistic nature. It arises from the human need of reinventing and reaffirming oneself constantly. Its final goal is the establishment of man as a unique individual. He would be inserted in a society by his own will but a difference can still be

2. NEW CULTS: CULTS TO LITERATURE AND CINEMA.

*“The word cult comes from the French **culte**, and is rooted in the Latin **cultus**, which means, “care” and “adoration”. That idea comes from the Latin **cultus** – the past participle of **colere**, which means, “to cultivate”. The word was used in the sense of “to worship or give reference to a deity”.⁵³*

In the previous section a very rough distinction between cults was proposed. This distinction rests upon their inner characteristics such as reasons for their emergence, final goal as well as their nature. Now, the focus should be centred on the proposed category of *new cults* and their characteristics.

This type of worshipping arises from the inner need of every human being possesses for demonstrating his individuality and uniqueness to the rest of the world. It denotes a humanistic nature stronger than the theological one. Here, man instead of deity would give the centre; man as such with no regards of the context he is immersed or its requirements, such as moral duties towards society, etc. His uniqueness would be the only remainder until the end of his days.

This new cult emerged just for a few people, as the idea is to remain unique that was the way it supposed to be. Although, as time went by it would be betrayed by its own creators,

“The trick of the stand-up comic and the syndicated columnist is to integrate himself with an audience by grovelling in his own weaknesses

⁵³ Notes from Internet. Definitions: Religions, Cults, Sects, Alternative Religious Movements (...) Pp.1.

*and misfortunes, real and fabricated, while withholding all the evidence of his manipulative personality”.*⁵⁴

At the beginning everything was in order. Just some people knew about of the existence of an element, a book, a movie, or a disc that possessed all the necessary characteristics that make it essential for people’s lives. As Julio López Navarro states⁵⁵, there are some significant elements that if combined may give a rough perspective of what elements form, for instance, the cult to cinema. Those elements correspond to a certain narrative technique or a particular style, also the consideration that the author had for a determinate audience.

Until that moment everything was right, the secret was safe. However, the fact that man also has a social inheritance was left aside. At some point man started to comment about this discovery to formally demonstrate his exclusive taste, in doing it the secret was unravelled. Once *the initial cult was broken, all doors were open to a new kind of cult.*

First those elements that make music, cinema and literature seem similar to old cults must be explained.

As already suggested in the first section, all cults are basically composed by two elements: Creeds and Practices. A relation can be drawn due to the presence of these two elements within the framework of the new cult.

⁵⁴ Sarris, A. *Confessions of a Cultist: On the cinema*. New York, Simon and Schuster. 1970. pp. 12.

⁵⁵ López, J. *Películas de Culto*. Chile: Ediciones Pantalla Grande. 1998. Pp 11.

Creeds will correspond to the model given not only by the message transmitted by the particular work, either a book, a movie or disc, but also by the character within the novel or by the very author of the work. As Julio Lopez points out:

*“ Those filmmakers whose work abounds in titles of cult have gained a great deal of importance becoming themselves into worshipped deities by a public that is enthusiastic and erudite about artistic tendencies. The confirmation to this is given by the works of Ed Wood, Alejandro Jodorowski, David Lynch, Rainer Fassbinder and others that have widely enriched this type of film making ”.*⁵⁶

Practices will correspond to a series of exercises, which constitute the particular ritual. These rituals range from the mere repetition of parts of the movie, book or disc; sometimes mute, sometimes out loud, to the attempt of becoming, always unsuccessfully though, the actual character of their adoration:

*“One of the most distinctive worshipping exercises in the night shows is the choral repetition of scripts, in which the intonation and voice inflexion of the performer are imitated with amazing similitude. When it comes to a musical or a horror movie, songs, dance and dissonant screams spice up the racket ”.*⁵⁷

Similarly to religions, they also have a wide range of myths that support their belief. These myths emerge from the work itself, from the legends that haunt the image of their creator being true or not, or from the hypothetical powers that the piece is supposed to have. Let's be reminded that John Lennon's murderer carried a copy of Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye.

⁵⁶ López, J. Op. Cit. Pp 16.

⁵⁷ López, J. Op. Cit. Pp 13.

New cults also present both types of adherence exposed before. The *Implicit* type, due to the process of identification that cultists develop towards the particular piece, and the *Explicit* one, due to the fact that these groups also have some *priests*. These correspond to cultists that are said to possess *all* the knowledge about the particular mythified element. Usually they themselves start off that rumour.

It is almost a law that those who are said to know the most about the objects of their adoration, end up by trying to embrace the life of their idols. They do whatever they can to be just like them; to live the way they would live, to eat what they would eat, to wear what they would wear. Their own life will begin to disappear while they pursue their idealised image. Of course this happens only in the most extreme cases. Toby Litt author of Deadkidsongs and contributor to Penguin UK making reference to this strange phenomena within literature says that,

“They identify so strongly often with the character or with the situation that it becomes a way of then to recognise who they are but that’s an exaggeration of the normal reading experience... with some books it becomes how people dress, how they talk.”⁵⁸

When it comes to the classification of the new cultism within the scope of “cults”, this type seems to fall into the category of those known as Rituals of Transition. The transition that takes place does not go from boyhood to adulthood; however this change would be produced at times. For instance, as one grows, one’s musical taste usually varies, certain type of music would be abandoned for being childish and another type considered to be mature would replace it.

⁵⁸ Litt, T. Cult Choice. www.penguin.co.uk. Pp 2.

The transition given by the new cult goes from the community to the individual. The modern individual is immersed in a society that seems to cast its members into a similar model. To avoid the moulding, he would search for different opportunities that may grant him a clean way out. Music, cinema and literature would provide that escape from the mould, although they couldn't remain pure for a long time.

The stages that characterise this type of rituals of transition can be also recognised within the framework of the new cult structure, which implies the following:

- Separation: from society's casting.
- Border: ambiguity during the search of the appropriate escape.
- Integration: to a particular cult, which will define and shape the personality of the individual as different from the rest. However, the similarity would remain, as there seem to be no human being who doesn't want to be unique.

As these rituals have their symbols, new cults also have their own, since they would correspond to an extension of old fetishism. The fundamental fetish and dominant symbol which arouses the worshipping would be the actual work of a particular author, a book, a movie or a particular record; all those elements that become fundamental objects and around which the entire adoration would take place.

Although fetishism is viewed as the lower and most primitive way of religious practice in history, one may say that today has become the corner stone of this new type of cult.

The strength that cults of the new type possess has been widely recognised by scholars, critics and even by common people around the world. Although not in an open way and some people learned to take advantage of this phenomenon.

One may wonder, what would happen if the object of worshipping all of a sudden disappears by some reason or another.

If that is the case there seems to be just two possibilities according to the actual power that the object possesses as a ritual fetish:

1) If the myth behind the fetish is not strong enough, the cult banishes through time and it is finally forgotten and replaced by a new one. This seems to be the case of those *fake new cults*, which are purely based on fashion.

2) But, if the myth behind the fetish were powerful enough, its actual disappearance would endow it with new and even stronger powers. When this happens the myth becomes a legend. And new cults grow stronger than ever. The cult had crossed an invisible barrier and becomes indestructible in time. Here is where *real new cults* emerged.

Nowadays, it is quite difficult to draw a line between *real* and *fake* cults. A difference of such nature deals with the fact that, although all types of cults correspond to *inventions* made by man in the search of something, results of this search would differ widely in the end.

Most people have taken advantage of the popularity of cults. They have left pure belief and faith aside in order to get some material benefits from it. Consumerism and

merchandising have increased around the image of the different cults and icons from this sub-world culture. What once was a cult became fashion.

Our world has difficulties in recognising a real cult from one created just for fashion, for pure profit. When this phenomena refers to the cinema industry Julio López tells us that,

*“The popular film is born as a work for collective entertainment and it is consciously conceived as a marketing product whose destiny is to obtain an immediate response from the massive audience. The cult film, in turn, cannot emerge or anticipate to it as such. Its status cannot be determined over the foundation of a particular audience, which is conditioned and limited by certain preferences, attitudes and specific socio-cultural schemata. It requires certain time to be praised as such”.*⁵⁹

The *real* new cult seeks the actual reaffirmation of the human being as such, an individual with unique characteristics. The *fake* new cult just seeks profit from those who mistakenly believe that it is a real one. The term *new cult* is used here to simply denote those cults that emerged in the XX century and that possess a humanistic inclination instead of a theological one. So, cults to music, cinema and literature of any type would be grouped together.

Until this moment there seems to be no clear definition for what this type of cults actually implies. When it comes to the cinema spectrum, scholars argue about the idea that cult cinema cannot or does not constitute a complete, separated genre:

“A genre requires of a group of films that share a similar code of meaning and convention that are distinguishable from their relation with other similar films. This kind of film in turn, has thematic characteristics that are dissimilar and it looks down to genre in the literal sense

⁵⁹ López, J. Op. Cit. Pp 12.

Precisely one of the most striking characteristics of the cult film is the difficulty which presents of being classified by a particular genre".⁶⁰

When it comes to the literary spectrum there are those who claim the contrary. Thomas Whissen author of "Classic Cult Fiction: A Companion to Popular Cult Literature" argues that cult literature "... *is a distinct genre that can influence and change individuals and Western society.*" He also distinguishes some cultural elements within it, such as "*romanticism, democratic idealism, myth-dream, opportunity and truth*" an psychological components like "*idealisation, alienation, ego-reinforcement, suffering and vulnerability*". He gives to the reader a crucial status just like the one that the audience has with the film or the listener with the record, the one that "*readers must feel that the book speaks for them*".⁶¹

On the other hand, Toby Litt defines cult books as *books that are overrated*. He is clearly aware of the strange phenomena that cult books produce over the enthusiastic reader. *they are books that take over people's lives; they invest too much in them that there's a feed back loop going on and they start to see that book in their own lives*. He also possesses the idea that a cult book requires certain time to acquire the category of cult book,

*"These are books that have survived and gone through quite tough times in order to survive. A cult book needed to have been out of print at some point for at least 10 years, people now describe books as 'cult' on publication."*⁶²

The difficulty in clearly defining the term *cult literature* lies in its obscure nature, in the fact that it is born and lives "underground" and that its appearance is not immediate.

⁶⁰ López, J. Op. Cit. Pp 14.

⁶¹ Conway, Ch. U.S Library Journal, 1992 April 1. Pp 120.

⁶² Litt, T. Cult Choice. www.penguin.co.uk. Pp 1.

López is also aware of ‘a time requirement’ for the emergence of a cult piece. Talking about cult movies he states,

*“ Cult films rarely enjoy of immediate popularity, even more, it passes unnoticed at the time of the premier and later on is worshipped by the same audience who rejected it ”.*⁶³

New cults are created from the darkness and mystery that surrounds the myth. They are objects of adoration of a specific public that would not permit any “phoney” amateur within their lines. The cultic nature is serious although it looks a bit over the line, specially when one sees those people that do not seem to have a life of their own outside the cultic practices.

*“ I stopped lowering my head at the epithet “cultist” as soon as I realised of the quasi-religious connotation of the term was somewhat justified by those of us who loved movies beyond all reason ”.*⁶⁴

There is a difficulty that lies underneath the term cult in the modern world due to the eclectic variety of works that this term covers. From classics to moderns ones, varying from “Pride and Prejudice” to “On the Road” in the case of literature, or from “Casablanca” to “Star Wars”, in the cinema’s case. In order to clarify this quest, a starting point for all this ‘movement’⁶⁵ should be proposed. There is some tendency to take us back to the late 50’s and early 60’s, right before the boom of the Beat Generation and covering its entire acme.

As this new cult seeks for the reaffirmation of the human being as such, there are many points within the history that could be very well associated to the appearance of the

⁶³ Lopez, J. Op. Cit. Pp 12.

⁶⁴ Sarris, A. Op. Cit. Pp 13.

new cultism. Revolutions of any kind are said to possess that quality of looking for man's rights, for man's wishes and desires. The French Revolution for instance, or The Bolshevik Revolution, perhaps, the United States revolution.

When it comes to the emergence of the new cultism, one may say that there is one revolution that settles the limits for this particular movement. That would be the one that took place at the end of the 50's decade and that, later on, after many changes, gave rise to the Hippie Movement.

The concepts of new cult, cult literature and revolution suggest different ideas to one's mind. However, for most people thinking of Gregory Corso, Jack Kerouak or Allen Ginsberg is inevitable. They seem to be the cult writers by excellence. The Beats have a special importance within the spectrum of cult literature. As they were immersed in an environment of confusion and deception due to many unpleasant circumstances, such as an ill administration, an excess of ambition, and a great confusion surrounding the years after World War II, their statement acquired a special value.

When Toby Litt was asked about Kerouac's On the Road his statement was clear,

*"I believe that is overvalued... because it has that strength. It has that energy that seems to reflect America, and the prose and the rhythms that are self-consciously borrowed from that tradition, and that's where the power comes from. It is one of those books that I read quite late and I felt that I should have read earlier."*⁶⁶

⁶⁵ The best way for making reference to this phenomenon is assuming its nature of social movement.

⁶⁶ Litt. T. Op. Cit. Pp 1.

After World War II, most people decided to start over, as clean as they could. One of the answers at that time rested on the arms of some overseas creeds such as Zen Buddhism and many saw *the path* in the doctrine of doing things for the sake of it. But they also found some problems with that,

*“ I took the satirical view that we were poor not because we were pure, but pure because we were poor, and our integrity was directly proportional to our obscurity. I suppose we represented a new breed of film critic ”.*⁶⁷

Those were real hard times. But some people decided to raise their voices and make a new statement of how life should be. The things they said and the way they said them make those writers become cult icons until today. Through this via the Beat Generation made its appearance in history.

But there were others who had raised their voices before, although not under the obscurity that the underground scene gave them. Some of them were close to the very source of the problem that affected them. They were not outsiders as the Beats or the Hips were, they were middle-class people, war veterans who decided to show the world how the ruling system had ruined their lives. Among them, there was one who stood higher than the rest. The readers mythified him and his name became one of the stronger legends still alive, his name was J.D Salinger.

⁶⁷ Sarris, A Op. Cit. Pp 11.

3. CULT LITERATURE AND SALINGER'S PHENOMENON

"Cult (often before a noun) great devotion, often regarded as a fad, to a person, idea, or thing, or a group showing such devotion." (The New Penguin English Dictionary)

On January 1, 1919 Jerome David Salinger was born in the nursery of a hospital in New York. Being half-Jewish and half-Irish, his life was divided into two cultures. He has been the centre of interest for many people who have read his works or hear about his life. One cannot stop wondering about what is it that this man possesses that has fascinated so many lives. There are many interesting elements about his life and work besides the fact that he wrote his well-known novel The Catcher in the Rye. This particular character known by everyone as J.D has become one of the most worshipped authors of the last decades. It wouldn't be a sin to say that J.D is a striking figure within the world of the new cultism.

Always interested in literature, after a brief experience in a military school, he went to Eastern Europe with his father. He was there to learn about the ham and cheese business, but he learned a bit more than just that. Due to his acquired knowledge of German and Polish, he could get in touch with some important writers of that time. He became deeply attracted German poetry and Rilke played an essential part in his life; later on this will also happen to one of his characters.

During his brief transition through college he started to write professionally. Some of his stories were sold to different papers and magazines like *Cosmopolitan* or *Good*

Housekeeping. As time went by his talent began to be recognised by some serious publications *Story*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Esquire*, even the *New Yorker*, where he would work until his decision for complete mutism and total seclusion from the world around him.

His prolific writing career was interrupted for a couple of years when he was forced, as many others, to join the army and go fight for the United States during World War II. His knowledge of German proved to be very handy at that time, especially when he had to interrogate some war prisoners. Some people might say that at this point poetry was disappearing from his lips, nevertheless, they were wrong. Before his return to civilian life, he already had in mind some ideas for the work that would change his existence completely. Some hints to this were given, for instance in *A Slight Rebellion off Madison* and later in *I'm Crazy*, Holden Caulfield would make his appearance very soon.

His ability as storyteller would be widely recognised in 1948 with the publication of *A Perfect Day for Bananafish*. In this story, his main character Seymour Glass provided certain hints about the horror of war and its consequences for people. He represented those who are recognised as different, either physically or spiritually by the rest of the world and, that did not feel comfortable with that. He also represents to those who were forced to change by some outside force, like for instance war. The theme of 'war' should be present almost all along his work. The attention given to this subject may be seen, for instance in *For Esme-with Love and Squalor*.

The relationship that Jerome established with Seymour and his entire fictional family will be crucial for the development of the following works. A great deal of his war experiences was portrayed in some later stories.

His way of dealing with war disasters and its effects over society and over the individual itself was one of the elements that enhanced the creation of his myth. At some point certain transformation took place. From a simple Jerome into a complex Salinger, from a storyteller to the salient cult figure that he is nowadays. After 'Bananafish' became popular, along with other short stories like The Laughing Man he was ready to look for something really important.

Almost imperceptibly he dealt with the enormous importance war had over thousands and thousands of people. This somehow prepared him for the final assault, always directed against the superficiality proper of society of those times. He went back in time and rescue characters from previous stories, which were mixed with complete new elements. It was a hard work but, 1952, and the piece that would place his name in history as *cult-icon* was ready to see the light. Then, one of the most important objects of modern adoration, The Catcher in the Rye appeared in scene.

The success of the only novel that Jerome ever wrote was not immediate, as one mistakenly might think. A couple of years after its publication, the narration of two days in the life of the young non-conformist Holden Caulfield, would obtain a warm welcome from United States critics. But, the success of the novel was given basically by the young readers.

Holden's diction and manners captivated 50's audience. In his discourse one could see what was the situation at that time. The after-war generation had something to say and Holden would and also could speak for them. Readers started to closely relate to this character. They felt that this young man felt as they felt. Here, other of Salinger's achievements can clearly be seen, in Litt's words,

*"There is a quality I can only describe as 'aliveness' to it – that is the most difficult thing to write into a book because it's not a technical thing. It really has to live."*⁶⁸

Feelings against war and the ruling system became more and more generalised; Salinger's work was one of the most important contributions to this phenomenon. His career gave him success in a very short term, and he could not notice that he was at the verge of a very strange situation. He and Holden were just about to become mythical characters in literary history.

For some people Salinger's cult started right after the publication of The Catcher in the Rye. They usually take into consideration the endless queues in front of bookstores that people used to make just to get a copy of "The Catcher". The audience saw Salinger as its 'spokesman' and they started to eagerly search for his former stories in the New Yorker. A compilation of his already published short stories called Nine Stories was released.

At this point, it is necessary to draw a new distinction between the product of massive success and the actual cultism. Cult phenomenon requires much more than high sale-rates to exist. The success that Salinger had at the beginning corresponds to what is

⁶⁸ Litt, T. Op. Cit. Pp 3.

commonly known as *best seller*. The moment for his mythification has not arrived yet. This was just part of the incubation process.

The fact that The Catcher in the Rye fell into the category of best seller and book-of-the-month choice at that time didn't immediately transform Salinger or his characters into cult figures.

A **Best Seller**⁶⁹, as defined by the dictionary, only deals with *a book or a record that has sold in large numbers*, it is just a matter of sales, and it doesn't necessarily imply the emergence of a cult as such around it. For the emergence of a cult a *myth* about someone or something must exist. It is the author the one that can be mythified, or his main characters. Some necessary features proper of a cult have already been explained in the previous sections. Among them one may see the importance that the presence the corresponding myth or series of it has for the development of a cult. It should be stated that *without the existence of a myth there is no cult*.

Many reasons turned J.D into a best seller, for instance the fact that he had been a non-rewarded talented writer since the beginning of his career. The quality of his writing style, as well as his ability to portray doubts, and feelings of despair proper of the 50's society finally gave him some recognition. Thanks to 'The Catcher' he could enjoy certain degree of fame; the simplicity of his language made his approach familiar to almost everybody. Behind the sale rates, Salinger was one of those who wanted to purify society.

⁶⁹ Funk & Wagnals. Op. Cit. Pp 60.

He had realised about people's 'phoniness' at that time. He was aware of the role that individuality played among an extremely 'patterned' society.

"Uniqueness" was a weird quality at those times, although nowadays there seems to be no apparent difference. Some people tried to remain unique despite the already imposed standards. Individuals seemed obliged to behave for pleasing the others⁷⁰. Nevertheless, most people were not happy with this 'way of living'. Society needed changes and the more outrageous of its members decided to write, they would tell the world the way they felt as clearly as they could. The ones that did not dare to say a word would sit down and read about those things that they couldn't said.

" I'm sick of just liking people. I wish to god I could meet somebody I could respect..."⁷¹

Salinger's characters have the merit of being part of those very few people that were still looking for something more than pure public recognition. Holden, Seymour and all the Glasses never bothered about their genius to be recognised as others expected it. Salinger as well as his characters is in the constant search for just one thing, a path leading to illumination. They wanted to go beyond social rules and material strings.

One of the problems was that Before-War generations were too rusty, too tired and too used to the fixed patterns to introduce any modifications. Changes could only be expected through the cohesion of young people's ideals,

⁷⁰ A quality that has not disappear even ion our days

⁷¹ Salinger, J.D. Franny. Little Brown and Company Edition. Boston. 1991. Pp.20.

*“ Elvis Presley, James Dean, the Beat writers and Salinger were the corner-stone of an horde of unsatisfied teenagers who decided to put an end to adult hegemony.”*⁷²

Thanks to The Catcher in the Rye Salinger’s phenomenon reached its higher point. It was the best seller in its purer expression. But, the best seller should die so the myth could emerge, and so it did.

In 1953 at the age of 34 and only after three years of the successful publication The Catcher in the Rye, Salinger being overwhelmed by fame and notoriety, decided to disappear from the public eye and so, he moved into an obtrusive cottage in Cornish, New Hampshire. In doing this, “J.D Salinger The Myth” emerged and started to grow.

In Salinger’s case almost all the necessary characteristics merged together to form one strong myth. The acquired fame with his character Holden Caulfield was very important for this process but, the legend made its appearance when he decided to locked the doors and remained inside his home. Jerome, one of the strongest detractors of the Beat Movement due to its “misfit” nature, ended up as one of the finest outsiders.

*“The silence of the writer is not the same as the silence of God, but there’s something analogous: an awe-inspiring creator, someone we believe have some answers of some kind, refusing to respond to us, hiding hid face, withholding his creation. The problem, the rare phenomenon of the unavailable, invisible, indifferent writer (...) addresses the problem of the apparent silent indifference of God to the hell of human suffering.”*⁷³

⁷² Maqueira E. El Cazador Cazado: Salinger un Mito viviente. Pp 29.

⁷³ Rosenbaum, Ron. The Man in the Glass House. EBSCO HOST. Pp 1.

It is due to this fact that his self-imposed exile from public life gave rise to all types of speculations. A really abundant number of stories and rumours of many types appear around his image.

His interest in Western civilisation led him years before success; to begin with instruction in the Zen doctrine and the influence of this 'philosophy of life' can be seen in most of his narrative works, for instance Teddy. One of most intricate characters, Seymour Glass seems to be created under a Zen overdose. Certain people have tried to explain his seclusion in terms of the alternative that Zen presents as a path for the escape of material needs of different type,

*"Buddhism is the PATH OF ESCAPE for those seeking here and now the permanent end of all anguish. And what is exactly anguish? Anguish is birth, suffering, pain, sorrow, sickness, disease, old age, decay, death, grief, despair, poverty, evil, lamentations, woe, tribulations, misfortune, war... and is what is unstable and uncontrollable. Buddhism d for those who have come to see that what has been CREATED is UNPERMANET, and that whatever is impermanent is inherently ILL. No permanent bliss or happiness is to be found in what is impermanent, only pain and peril. "*⁷⁴

His ascetic life has also attracted the attention of many of his followers. More and more rumours spread out since he began his new kind of life. One great source of money has been the one of writing books about his secluded life. Even one of his wives did it; his daughter also took a chance. Thanks to this intrusion some of his "rituals" could be known. His life was unravelled and some of his customs were really bizarre. After entering in the cottage, any information about his life would be priceless for his followers,

" Spoke to his characters as if they were alive, drank his urine and had certain relationship with the Scientology church ".⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Fundamental Buddhism Explained Summary www.fundamentalbuddhism.com. Pp 2.

⁷⁵ Maqueira, E. Op. Cit. Pp 30.

Inside his house and completely detached from the outside situation he continued his writing. Now, his attention was centred on the first character that gave him some recognition, Seymour Glass and his peculiar family.

During his seclusion, he devoted his time entirely to make a further development of his Glasses characters. Raise High the Roof Beam Carpenters, the introduction to Seymour's life called Seymour: an Introduction and some other insights about his person given in Franny and Zooey. After his last work on Seymour's life, dated 1965 and named Hampworth 16, 1924, silence became complete.

In a period of 25 years, from 1940 to 1965, he published a total of 35 short stories. Oddly enough, his proficiency was also a source for the invention of new stories around his image. This time his writing skills were questioned,

*"I was explained the other day that J.D Salinger is really a panel of 8 men, that convened once a month for five years, creating Holden Caulfield, the Glasses (...) I didn't believe until I noticed in 'Raise High', the small inscription on the inside from cover that read, 'we are really 8 men'."*⁷⁶

Despite the complete mutism maintained for over 30 years, some of the bravest fans of his work had found different ways for the establishment of their desired communication with him. Some people took advantage of the support he gave to the youngsters from the local high schools and one interview meant for a school paper was widely published.

⁷⁶ Who the hell is J.D Salinger? JDS FAQ A Preliminary Collection of Material.
<http://memebbers.tripod.com/SundeepDougal/faq.html>. Pp 4.

After a few years of silence J.D decides to make a statement in the New York Times about a "terrible invasion of my privacy"⁷⁷. " I like to write, I love to write. But I write just for myself and my own pleasure "⁷⁸ As time went by the seclusion grew even stronger. After he prohibited the use of his picture on any cover of his books, he devoted most of his time to chase those who published via Internet any fragments of his works without permission.

Many of the elements exposed before may seem enough for the creation of such a strong myth; an hermit writer living in its "cave" packed with NO TRESPASSING signs for more than 40 years, and surrounded by a *Wall of Silence* built up by his own hands. The reason for the complete mythification of his person and his work was about to come.

On December 1980 and Michael Chapman, bare hands, cold feet and with an endless number of bullets decided to "put the last nail into the 60's coffin"⁷⁹. He would put an end to John Lennon's life. He decided to kill a celebrity, one cult figure that was mostly appreciated by the public. Lennon, one of most appreciated legends of all times.

The affair took an unsuspected turn; after searching Chapman, police found with him a paperback copy the Catcher in the Rye. Salinger and his work were on scene again. But this time, his 25-year career of storyteller and novelist was not the real source of his importance.

⁷⁷ Jerome David Salinger; a Chronology. Op. Cit. Pp 6.

⁷⁸ Jerome David Salinger (1919-) <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/salinger.htm> Pp. 2.

⁷⁹ Maqueira, E. Op. Cit. Pp 28.

Attention was drawn over The Catcher in the Rye all over again due to this unusual fact. All types of speculations grew again around Salinger's figure. People were concerned about the 'danger' that books implicated especially those books that were considered to be *symbolic* to some people. That concern is alive even today,

*"Are you saying that cult books are dangerous? Definitely. (...) there is a sense in which that comes from real life, as in Mark Chapman's obsession with the Catcher in the Rye when he shot Lennon."*⁸⁰

It is that 'aliveness' that Litt told us the one that made 'The Catcher' to be fundamental in Chapman's case, it is quite possible that he was one of those who felt the book to be addressed to them and to their problems, but that was not all. Controversy followed this book from the beginning of this publication, at that time it was banned from school libraries because some people considered it a heresy that attempted against the traditional American values. Someone might have thought that by doing this the book would be forgotten and his author buried alive, that someone was terribly mistaken because Chapman's case gave an entire new mythology to be added to Salinger's legend.

Salinger's cult grew even bigger and settled its roots into literature history. His figure would be object of the adoration for more and more people. Now, his fame travelled all over the world and everybody wanted to read the man who inspired Lennon's murderer.

Fans' devotion towards Salinger is *the* element that maintains the legend still alive. Nowadays, people organise tours around his home. There are competitions for getting his picture, while one can see the only mailbox which have no name on it. The love and

⁸⁰ Litt, T. Op. Cit. Pp 1.

devotion that people feel for this writer seems to be endless. Salinger gave up fame and fortune while he was looking for something that only his own words can explain and perhaps one would never understand.

"A writer's feelings of anonymity – obscurity are the second most valuable property on loan to him." Salinger.⁸¹

The last thing one heard about Salinger was in 1997, when media announced that his short story Hampworth 16, 1924 was soon to be released in the market. Fans are still waiting for this to happen.

⁸¹ J.D Salinger. Wikipedia. Pp 1.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the aims of this research was the establishment of a relation between religious cults and those modern cults to music, cinema and literature, which, at first sight may seem to share no common elements with the former ones. In first section some insights about the difference between religions and cults were given to carry out this process.

In the second section, two types of cults were formerly recognised, Old and New. They would differ in their goals and reasons for their existence. Within the New cults, two other types were distinguished: Fake and Real. Their difference lies in the actual purpose of their appearance, either pure search or pure profit. Also in this section, some approaches were given to what would actually be cult literature from the cinema's perspective, finally, to arrive to the importance that these types of cults have within the modern world.

In the third and last section, one of the most important icons within cult literature J.D Salinger was presented. Some aspects of his life were described and a number of the most important myths around his image were given. In trying to exemplify what cult literature means for those that cultivate it, the person and work of J.D give most of the necessary information for the achievement of this purpose. As usual his eclectic personality leaves the door open for a lot more of research about him and his work.

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CONCLUSION

Finally, we have to say that at the beginning of this seminar Salinger's works seemed to be rather simple in their form and content to us: a set of short stories and just one novel. All of them were common stories, without a vast development, including few characters and with a narrative easy to follow.

But after the introduction of new subjects like, for instance, elements taken from the Eastern culture such as the Zen Buddhism, a historical background of the time the publication of Salinger's work, biographical elements of the author and an analysis of the author's writing technique, and all of this applied to the exhaustive analysis and discussion of every story, we came to realise that the author presents us characters that seem to be more than just ordinary human beings; instead, Salinger gave us a description of the complexity of human behaviour and thinking, a narrative full of symbolism in which all the stories, as well as the characters, are interrelated. In Salinger's work even the smallest element, after the analysis, come to be a portrait of our reality.