Socialization, Sexuality, and Innocence in *The Catcher in the Rye*

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HELENIUS, EERO: Socialization, Sexuality, and Innocence in *The Catcher in the Rye*

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J.D. Salingerin 1951 julkaistu romaani *The Catcher in the Rye* (suom. *Sieppari ruispellossa*) on yksi kaikkien aikojen myydyimpiä kirjoja. Kirjassa sen päähenkilö, 16-vuotias Holden Caulfield, kertoo lukijoilleen siitä, mitä hänelle tapahtuu hänen paettuaan eräästä yksityiskoulusta viikonlopuksi New Yorkiin kun hänet on erotettu koulusta huonon koulumenestyksen vuoksi.

Vuonna 1950 julkaistiin sosiologi David Riesmanin teos *The Lonely Crowd* (suom. *Yksinäinen väkijoukko*). Kirjassa Riesman esittelee kolme historiallista luonnetyyppiä: perinneohjautuvan, sisältäohjautuvan, sekä ulkoaohjautuvan tyypin. Lisäksi hän listaa kolme niin sanottua universaalia luonnetyyppiä: mukautuneen, itsenäisen, sekä anomisen luonnetyypin.

Tutkielmassa käydään läpi Riesmanin kaikki kuusi luonnetyyppiä sekä niihin liittyviä muita teorioita ja todetaan, että luonnetyypeistä kaikki ovat selkeästi edustettuina Salingerin romaanissa. Tämä osoittaa osaltaan, että Salingerin ja Riesmanin teokset ovat paitsi otollisia kuvia oman aikansa yhteiskunnasta, niin myös sen, että Riesmanin teoriat soveltuvat paitsi sosiologiseen niin myös kirjallisuustieteelliseen tutkimukseen.

Tutkielmassa pohditaan sekä kirjan päähenkilön että sen tiettyjen sivuhenkilöiden seksuaalisuutta ja erityisesti seksuaalista mukautumista Riesmanin teorioita hyödyntäen. Tutkielmassa käsitellään lisäksi Holdenin sekä hänen pikkusiskonsa Phoeben suhdetta, jonka jotkut kriitikot ovat nähneet seksuaalisesti värittyneenä, ja todetaan, että kirjassa oleva todistusaineisto ei tue tätä väitettä. Lisäksi tutkielmassa käsitellään Holdenin suhdetta auktoriteetteihin, erityisesti vanhempiin sekä opettajiin, sekä joukkotiedotusvälineisiin, erityisesti elokuviin ja näytelmiin. Tässä osiossa käytetään hyväksi erityisesti Riesmanin historiallisia luonnetyyppejä ja todetaan, että teoksessa paljastetaan erityisesti ulkoaohjautuvan luonnetyypin sisältä löytyviä etuoikeutettuja käyttäytymisen muotoja.

Tutkielman keskeisimpiä toteamuksia on, että vaikka Holdenia pidetään yleisesti eräänlaisena kapinallisuuden perikuvana, hänen luonteessaan ja toimintatavoissaan on puolia, jotka ovat ristiriidassa tämän näkemyksen kanssa. Vaikka Holden ilmaisee turhautumisensa tiettyjä yhteiskunnan pölyttyneitä rakenteita kohtaan, hän varjelee vanhempiensa tunteita sekä käyttäytyy kunnioittavasti opettajiaan kohtaan. Holden ei yritä aktiivisesti muuttaa yhteiskuntaa, mikä on keskeinen osa yhteiskunnallista kapinaa, vaan haluaa sen sijaan paeta yhteiskunnasta kokonaan. Täten Holdenin kapina on korkeintaan eräänlaista eksistentiaalista kapinaa. Lopuksi tutkielmassa käsitellään Holdenin suhdetta elokuviin sekä muihin joukkotiedotusvälineisiin ja todetaan niiden merkitys ulkoaohjautuvan luonnetyypin muovaamisessa sekä käsitellään lyhesti romaanin ironista roolia juuri sellaisena populaarikulttuurin ilmenemismuotona, jota kirjan päähenkilö vastustaa.

Avainsanat: *The Catcher in the Rye*, *Sieppari ruispellossa*, J.D. Salinger, *The Lonely Crowd*, David Riesman, viattomuus, sosialisaatio, seksuaalisuus, kapinointi, konformiteetti

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1. Introduction

> "I swear to God, if I were a piano player or an actor or something and all those dopes thought I was terrific, I'd hate it. I wouldn't even want them to clap for me. People always clap for the wrong things. If I were a piano player, I'd play it in the goddam closet." —Holden Caulfield (Salinger 1991, 84)

In 1951, Little, Brown and Company published a little book called *The Catcher in the Rye*. It tells the heady tale of a sixteen-year-old boy called Holden Caulfield, recently expelled from an esteemed college preparatory school called Pencey Prep in Agerstown, Pennsylvania. In it, Holden goes to meet an old history teacher of his even though he dislikes the teacher for being so old, asks a roommate he sort of hates about joining a Catholic monastery, gets into a fistfight with another roommate he also sort of hates, and finally decides to forgo telling his parents about his expulsion so as not to ruin their Christmas vacation and, instead, uses the money he gets from selling his typewriter to take the train to New York City. In the city, Holden checks into a hotel, solicits the services of a prostitute so as to practice sex for marriage, gets drubbed by the procurer of said prostitute after having underpaid for the sex he ended up not even having, goes on a strife-ridden date with an old flame, nearly gets sexually assaulted by his befuddled former English teacher, de-defaces a "Fuck you" written on a school wall to protect innocent children from such debauchery, and cries in the falling rain while watching his little sister ride a carousel while trying to reach for a golden ring and failing in the attempt.

It is, in other words, an eventful adventure. It is also one its readers have found easy to identify with: millions upon millions of copies have been sold worldwide, hundreds of thousands of copies continue to be sold every year[1]. *Catcher* also enjoys continuing popularity among American high school English teachers who assign the book to their adolescent students. It is a book so bewitching that it inspired Mark David Chapman to kill John Lennon in 1980 and probably influenced John Hinckley, Jr., who attempted to impress actress Jodie Foster by attempting to assassinate president Ronald Reagan a year later[2] (Whitfield 1997, 571–572). Despite its relative brevity (the edition I have weighs in at a little over 200 pages), in addition to (and partly due to) its status as a perennial favorite, *Catcher* has been subjected to a staggering amount of critical inquiry: the extent of the amount of Salinger criticism produced in the late 50s and the 60s was such that it even inspired *The Nation* journalist George Steiner to refer to it collectively (and mockingly) as "The Salinger Industry" (Graham 2007, 48). The book, it seems, is an almost inexhaustible source of food for thought for both scholars and regular readers alike.

Even apart from its apparent potential for making men into murderers, *The Catcher in the Rye* has always attracted controversy. Immediately upon its release, it was immediately and decisively denounced for both its language and subject matter: Graham (2007, 38) quotes *Catholic World*, which vilified the book's "formidably excessive use of amateur swearing and coarse language," while the *Christian Science Monitor* described it "a nightmarish medley of loneliness, bravado and supineness … wholly repellent in its mingled vulgarity, naïveté, and sly perversion" (Silverberg 2008, 8). *Catcher* has been censored and banned too often to keep count (Whitfield 1997, 578) and several high school teachers have even been fired for having had the

[1] Yardley (2004) estimates 250,000 copies a year and "probably way over" 10 million copies sold, but other sources put the number of total copies sold at approximately 65 million. The death of the author, combined with a documentary about his life and the persistent rumors about possible posthumous releases have pushed *Catcher* back on the top of the best-seller list, so the actual figures are probably even higher.

[2] Hinckley is reported to have said "if you want my defense all you have to do is read *Catcher in the Rye*" (Whitfield 1997, 573).

audacity to assign it as reading material (Whitfield 1997, 575). It says something about the book that it remained on the list of most challenged books in the US up until as late as 2009, more than fifty years after it was published (ALA 2009).

If *The Catcher in the Rye* is mired in perpetual controversy, the same was certainly true for the author of the book — perhaps even more so. Following the confounding success of *Catcher* — the only novel he ever published — Jerome David Salinger, the elusive writer who penned Holden's tale, withdrew to a secluded farmhouse in Cornish, New Hampshire[3]. After publishing a smattering of short stories, he reportedly experimented with various religions and other mystical enthusiasms, drank his own urine, and liked to spend his time sitting in that most marvelous of Dr. Wilhelm Reich's inventions, the Orgone Accumulator, an apparatus that purportedly harvested a "orgone energy" from thin air (McGrath 2010). His reappearances in the public eye took place mostly by proxy and were largely driven by the desire to prevent people from making unauthorized biographies, film adaptations, and other derivatives of his work. Salinger's reclusion, the aura of mystique surrounding his persona, and the unabated rumors regarding a possible hoard of unpublished works doubtless ensured a steady level of interest in Salinger throughout the years — an interest that burgeoned anew in 2010 when Salinger died of natural causes at the age of 91, with hopes arising among fans and Salinger scholars that a fresh batch of stories from their literary idol might be published posthumously.

The number of confluences between the stories of Holden and his author is significant. Like Holden, Salinger came from a privileged background: he was born in 1919 to a relatively affluent Jewish kosher cheese merchant family, and in 1934, at the age of 15, his father Sol sent him to Valley Forge Military Academy, where it is said he begun writing. According to Hamilton (1988, 18), that same academy is the model for Pencey Preparatory School, the place where Holden's yuletide escapade begins. Hamilton (1988, 66) furthermore notes that in

[3] It is worth noting that Holden contemplates a retreat from society not entirely dissimilar to Salinger's on multiple occasions in *Catcher.*

"a letter to a friend, [Salinger] admits without equivocation that the boy-hero Holden Caulfield is a portrait of himself when young". Joyce Maynard (1998, 93), an author with whom Salinger had a romantic relationship when he was 53 and Maynard eighteen, reinforces the link between Salinger and Holden by arguing that "[t]he only person who might ever have played Holden Caulfield [in a play] would have been J. D. Salinger".

An additional striking and perhaps somewhat dejecting example of Salinger imbuing Holden with his own worldview (or possibly the other way around) was reported by Lacey Fosburgh (1974) for the *New York Times* in a rare interview he conducted by telephone with Salinger in 1974, by which point Salinger had already withdrawn from society to escape the (to him) insufferable aspects of fame. In the interview, Salinger — whose last published work, "Hapworth 16, 1924," appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1965 — tells Fosburgh that he is actively writing new material: "There is a marvelous peace in not publishing. It's peaceful. Still. Publishing is a terrible invasion of my privacy. I like to write. I love to write. But I write just for myself and my own pleasure" (Fosburgh 1974). Leonard (2010) relays an anecdote from Salinger's neighbor, who claims that Salinger "had told him he had written 15 unpublished novels" during his years of willful quasi-isolation from the society. Miller (1999), writing about letters Salinger sent to Maynard, offers further evidence on the fertility of Salinger's creative mind:

> If the fistful of Salinger letters that have emerged since 2010 impart any significant news, it is the constant confirmation by Salinger himself that he was indeed still writing during the decades of his seclusion and amassing a considerable body of work.

Whatever the number of novels Salinger produced during his years of reclusion, it seems safe to say that Salinger truly was playing the piano "in the goddam closet," as Holden emphatically states he would do were he a virtuoso pianist.

Despite the unquestionable efficacy of The Salinger Industry in dissecting Salinger's *tour de force*, there nonetheless remain aspects of *Catcher* that warrant more study. The aim of this thesis is to fill that void by focusing on the themes of social conformity, sexuality, and the main character's relentless drive to cling to the notion of childhood innocence as he struggles with precisely those themes, all the while standing on the cusp of adulthood, uncertain whether he can make the leap without falling in between the cracks. Throughout the study my focus will remain chiefly on the main character, but I will also discuss how other characters — both authority figures and non-authority figures — stand either as foils or parallels to Holden's ideals. I will also consider Holden's complex relationship with the mass media as a vehicle of influence in the lives of both Holden and his coevals. My analysis is buttressed by the sociological theories laid out by David Riesman in his seminal study *The Lonely Crowd*, a contemporary of *The Catcher in the Rye*. In particular, I will investigate how Riesman's historical and universal types can be fruitfully applied to the study of various characters and themes in the book.

Sex and sexuality are prominent and much-discussed themes in *Catcher.* Scenes with either implicit or explicit sexuality are behind much of the social outrage the novel caused for more than forty years after its publication and have been the subject of much critical scrutiny and understandably so; after all, adolescent sexuality is a theme that continues to be controversial yet absolutely central to the experience anyone on the verge of adulthood. In my study of the themes of adolescent sex, sexuality, and sexual conformity, I aim to demonstrate how all of Riesman's universal types are almost perfectly embodied in the novel as well as investigate Holden's complex relationship with sexuality while presenting strong evidence against the readings of previous critics on the subject.

Authority figures are likewise central to any discussion on social conformity: for adolescent in specific, they are perhaps the most important of those social entities that try to instill direction into the adolescents' life to ensure a successful socialization process. Therefore, in

this thesis, I discuss Holden's relationship with various authority figures in the novel and argue that contrary to the view of many casual and professional critics of the novel, Holden is not diametrically and unambiguously opposed to authority figures — in fact, in many cases, as we will see, the opposite is true. As with everything related to Holden, however, the ultimate truth is more complex and nuanced, and it is the heart of that truth I seek in this thesis.

Finally, I will once more set Holden against some of his compeers and the mass media and explore how different forms of conformity and non-conformity are manifested in the novel and how Holden's rebellion is of a very particular kind, rather than a monomaniacal force aimed at anything and everything, as it is often viewed. I will also argue that the novel exposes privileged and non-privileged forms of social conformity. Throughout the thesis, I will make use of Riesman's theories and terminology to both fortify my arguments and illustrate its applicability to studying *Catcher*. With that in mind, I will begin by laying out the theoretical framework for this work of sociological criticism on Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye:* David Riesman's influential sociological work *The Lonely Crowd* and the central concepts introduced in that book.

2. *The Lonely Crowd* and *The Catcher in the Rye*

> "[F]or me, the weight of the book is in the narrator's voice, the non-stop peculiarities of it, his personal, extremely discriminating attitude to his reader-listener, his asides about gasoline rainbows in street puddles, his philosophy or way of looking at cowhide suitcases and empty toothpaste cartons — in a word, his thoughts." —Salinger, in a letter to a filmmaker about the prospect of making *The Catcher in the Rye* into a movie (Itzkoff 2010).

The year 1950 saw the publication of *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, a seminal sociological study of American character by David Riesman, with contributions from sociologist Nathan Glazer and poet Reuel Denney. It became a surprise bestseller and one of the few works of sociology with sales exceeding 75,000 copies during the 1950s — a fact which, Haney (2008, 210) argues, "imbues its high sales figures with added significance" — and total sales of 1.4 million copies by the early twenty-first century (McGrath 2002), which makes it the best-selling book by a sociologist in American history.

Written in 1948–1949, while it is "inseparably linked … to the 1950s … [its] social science perspectives shaping [it] are … more representative of the 1930s and 1940s than of the 1950s", as Wrong (1992, 381–382) notes. Whitfield (1997, 586) reports on the affinity between *The Lonely Crowd* and *Catcher*, noting that it was such that Riesman even assigned *Catcher* to his students as a case study when teaching at Harvard University. Being a work that both continues to be relevant to this day as well as being inextricably linked to the time *The Catcher in the Rye* was released, it makes for a befitting source for contextualizing my study of the book (published in 1951 and written some years before that). In this section, I will briefly introduce Riesman's tradition-directed, inner-directed, and other-directed historical character types as well as his so-called "universal types" of adjustment, autonomy, and anomie. I will investigate how Riesman's theories have been received and interpreted by previous scholars and how some of the concepts in *The Lonely Crowd* have been applied in previous studies of *Catcher* and, in doing so, pave the way for my own interpretation of the book. I will fortify Riesman's con-

cepts with other scholars' theories of anomie and demonstrate the relevance that those concepts continue to have with regard to twenty-first century social phenomena.

The central and arguably the most influential contribution of *The Lonely Crowd* to the field of sociology is Riesman's explication of historical and universal types, both of which I shall briefly expound here. I will begin my discussion of Riesman's theories by presenting his so-called *historical types*; that is, the tradition-directed, inner-directed, and other-directed character types.

2.1. Historical character types

Riesman (1961, 8) defines a *tradition-directed* character as one "whose conformity is insured by their tendency to follow tradition". A tradition-directed person operates within the constraints of their culture both as a whole and as single individuals functioning as agents of influence. An example of a tradition-directed person might be a pious Jew whose behavior is regulated both by the Jewish religious discourse they inhabit and the actors within that discourse, such as other believers and the clergymen of that religion. Another good example of a tradition-directed person is a disciple of *bushido*, the way of the samurai life, known for its strict tenets of honor: according to Riesman (1961, 24), the primary emotion that keeps the tradition-directed person on course is the fear of being shamed, and for a samurai, there is no greater motivator than shame. Wrong (1992, 382) notes that Riesman considers the tradition-directed character type "a pre-modern forerunner" of the other two character types. As such, while certainly of lesser importance than the other two character types, we find that the tradition-directed character type is also represented in *The Catcher in the Rye* at least by Mr. Spencer, Holden's former history teacher.

An *inner-directed* character is one "whose conformity is insured by their tendency to acquire early in life an internalized set of goals" (Riesman 1961, 9). An inner-directed person is

augmented with what Riesman calls a psychological gyroscope, an instrument "set by the parents and other authorities [which] keeps the inner-directed person 'on course', even when tradition … no longer dictates his moves" (1961, 16). It is a mistake to think of an inner-directed person as more independent than their tradition-directed or other-directed counterparts, for even if the authority figures who have set the gyroscopic mechanism of the inner-directed person in motion are no longer active sources of direction in that person's life, the inner-directed person continues to obey their "internal piloting" indefinitely (Riesman 1961, 24). An example of an inner-directed person is the dutiful progeny of a family of lawyers whose parents have set their gyroscope in motion and oriented towards a life in advocacy. The sentiment that prevents an inner-directed person from being led astray is the guilt of failing to heed the guidance instilled in them by the authority figures in their life — "the fear that one's behavior won't be commensurate with the imago within", as Lewis-Kraus (2013) eloquently puts it.

An *other-directed* character is one "whose conformity is insured by their tendency to be sensitized to the expectations and preferences of others" (Riesman 1961, 8). Lewis-Kraus (2013) writes that an other-directed character's "identity and behavior is shaped by [their] relationships", and indeed, the lives of other-directed people are guided by signals from other, contemporary entities in the society: friends and family, peer-groups, school, and the mass media, to mention a few. While the goals of other-directed people evolve constantly, that the goals are defined by other people's expectations remains constant. Riesman (1961, 21) writes: "The goals toward which the other-directed person strives shift with that guidance: it is only the process of striving itself and the process of paying close attention to the signals from others that remain unaltered throughout life". Riesman (1961, 22) furthermore notes that while other-directed types are not alone in their desire for other people to like them, "it is only the modern other-directed types who make this their chief source of direction and chief area of sensitivity". For both inner-direction and other-direction, then, direction comes from the out-

side, but as Riesman (1961, 159) writes, direction is "simply internalized at an early point in the life cycle of the inner-directed". Lewis-Kraus (2013) provides a succinct summary of the difference between the inner-directed an the other-directed character types: "the inner-directed person consults the internalized voices of a mostly dead lineage, while her other-directed counterpart heeds the external voices of her living contemporaries".

If a tradition-directed person is held on course by shame and an inner-directed one by guilt, an other-directed is kept from going astray by a kind of a psychological radar that is sensitive to the signals of approval sent their way by other members of the society. Riesman calls this phenomenon *diffuse anxiety*, and it is what fuels and guides the behavior of the other-directed character. An example of an other-directed character is a demagogue who modifies their decision-making on the level of social approval it receives. The other-directed character type, argues Riesman (1961, 20), is what the American postwar society is steering towards as a whole and notes that it is especially prevalent amongst the privileged young:

> [T]he other-directed types are to be found among the young, in the larger cities, and among the upper income groups, we may assume that, unless present trends are reversed, the hegemony of other-direction lies not far off.

In other words, precisely the kind of social circle Holden — who himself is of privileged background — is immersed in.

Among others, sociologist Dennis Wrong (1992, 383) has noted the affinity between Riesman's sociological types and Salinger's literary output, praising "Riesman's up-to-the-minute sense of the zeitgeist, comparable to that of a writer like J.D. Salinger (who was at the same time drawing fictional portraits of the very kinds of people Riesman characterized as other-directed)". Riesman later acknowledged this as an allusion to *The Catcher in the Rye*, furthermore crediting Wrong with helping "dispel confusion about the character 'types' of *The Lonely Crowd*, locat[ing] the book in its post-World War II context, and pos[ing] questions for

contemporary readers" (Riesman 1992, 392). Wrong (1992, 386) furthermore explains the oxymoronic title of Riesman's book, writing that that the "phrase 'the lonely crowd' … might have been intended as a vivid image of 'mass society,' perhaps the most general label used by sociologists to characterize the United States in the early postwar years". It is the reality of precisely this lonely crowd, what Wrong (1992, 381) calls "a grey-suited 'new middle class'" — with its profusion of formalities, its pomp and ceremony, its obsession with cars and shows and ship-christenings and what Holden calls its "dirty little goddam cliques" (131)[4] — that Holden yearns to leave behind when he asks his roommate Ackley how to go about joining a monastery (50), when he explains to his younger sister Phoebe his plans to escape to a ranch in Colorado (165), and when he suggests to Sally a pastoral fantasy of elopement to "somewhere with a brook" (132).

Rowe (2001, 105) suggests that *The Lonely Crowd*'s reverberations upon the American society "may have paved way for a new public concern with the disturbing subject of American character," but that "the immediate interest Riesman's book aroused and its relatively large sale suggest a readership already sensitized to the kind of anomie which Riesman described and from which Holden Caulfield suffers". Rowe's introduction of *anomie* in connection with *Catcher* is astute: after all, simply employing Riesman's historical types (that is, the types of direction) is not sufficient; we must also take into account Riesman's so-called *universal types*, and that is what we shall move on to discuss next.

2.2. Universal character types

Riesman's universal types are adjustment, autonomy, and anomie. This set of Weberian ideal types that Wrong (1992, 383) calls a "psychological typology … more universal or transhistori-

[4] Salinger, J. D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1991. All quotations from *The Catcher in the Rye* will be from this edition and hereinafter will be cited in parentheses.

cal one than the three historically specific forms of direction" constitute together with the historical types discussed above a kind of coordinate system upon which we can impose a human character according to their modes of behavior. This is not to suggest that every person can be unambiguously designated as one type or another: rather, Riesman (1961, 243) writes that "[e]very human being will be one of these types to some degree; but no one could be completely characterized by any one of these terms".

The *adjusted* Riesman (1961, 242) defines as "those who reflect their society, or their class within the society, with the least distortion" and writes that a "person who has the appropriate character for his time and place is "adjusted" even when he makes mistakes and does things which deviate sharply from what is expected of him". The pith of this definition is that being adjusted is always relative to the sociotemporal milieu of the person, not to any immutable laws of morality. Moreover, whether one is adjusted or not is a matter of one's own will. An adjusted person is adjusted whether they want it or not; it is something that is implanted in them and is in fact so deeply rooted they themselves are unable to weed it out. A straightforward way to understand the definition of adjustment to anyone who has read *The Catcher in the Rye* is to imagine a person who is the exact opposite of what Holden is and represents.

In contrast, the *autonomous* are "those who on the whole are *capable* of conforming to the behavioral norms of their society … but are free to choose whether to conform or not" (Riesman 1961, 242). The key idea behind autonomy is choice: they see the world, the society and its rules, and they decide whether they want to play by the rules of that society or not. According to Wilkinson (2010), autonomy is the ideal that Riesman himself strived for in his personal life. Writing about minorities (and Jews in particular), Riesman (1948, 413) encouraged his readers to find "the nerve to be oneself when that self is not approved of by the dominant ethic of a society". Indeed, it is this edict that lies at the heart of Riesman's notion of autonomy.

The *anomics* in turn lack the said choice, and hover somewhere in between the two states of adjustedness and autonomy. *Anomie* is a term coined by French philosopher Jean-Marie Guyau and popularized by sociologist Émile Durkheim in his 1897 book *Suicide*, where he "used the concept to speak of the ways in which an individual's actions are matched, or integrated, with a system of social norms and practices" (Star et al. 1997). Anomie can arise either in a social system that is overtly rigid and that allows little room for the individual to maneuver or, conversely, in a system that lacks social standards and values and offers too little guidance (Star et al. 1997). Rather than choosing anomie, anomics are flung into a state of normlessness through events such as "conflict with other-directed or inner-directed patterns or some combination of them" (Riesman 1961, 249–250).

With the term *anomie* (from Greek *a-* 'without', and *nomos* 'law'), Riesman takes his cue from Durkheim but notes that he uses it in a wider sense, as a synonym for "maladjusted", but without the negative connotation the term evokes. Haney (2008, 76) notes that "Riesman's use of the term departed from that of Durkheim in that he characterized individuals, rather than social structures, as anomic" and that that was what led into the development of the anomic character type. While we are almost exclusively concerned with Riesman's definition of anomie in this thesis, the significance of Durkheim's definition cannot be ignored. For example, Star et al. (1997) argue that Durkheim himself saw anomie as a "mismatch, not simply as the absence of norms … a mismatch between individual circumstances and larger social mores", which is about as apt a summary about Holden's predicament that anyone can make.

On Riesman's coordinate system of social character, then, autonomy and anomie seem to be at opposing ends of the line. Regarding that contradistinction, Riesman (1961, 242) writes that in "each society those who do not conform to the characterological pattern of the adjusted may be either anomic or autonomous". If the autonomous are at liberty to choose whether adjustment is a worthwhile goal, anomic is what becomes of a person who seeks ad-

justment but fails to clinch it. As a result, that person becomes largely incapable of behaving according to the norms set by society. If we consider these concepts in the context of *Catcher,* it becomes evident that one of the strongest underlying themes in the book is on the one hand Holden's desperate attempts to behave as he thinks society at large expects of him and on the other hand his rebellion and despair against those very expectations. This contradiction can be fruitfully considered with regard to Holden's relationship with both abstract concepts such as the end of childhood and with other characters in the book, and that is indeed what much of this thesis is concerned with.

2.3. Merton and strain to anomie

In our application of the concept of anomie, we shall also make use of an earlier definition of the term by American sociologist Robert K. Merton. Writing some years before the publication of *The Lonely Crowd*, Merton (1938, 679) expands on Durkheim's notion of anomie with a postulation that has since been named *strain theory.* He proposes that an individual can be placed in a situation where a society, through the "dominant pressure of group standards of success", exerts such an amount of pressure on an individual that they are driven to try to achieve their cultural goals (of success or wealth, for example) through illegal or illegitimate means because they see it as the more effective or only solution. In a scenario such as this, then, an individual is effectively strained to anomie. According to Wortley et al. (2008, 82), who apply Merton's theories to their study of youth violence, in such a scenario, culturally established norms are no longer effective in regulating the behavior of the individual in question, which in turn will precipitate anomic behavior (crime or "deviant" behavior) in that individual.

Merton (1938, 676–677) argues that individuals can respond differently to the strain they are placed under and identifies five different modes of adaptation: conformity, innova-

tion, ritualism, and retreat. To our discussion, innovation, retreat, and rebellion are the relevant modes. In short, *innovation* refers to a situation where the individual retains their desire to attain the cultural goals but considers what the society deems legitimate means of attaining them as unavailable or infeasible due, for example, to the lack of formal education or economic resources. The mode of *retreat* is where an individual abandons both the goals and the means to that goal because of a "continued failure to attain the goal by legitimate measures and from an inability to adopt the illegitimate route because of internalized prohibitions and institutionalized compulsives". As a result, a retreating individual is seen as deviant. Finally, the mode of *rebellion* entails both the rejection of cultural goals as well as a means and a will to substitute those goals with new ones (Merton 1938, 677–679).

Merton's theories are perhaps most often quoted in connection with studies of crime and youth crime in particular, but they are by no means exclusively applicable in only those domains, and indeed we can use Merton's strain theory to buttress Riesman's concepts in our study of the motivations and behavioral patterns of various characters in the book to good effect. With regard to the criminological aspect of the theory, it is worth mentioning that even though anomie can be and often is linked to criminal behavior, and even though *Catcher* has been vilified throughout its entire published history, there are actually very few instances of crime in the novel, the worst being Sunny's status as a prostitute, her procurer assaulting Holden, and Holden engaging in underage drinking.

2.4. Interpretations of *The Lonely Crowd*

In trying to make sense of Riesman's universal character types, many have simplistically confused adjustment with conformity and anomie with non-conformity. Riesman (1961, 242), however, explicitly warns against this very conflation, noting that instead, "utter conformity in behavior may be purchased by the individual at so high a price as to lead to a character neu-

rosis and anomie: the anomic person tends to sabotage either himself or his society, probably both". This is in line with Merton's strain theory in that he, too, believed that indefatigable drive towards social conformity could be a deciding factor in driving an individual to a life of crime: as Wortley et al. (2008, 81) write, "Merton … argued that it was the rigid adherence to conventional American values that caused high rates of crime and deviance".

A related and frequent misinterpretation of Riesman's types is proffered by Wrong (1992, 383), who writes that *The Lonely Crowd* was commonly misread as a "tract against other-direction in the vein of what came to be called 'social criticism'" and that it favored inner-direction over other-direction because inner-direction was falsely equated with autonomy. Other-direction, in turn, became a byword for apathetic and wanton acceptance of the norms and expectations of mass society. Wrong (1992, 385) writes:

> [O]ther-direction quickly became identified with the imputed mindless conformity and gullibility of "mass man," with hypocritical—if unconscious—pretensions to sincerity and intimacy in even the most casual of personal relations, with a chameleonlike [sic] adaptability to any company one was presently keeping, suggesting an inner emptiness and lack of true convictions.

To understand other-direction in this way, however, is to profoundly misunderstand it. As Lewis-Kraus (2013) points out, to naively equate other-direction with an utter paucity of critical faculties and flagrant ingenuity is to ignore what he calls "the positive aspects of other direction: openness, lack of inhibition, interest in others, and ability to change". This misunderstanding is a significant one in many ways, and if we accept Wrong's argument about the overt consonance between *Catcher* and *The Lonely Crowd*, it is not unreasonable to assume that the way "mindless conformity" of the mass society is represented in *Catcher* swayed the way Riesman's book was interpreted by readers familiar with both texts.

Not all criticism of Riesman's theories is misinterpretation, of course; *The Lonely Crowd* and his other works have also been subjected to much valid criticism. Wilkinson (2010), for

instance, notes that the "quest for authenticity—being true to oneself—recurred in several social-character books of the time" when *The Lonely Crowd* was released — a group that doubtless includes *Catcher* — and praises the book's "prescience" on matters of social change and consumerism, but, conversely, also writes about the contradictory reception *The Lonely Crowd* received in the years following its release:

> Studies of changing values in advertising, child-rearing-advice literature, and stories in children's reading textbooks on the whole supported *The Lonely Crowd*'s claims. Many historians and social scientists, though, complained that the book lacked psychological evidence for the character change it asserted, did not say clearly when the change occurred, overgeneralized about social attitudes, and omitted survey data, though Riesman and Glazer had actually pored over National Opinion Research Center interviews.

Wilkinson (2010) also cites a 1961 study that calls Riesman's other-directed character type into question: it found that American college students "who most craved popularity and group belonging were also most dependent on media messages, as Riesman would predict, but they were not more sensitive to other people".

Whether Riesman's concepts hold water with American college students of one specific era bears little significance to whether they're applicable as tools of literary criticism, however. As mentioned above, multiple critics have considered Riesman's theories in connection with not only *Catcher* but also other books from the same and later eras.[5] Indeed, the affinity between the two books is too significant to ignore, for Riesman's theories are indeed congruous with much of the cast of *Catcher* and Holden in particular. As we will see, using *The Lonely Crowd* to study *The Catcher in the Rye* yields indisputable insight both into the characters in the book and the changing social landscape of the time both books were published.

It would not be accurate to suggest that Riesman's theories are only applicable to the social circumstances of postwar America, either. With the advent of globalization, Riesman's

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[5] See for example Brookeman (1991), Whitfield (1997), Rowe (2001), Halliwell (2007), and Cheever (2010).

concepts have resurfaced in connection with discussion about the way modern technological advancements affect our social lives. A case in point is the rise of the internet and its myriad social media, which has breathed new life to discussion on *The Lonely Crowd*. Lewis-Kraus (2013) goes so far as to say that in our online world, the book "has become even more relevant now than it was in the nineteen-fifties", noting the role of the internet in furnishing with other-directed individuals a way of obtaining "a flow of guidance, expectation, and approbation" (Riesman 1961, 31) from their peers to an unforeseen extent. Indeed, even though he had no way of predicting the rise of modern-day social media Lewis-Kraus is referring to, Riesman did see the auguries of such a social shift and its effect on the nation's young when writing the foreword for the 1961 edition of *The Lonely Crowd*:

> As the representatives of adult authority and of the older generation decline in legitimacy, young people and the millions who seek to stay young become even more exposed to the power of their contemporaries both in person and through the mass media. (1961, xiv)

Back on the table are also the historical and universal character types of *The Lonely Crowd* and above all the misinterpretations of those terms, which Riesman had to contend with throughout the published existence of his most famous work. The term the "lonely crowd" has been appropriated to refer to the throngs of social media users who are so moored to the collective opinions of others on things like restaurants, fashion, cars, and other services, goods and chattels that the prime stipulation for one to even consider investing their hard-earned money in one diversion or other is that it has been pre-approved by a faceless, unqualified jury of their peers (Siegel 2013). As Siegel (2013) writes, "gone are the days when 'conformist' was a slur on someone's character … if you are not following the crowd of five-start dispensers, you're a tasteless, undiscriminating shlub". It is not difficult to envisage what Holden might have thought about such vanguards of social media as Twitter, Facebook, or Yelp or the type of share-everything attitude living they espouse.

Indeed, Holden's contempt of most of mainstream culture and mass media is an aspect of the novel that carries weight to this day. Among the most prominent examples of this is the true story of Christopher McCandless, an American university graduate who became disillusioned with what he perceived to be the excessive materialism, consumerism, and conformity of the society that surrounded him and decamped to the Alaskan wilderness after wandering around in North America for two years under the name "Alexander Supertramp". Not long before his retreat, McCandless wrote a letter to a friend where he explains aspects of society he is unhappy with. Parts of the letter, which was reprinted in Jon Krakauer's 1996 book *Into the Wild*, which recounts McCandless's story, are decidedly Holden-esque in sentiment:

> So many people live within unhappy circumstances and yet will not take the initiative to change their situation because they are conditioned to a life of security, conformity, and conservatism, all of which may appear to give one peace of mind, but in reality nothing is more damaging to the adventurous spirit within a man than a secure future … If you want to get more out of life, Ron, you must lose your inclination for monotonous security and adopt a helter-skelter style of life that will at first appear to you to be crazy. (Krakauer 1996, 57)

Into the Wild reaches a level of Thoreauesque retreatism and disaffection with social adjustment and the "mindless conformity" Wrong (1992, 385) referred to that even Holden would likely balk at: while a job at a filling station where he would never have to talk to anybody is enough to fulfill Holden's fantasy of retreat, for McCandless, only a life of full self-sustenance in the Alaskan wilderness would do. Even if the kind of wanderlust that permeates *Into the Wild* so thoroughly plays a relatively minor role in *Catcher* in that it only makes an appearance in Holden's bucolic fantasy of elopement with Sally, what the protagonists of both books share is the disillusionment with the myriad, mundane, and, to them, utterly disgusting parts and parcels of society and that is where the confluence of the two stories truly lies. Keyes (2007), for instance, calls *Into the Wild* "a sort of nonfiction *Catcher in the Rye* that takes on the same issues of family dysfunction, misguided youth, wanderlust, and the pitfalls of an unexamined

life" and notes that it is taught in schools throughout the USA. It has then doubtless struck a similar chord with adolescent audiences (or, perhaps more likely, with teachers of adolescent audiences) as *Catcher* did and the success of both the book and the subsequent 2007 Hollywood movie serve as examples how the anti-establishmentarian mindset Holden espoused continues to live on.

Returning to the concept of anomie, if we indeed consider it, as Durkheim did, "a mismatch between individual circumstances and larger social mores" (Star et al. 1997), in *Catcher*, the larger social mores against which Holden's individual circumstances are projected are made evident time and again. The juxtaposition is evident in the opening chapter of the book, where Holden cites a text found on an advertisement for Pencey Prep: "Since 1888 we have been molding boys into splendid, clear-thinking young men". The advertisement also features "some hotshot guy on a horse jumping over a fence" (2), a telling visual of the sort of "clear-thinking man" Pencey purports to produce and, by virtue of it being presented in an advertisement, what kind of man society expects — and the kind of man Holden could not be further away from:

> Strictly for the birds. They don't do any damn more molding at Pencey than they do at any other school. And I didn't know anybody there that was splendid and clear-thinking and all. Maybe two guys. If that many. And they probably came to Pencey that way. (2)

Holden reveals to the reader his cynicism of not only the ability of Pencey or any school for that matter to mold anyone into anything but also his disdain, disaffection and disinterest (faked or otherwise) towards how one is "supposed" to act and be interested in: "The game with [rival school] Saxon Hall was supposed to be a very big deal around Pencey. … [Y]ou were supposed to commit suicide or something if old Pencey didn't win. … [P]ractically the whole school except me was there …" (2).

Holden's mismatch with certain societal norms is a central theme in the book, and when considering issues of social conformity with regard to *The Catcher in the Rye*, the question of how Holden relates to other characters in the novel becomes essential. In what follows, I will investigate the relationship between conformity, sex and sexuality in *Catcher.* I will concentrate on a number of key scenes and characters in the book, including Holden's roommate Ward Stradlater; his old schoolmate Carl Luce; Sunny, a prostitute whose services he solicits; and Phoebe, Holden's little sister. I will also argue that the sociological character types suggested by Riesman are uncannily represented by the aforementioned key characters in *Catcher* as well as challenge previous critics' readings of aspects of Holden's sexuality.

3. Sexual conformity in *The Catcher in the Rye*

> "Sex is something I really don't understand too hot." —Holden Caulfield (Salinger 1991, 63)

The Catcher in the Rye is a novel of dualities, and the subject of sex and sexuality is no exception. As with any sixteen-year-old, Holden's relationship with sex and sexuality is complicated. In representations of adolescent sex and sexuality in modern popular culture, for example in movies such as *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* or the unexpectedly long-lived *American Pie* franchise, sex is the be-all and end-all of all life's goals: everything revolves around it.

This worldview is certainly present in *Catcher* to the extent that sex is doubtless one of Holden's central concerns. The same applies to nearly all of his comrades. As Holden says, in schools like Pencey, "all you do is talk about girls and liquor and sex all day" (131). Holden's roommate Ward Stradlater is a "very sexy bastard" (32), and his other roommate, Robert Ackley, continuously boasts about his sexual conquests: "All he did was keep talking in this very monotonous voice about some babe he was supposed to have had sexual intercourse with the summer before. He'd already told me about it about a hundred times" (37). A schoolmate of Holden's from a previous school, Carl Luce, whom Holden elevates to a sex-guru-like status, is a character whose only function in the story is to act as a sexual foil to Holden.

There are definite differences, however, between *Catcher* and other narratives usually classified as "coming-of-age" stories. For example, there is no Lacanian mirror stage scene so prevalent in literature with pubescent or adolescent protagonists and present in such portrayals of adolescence as Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* and Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* and many others. In fact, Holden never once mentions the transformations his body has undergone during puberty, nor indeed makes a habit of delving into issues related to the human body, beyond his older brother D.B's ex-girlfriend having "very big knockers" (86) and a girl he dances with at the Lavender Room having a "pretty little butt [that] twitched so nice and

all" (73). Instead, Holden sees sex as something that is simultaneously fascinating, exhilarating, and frightening. Holden's approach to and conceptualization of sex and sexuality is heavily infused with his own particular brand of sexual non-conformity and anomie, and it is with that — as well as Riesman's character types — in mind I proceed to investigate sex and sexual conformity in *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Besides Holden, there are three central characters that must be considered when it comes to sex and sexuality in *Catcher*: Ward Stradlater, Carl Luce, Sunny, and Holden's little sister, Phoebe. Either explicitly (as in the case of Luce and Sunny) or implicitly (with Phoebe), the themes of sex and sexuality are central to the encounters Holden has with each of those characters. What follows is an investigation of those themes reinforced with Riesman's sociological theories and especially his universal types of adjustment (represented by Stradlater), autonomy (Luce), and anomie (Sunny, and, of course, Holden), with Phobe's case being something of an outlier. At the heart of the matter is, of course, Holden's own complicated relationship with sex and sexuality and how it manifests in these encounters.

3.1. Stradlater

Using Riesman's terminology, Holden's roommate Ward Stradlater is an *adjusted* character: being a stereotypical "jock" whose main occupation seems to be seduction in the back seat of a Buick, he reflects both the postwar American society of the 1950s and the microcosm of the American prep school impeccably: it is indeed difficult to imagine him being any other way. As Pinsker (1993, 41) fittingly describes him, he is "the sort of boy that schools like Pencey are made for: good looking, athletic, well-rounded, and, above else, absolutely 'normal'".

Stradlater is at the heart of the first paradox related to Holden's view on sex. It comes to light during his conversation with Stradlater on the subject of Jane Gallagher, a childhood friend of Holden's. Holden is dumbfounded when he hears that Stradlater is going on a date

with Jane, because Stradlater is a "very sexy bastard" (32) ("sexy" meaning 'sexual'). Holden, a creature of habit, strongly associates Jane with childhood (both his own and in general) and, by extension, innocence, and immediately becomes despondent at the thought of Stradlater, being a "sexy bastard", tainting Jane with his sexual presence and behavior. The circumstances are exacerbated by Stradlater's status as a ladies' man:

> The thing is, you didn't know Stradlater. I knew him. Most guys at Pencey just talked about having sexual intercourse with girls all the time—like Ackley, for instance—but old Stradlater really did it. I was personally acquainted with at least two girls he gave the time to. That's the truth. (48–49)

Holden is eventually overcome by despair when Stradlater, back from his date, refuses to divulge what happened on his date with Jane: "That's a professional secret, buddy" (43). Holden tells us Stradlater does not "even care if a girl kept all her kings in the back row" (43), a detail about Jane's character that means everything to Holden but nothing to Stradlater. As Strauch (1961, 13) puts it, it is symbolism for "portraying defense against sexual attack", but the metaphor must be interpreted to reflect sexual purity in a wider sense and its preservation in particular. As Pinsker (1993, 44) writes:

> [F]or Holden, Jane Gallagher's kings in the back row are rather like the purity of snow in winter: 'nice and white.' In the arithmetic of Salinger's symbolism, they suggest an aversion to risk, a need to be protected—for if one moves a king onto the playing field of a checkboard, it might, after all, be 'jumped'.

Stradlater, in his indifference to such things, stands for society at large: when Holden tells Stradlater about him and Jane playing checkers as children, it depresses Holden that Stradlater's response is indifferent silence: "That kind of stuff doesn't interest most people" (32), Holden decides. Holden is despondent that he seems to be the only one to whom things like a girl keeping all her kings in the back row are of any import.

In an episode of blind rage — "This next part I don't remember so hot" (43) — Holden tries to punch Stradlater's toothbrush when he's brushing his teeth "so it would split his goddam throat open" (43). However, Stradlater, being physically much stronger than Holden, easily overpowers him and the fight is over soon with Holden lying on the floor, beaten, still spouting insults at Stradlater. While Holden's actions are certainly not justifiable, his misgivings are at least understandable: after all, what Holden knows and Stradlater is completely obvious to (and probably would not even care about were he not) is Jane's scarring childhood experiences related to nakedness and sexuality: Jane's father had a habit of running "around the goddam house, naked" (32) while under the influence of alcohol and, according to Holden, might have even "tried to get wise with her" (79). With regard to sex and sexuality, then, Holden is primarily concerned with protecting the innocence of those — girls, in specific — yet untainted by its ever-pervasive influence; or, as Pinsker (1993, 46) writes, with "halting the clock that pushes him inexorably toward adulthood".

Pinsker (1993, 46) also touches upon the altercation between Holden and Stradlater, noting that it is "another instance of innocence under pressure, of Holden desperately trying to fend off the changes that he associates with sexual activity, with social conformity, and, ultimately, with death". Ever the paradox, for someone who is so concerned with retaining sexual purity, Holden himself also claims to be "quite sexy": "Women kill me. They really do. I don't mean I'm oversexed or anything like that — although I am quite sexy" (54). He goes even further than that, claiming that "I'm probably the biggest sex maniac you ever saw. Sometimes I can think of *very* crumby stuff I wouldn't mind doing if the opportunity came up" (62). This side of Holden's multifaceted personality is manifested in his encounter with Carl Luce, his former schoolmate, later in the book, and that is what we will analyze next.

3.2. Luce

Carl Luce is, with regard to sexuality if not to the content of his entire character, an *autonomous* character: he is what Holden simultaneously strives to be and is afraid to become. In contrast to Holden, Luce appears to have accepted and even embraced the transition to adulthood and appears to be in charge of his own life. Carl Luce is portrayed as a man who is fully capable of conforming to the norms of the society, but, with his interest in Eastern philosophy[6] and a girlfriend almost twice his age, he simply chooses not to — at least in those aspects of his life Holden's narrative reveals to us.

Immediately upon meeting Carl Luce, Holden steers the discussion firmly towards sex. These are the very first words Holden says to Luce after they see each other for the first time in years:

> "Hey, I got a flit for you," I told him. "At the end of the bar. Don't look now. I been saving him for ya."
> "Very funny," he said. "Same old Caulfield. When are you going to grow up?"
> I bored him a lot. I really did. He amused me, though. He was one of those guys that sort of amuse me a lot.
> "How's your sex life?" I asked him. He hated you to ask him stuff like that.
> "Relax," he said. "Just sit back and relax, for Chrissake." (144)

Holden begins by pointing out a "flit" (a homosexual man) to Luce and immediately moves on to ask him about his sex life. There is a stark contrast here to the Holden we saw fiercely championing for Jane's innocence in his altercation with Stradlater. This is a prime example of Holden desperately trying to adjust, to be the of sixteen-year-old he thinks his schoolmates expect of him; the kind of teenager that continues to be depicted in numerous movies, books, and television shows to this day: obsessed with sex. As can be expected, this attempt ultimately ends in abject failure because it runs contrary to Holden's "better nature".

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[6] "I simply happen to find Eastern philosophy more satisfactory than Western. Since you ask." (146)

With his talk of the philosophical level and the "spiritual experience" (146) of sex, to Holden, Carl Luce is a sort of a mystical sex guru, perhaps even a role model in some twisted way:

> The reason I was asking was because he really knew quite a bit about sex and all. He was one of the few guys I knew that did. He lost his virginity when he was only fourteen, in Nantucket. He really did. (145)

Interestingly, during their encounter, Luce is only a shade of the self-appointed authority on all things sexual Holden describes him to be — instead, he seems embarrassed and surfeited with the subject. Nonetheless, Holden, in his attempt at autonomy, desperately attempts to connect with both Luce and social norms in general and tries to act the way he perceives society expects him to act, bantering with Luce about who he is dating and whether older women are "better for sex" (145) and psychoanalysis. In the end, however, it all comes to naught, with Holden entreating Luce to share one more drink: "Please. I'm lonesome as hell" (149). Luce refuses Holden's offer and Holden proceeds to get "drunk as a bastard" (150) and eventually "depressed and lonesome" (153) when he is once again left stranded, autonomy hopelessly out of his reach.

It is interesting to note how Holden's descriptions of Stradlater and Luce are so markedly different, with Stradlater an undercurrent of disapproval present every time there is talk of Stradlater's sexuality. "Only very sexy stuff" interested Stradlater, for instance, a "sexy bastard" (32) and a "secret slob" (27), while Luce is described as "very intellectual" (136) and "intelligent" (143). But Stradlater never directly boasts about his sexual exploits or flaunts his knowledge on the matter. Instead, he seems quite sympathetic towards Holden: even during their violent encounter, he does not appear to take any enjoyment in beating Holden and, after their altercation, seems regretful that things went as far as they did. Luce's behavior, on the other hand, is singularly indifferent and contemptuous towards Holden and he remains arro-

gant during their entire conversation in the superiority of his knowledge and experience of all things sexual and simultaneously reluctant to discuss anything related to his own sexuality.

Significantly, Luce is also a prime example of an other-directed character, someone for whom the approval of others is their chief source of direction. According to Holden's description of him, at the Whooton School, he lived off the admiration and respect of his schoolmates. In fact, according to Holden, he was so dependent on the signals of the people around him that he could not seem to stand to be in a situation where he was not there to bask in the glory of their approval:

> These intellectual guys don't like to have an intellectual conversation with you unless they're running the whole thing. They always want you to shut up when they shut up, and go back to your room when they go back to *their* room. When I was at Whooton old Luce used to hate it—you really could tell he did—when after he was finished giving his sex talk to a bunch of us in his room we stuck around and chewed the fat by ourselves for a while. I mean the other guys and myself. In somebody else's room. Old Luce hated that. He always wanted everybody to go back to their own room and shut up when he was finished being the big shot. The thing he was afraid of, he was afraid somebody'd say something smarter than *he* had. (147)

In this respect, Luce represents the non-privileged strand of other-direction in the novel: ostentatious, self-obsessed, and haughty. Despite that, as well as Holden confessing before their encounter that he does not like Luce very much and that he once "called him a fat-assed phony" (137), in the scene where Holden meets Luce, his behavior is tinged with an unmistakable hint of respect and there is a strong sense that Luce's words carry weight with Holden. Holden not only recognizes Luce's intelligence but more importantly, also sees him as someone who has clinched autonomy despite his unorthodox preferences (for older women and for Eastern philosophy), which is something Holden desperately yearns for. Significantly, Holden also describes Luce as possessing a "good vocabulary" (149), which is in contrast to his own vocabulary, which he describes as "lousy" (9) when he reveals to the reader how he sometimes acts young for his age. This indicates that Holden furthermore might view Luce, who is three years

his senior, as a sort of surrogate for his absent older brother, D.B, whom he idolizes, especially in terms of intellect and experience.

Holden's dualistic persona rears its head during his encounter with Luce when Luce reluctantly divulges to Holden that in Eastern philosophy, sex is considered both a physical and spiritual experience. While Holden's behavior during his meeting with Luce feels otherwise forced and, ironically, even phony, he seems ingenuous when talking about his view of the spirituality of sex towards the end of the chapter:

> "I know it's supposed to be physical and spiritual, and artistic and all. But what I mean is, you can't do it with everybody—every girl you neck with and all—and make it come out that way. Can you?" (147)

Holden expresses to Luce his wistful hope that sex can be a deeper experience than how other boys his age view it: a conquest, an act with intrinsic value that has the power to raise you above people who have not yet undergone that particular rite of passage.[7] Holden even admits that he cannot "get really sexy … with a girl I don't like a lot. … If I don't, I sort of lose my goddam desire for her and all" (148). While most other boys (like Stradlater and Ackley) his age would likely embrace any chance of accruing sexual experience, Holden is incapable of doing so unless there is real affection.

Luce interprets Holden's "lousy" sex life as a mark of immature mind and suggests visiting a psychoanalyst to help "recognize the patterns of [Holden's] mind" (148). Holden asks Luce whether his father, who happens to be a psychoanalyst, has ever analyzed him, to which Luce responds: "Not exactly. He's helped me to ad*just* myself to a certain extent, but an extensive analysis hasn't been necessary" (149). This foreshadows the end of the book when we find Holden in the care of a psychoanalyst who tries to help him do just that: adjust, both in Riesman's sense and the traditional psychoanalytic sense. Before that, however, we will turn our

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[7] According to De Gaston et al. (1996), adolescent males experience more peer pressure to begin having sex than adolescent females.

attention to the encounter Holden has with Sunny, the young prostitute, and investigate the parallels and differences between the two characters.

3.3. Sunny

Perhaps the most famous example of Holden's somewhat paradoxical relationship with sex is Holden's encounter with Sunny, the prostitute from Hollywood, whose services he solicits from Maurice, the elevator "boy" (from Holden's description, he seems more like a grown man) at the hotel he is staying at. Before their rendezvous, Holden offers the reader his justification for soliciting a prostitute by alluding to an unnamed (and, to the best of my knowledge, fictitious) book with a character called Monsieur Blanchard, a man possessing of a copious amount of carnal knowledge:

> I read this book once, at the Whooton School, that had this very sophisticated suave, sexy guy in it. Monsieur Blanchard was his name, I can still remember. … He said, in this one part, that a woman's body is like a violin and all, and that it takes a terrific musician to play it right. … In a way, that's why I sort of wanted to get some practice in, in case I ever get married or anything. (92)

The prospect of marriage, perhaps the most normative of all Western social institutions and the most significant of stepping stones into adulthood, sets Holden adrift, desperately attempting to negotiate the rocky waters of autonomy, only to find himself run aground by his unyielding desire to defend innocence rather than adulterate it with sex, as we shall see in what follows.

Before his meeting with Sunny the prostitute, Holden relates an anecdote about a time when he almost had sex with a girl:

> Take this girl that I just missed having sexual intercourse with, that I told you about. It took me about an hour to just get her goddam brassiere off. By the time I did get it off, she was about ready to spit in my eye. (93)

Set against Holden and Sunny's confrontation, this passage resists any other reading than Holden's flat-out incapability of having sex — not because of his complete aversion to the physical act itself, but because he is, as ever, afraid of the consequences of sex to the innocence of himself and the girl and of what an indelible shove it would be over the threshold between adolescence and adulthood. Even getting his partner's brassiere open presents him with an insurmountable obstacle in such a situation. Along the same lines, in a neat metaphor, Holden quite literally stumbles over and falls upon that very threshold when he is going to open the door to let Sunny in his hotel room:

> Finally, somebody knocked on the door, and when I went to open it, I had my suitcase right in the way and I fell over it and damn near broke my knee. I always pick a gorgeous time to fall over a suitcase or something. (93)

Holden, as every other 16-year-old virgin ever, knows from observing the behavior of his peers more than anyone that he *ought* to be a sexual being: that he ought to be interested in girls and having sex with them and that he ought to be experienced, but in his endless crusade for innocence he also despairs in the face of that very thing. Before he trips on his suitcase, Holden explicitly voices that very frustration: "I sort of just wanted to get it over with" (93).

Holden's misguided attempt to "practice sex" for marriage hits a wall the very instant he realizes from Sunny's appearance and demeanor that she is almost as young as he is:

> It was a funny thing to say. It sounded like a real kid. You'd think a prostitute and all would say "Like hell you are" or "Cut the crap" instead of "Like fun you are."
>
> "How old are you?" I asked her. "Old enough to know better," she said. She was really witty. "Ya got a watch on ya?" she asked me again, and then she stood up and pulled her dress over her head.
>
> I certainly felt peculiar when she did that. I mean she did it so sudden and all. I know you're supposed to feel pretty sexy when somebody gets up and pulls their dress over their head, but I didn't. Sexy was about the last thing I was feeling. I felt much more depressed than sexy. (94–95)

Regarding the scene with Sunny, Tolchin (2007, 35) argues that Holden "concocts a lie about having had an operation to avoid sex with a prostitute so as to conceal a profound lack of interest in her body". However, there is no evidence in *Catcher* of Holden's asexuality or disinterest in the female body — Sunny's or anyone else's. It is not often that Holden discusses anything related to the subject explicitly, but there are a number of occasions. Upon meeting the mother of a classmate of his, Ernest Morrow, on a train while on his way from Pencey to New York, he says of her: "She had a lot of charm. She had quite a lot of sex appeal, too, if you really want to know" (56). Holden notes that his childhood friend and romantic interest of a kind, Jane Gallagher, "had this terrific figure" (79). He also recounts his tryst "with a terrible phony named Anne Louise Sherman", with whom he "spent the whole night necking" (63), and notes the "pretty little butt" (73) of a girl he dances with at the Lavender Room as well as Sally's "little blue butt-twitcher of a dress" and how "cute her little ass looked" in it (129) when they go ice-skating at Radio City together.

Holden's motivation for withholding sex, then, is not that he is uninterested in Sunny's body. It is true that Holden might not be particularly fascinated with it at that particular moment, but his disinterest is the symptom rather than the cause, for as we have seen, Holden's motivation for remaining a virgin lies in his ferocious drive for preserving innocence on the one hand and his reluctance to transition to adulthood on the other. It feels as though he is acutely aware that as a sixteen-year-old boy, sex should be perhaps his main focus in life (and indeed he tries to make it so with Carl Luce and Sunny) while at the same time he is decidedly unprepared to partake in the pleasures of the flesh. It as Riesman (1961, 146) writes of the sexuality of the other-directed person: "Though there is tremendous insecurity about how the game of sex should be played, there is little doubt as to whether it should be played or not".

As mentioned above, Sunny's childlike appearance and demeanor plays a central part in Holden's reluctance to have sex with her. Holden notes that Sunny is "young as hell" and "had

a tiny little wheeny-whiny voice" and that her diction "sounded like a real kid" (94), which we get a glimpse of when she pronounces "picture" as "pitcher" and contorts Melvyn Douglas's first name to "Mel-vine" (97). When Holden hangs up her dress because she does not want it to get wrinkly, he feels depressed when he realizes that Sunny is just a regular girl; a "pretty spooky kid" (98) and not "any old bag" (93) or "a big old prostitute, with a lot of makeup on her face and all" (98). Even if Holden did not have any other doubts about bedding Sunny, there are two insuperable obstacles to the two of them having sex: one is that Holden sees Sunny as little more than a child, which means no force in the world could bring Holden to defile Sunny by having sex with her. The other is that Sunny's only hobby seems to be going to the movies, which obviously does not sit well with Holden, who already associates Hollywood with prostitution: "I don't think I could *ever* do it with somebody that sits in a stupid movie all day long. I really don't think I could" (96). We will return to Holden's relationship with movies later in this thesis.

To determine whether Sunny can be classified as autonomous, adjusted, or anomic, we can begin by safely ruling out autonomy, for it is unlikely that this young girl around Holden's age whom Holden repeatedly describes as "nervous" and childlike in demeanor *chose* to fulfill her lifelong dream of becoming a call girl to have sex for money with strange men in strange hotels. It is more likely that she had no choice in the matter, and a person denied of choice can either be adjusted — for as Riesman notes, an adjusted person will be adjusted whether they want it or not — or flung to anomie against their will. According to Riesman (1961, 242), when determining a person's adjustment, we must look at whether their character structure obeys social norms; an adjusted person is one who "respond in their character structure to the demands of their society or social class at its particular stage on the curve of population" and "has the appropriate character for his time and place". As a young, likely underage, probably uneducated prostitute, it is fair to say Sunny does not fulfill either proviso.

To shed light Sunny's predicament, we can turn to Merton's modes of adaptation (see section 2.3). Once we do so, it becomes apparent that Sunny is, more than anything else, a social innovator. An innovator, we remember, is a person who has not lost sight of their cultural goals but lacks all legitimate means to achieve those goals. According to Merton (1938, 675), the primary among these goals is the acquisition of wealth, and considering Sunny's "choice" of profession, it seems safe to say that that is not a goal she has forfeited: rather, it is likely the only goal she strives towards. The same cannot be said of Holden, whose attitude towards money is indifferent at best: he does not seem to be overtly concerned with pecuniary matters when pitching to Sally his vision about life in the wild, for example. At worst it is hostile, such as in his impassioned rebuttal of Phoebe's suggestion to pursue the career of 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" (172). That speech, in fact, shows Holden calling into question the integrity of the very cultural goals Merton write of that were certainly prevalent in postwar American society. Notably absent from Holden's rhetoric, however, is any attempt to replace those goals with better ones, which, according to Merton (1938, 678) precludes classifying Holden as a social rebel proper. We will return to this topic later in this thesis.

It is not, then, that Sunny has abandoned the goal of amassing at least some degree of wealth. Rather, as a prostitute, Sunny is, for one reason or another, devoid of any culturally accepted means of achieving that goal. Neither is there anything in the novel to suggest that she shares with Holden the desire to reject society and its integrants: as a prostitute from Hollywood who likes the movies (compare to Holden's brother D.B., who is writing movies "out in Hollywood … being a prostitute"), she rather embodies the things in society that are at the core of Holden's will to escape it. Sunny and Holden, then, are two sides of the same coin: they share the anomie into which both have been flung against their will but for decidedly different reasons and with dramatically diverging consequences. In the 1969 preface to *The Lonely*

Crowd, Riesman describes anomics either as "impulse-directed" or "circumstance-directed", and once we introduce this axis into the equation, it is easy to see that while Holden's anomie is of the impulsive sort, all evidence points to Sunny being the victim of her circumstances.

Interestingly, regardless of her profession Sunny — like Holden — appears inexperienced both sexually and otherwise. The way her behavior is described gives the impression that like Holden, she, too, "just wants to get it over with". In many ways, the encounter with Sunny feels like Holden meeting a female version of himself: someone who has a conception of what adulthood is or should be but finds crossing the threshold difficult; someone teetering on the precipice of autonomy and anomie. There is, however, a tacit affinity between Sunny and Holden, which rears its head when Sunny remarks on the similarity between Holden and the young protagonist of the 1937 film *Captains Courageous*, Harvey Cheyne, a child of wealthy parents who gets suspended from a boarding school and embarks on a grand voyage of mental growth and maturation. Even though she is completely unacquainted with Holden and though he is desperately trying to summon his inner Monsieur Blanchard at the beginning of their meeting to mask his anxiety, Sunny sees through his façade and unwittingly acknowledges his predicament.

The scene with Holden and Sunny has a clear parallel with the scene that follows soon after with Holden and his little sister, Phoebe. As Svogun (2009, 704) writes, "Throughout and between the two episodes, topics are raised, images are conjured, personas and behaviours are shuffled, traded and reversed in a continuous round robin that creates a chaotic order worthy of Wonderland". It is this topsy-turvy carousel we will investigate next.

3.4. Phoebe

When discussing sex and sexuality in *The Catcher in the Rye*, the scene towards the end of the book where Holden meets his little sister Phoebe in her bedroom cannot be ignored. Critics

have made much of that particular scene: Svogun (2009, 697), for example, writes that readers "have suggested, for example, that Phoebe may be seen as … a source of perverse temptation for Holden himself". Svogun (2009, 697) also notes that scholars such as James Bryan suggest that there is a "clear undercurrent of sexual tension" in the bedroom scene and that Phoebe has, for Holden, replaced 'the mother as love object' and that Holden has a 'frantic need to save his sister from himself'".

Svogun's proposal that Holden seeks to save Phoebe from his own sexuality is at odds with Tolchin's (2007, 35) proposal of Holden's "profound lack of interest" in the female body which we discussed earlier (and found unsubstantiated) and demonstrates how differently critics have interpreted Holden's sexuality. Svogun goes on to expound her theory on the sexual undercurrent underlying Holden and Phoebe's encounter, and while she felicitously points out the similarities and contrasts between this scene and the scene with Holden and Sunny, her argument falls flat when she suggests that Holden has ambiguous sexual feelings about Phoebe. Svogun (2009, 700) writes:

> Holden's ambivalence about Phoebe, his fear of his own feelings, and his concern about hers—"She likes me a lot. I mean she's really quite fond of me. She really is"—seem convincingly conveyed by Salinger in Holden's frequent and rather agitated returns to the subject.

Let us provide some additional context to the quote Svogun supplies:

> I guess I thought it'd take my mind off getting pneumonia and dying. It didn't, though. I started thinking how old Phoebe would feel if I got pneumonia and died. It was a childish way to think, but I couldn't stop myself. She'd feel pretty bad if something like that happened. She likes me a lot. I mean she's quite fond of me. She really is. Anyway, I couldn't get that off my mind, so finally what I figured I'd do, I figured I'd better sneak home and see her, in case I died and all. (156)

The scene shows us Holden in what is perhaps his darkest moment, battling relentless depression and suicidal thoughts and debating whether his life has any worth to anyone. When he is

desperately seeking for reasons to live, it occurs to him that his little sister is fond of him and he eagerly clutches at that straw, resolving to go and meet her before his situation deteriorates. When considered in context, it is difficult to construe that passage as containing a revelation of Holden's ambiguous sexual feelings towards Phoebe without willfully ignoring the context in its entirety. It is doubly baffling when we consider how deftly Svogun points out the contrasts in the scenes with Sunny and Phoebe.

As further evidence of covert sexual ambivalence that surface in the scene with Phoebe, Svogun (2009, 701) points to how Holden manages to "satisfy [his feelings] subliminally … by enacting a ritual of physical union with Phoebe when he dances with her". Svogun notes the "sexual connotations of dancing" (2009, 702) and as evidence that Holden has sexually ambivalent feelings about dancing with Phoebe, she (2009, 701–702) points out how Holden says that "he 'doesn't do it out in public' with Phoebe, [and] is conscious of not wanting to yank her clothes 'up in the back', yet 'hold[s] her in close as hell'". I am not convinced, however, that dancing is by definition an act with sexual connotations, especially dancing with one's little sister or other relative. After all, is the groom dancing with his mother at a wedding truly and "by definition" an Oedipal act? I doubt many would make such a claim.

If we take a closer look at the quotations Svogun uses as evidence, we see that if we again look at the issue in a larger context, they actually work against her arguments instead of for it. Holden says he *does not like it* when adults "keep yanking the kid's dress up in the back by mistake" (175) — not that he is afraid that he might do so himself. Instead, Holden feels confident in dancing with Phoebe precisely because he knows he is not going to lift her dress up, and he feels safe doing it in private precisely because there are no onlookers to falsely interpret their dance as an act that sexual overtones — it is only dance, nothing more. The reason he is holding Phoebe "close as hell [is] *so that it doesn't matter that your legs are so much longer*" (175, emphasis mine), not because he craves the physical closeness of his little sister in a sexual sense.

Svogun also conveniently leaves out one crucial trait of Holden's: he is, as he says himself, simply "very fond of dancing" (70). He tap-dances for Stradlater "just for the hell of it" (29) — a dance for which there seems to be no suggestion of sexual connotations in Svogun's essay or anywhere else. He dances with all three girls, even the "ugly" one, at the Lavender Room — a place "that are very terrible to be in unless you have somebody good to dance with" (75–76) because he likes dancing.

In light of the evidence above, it is safe to conclude that an interpretation of Holden's affection towards Phoebe as purely fraternal, her effect on him as purifying rather than defiling, is more strongly based on textual evidence than any Freudian conjecture suggested by Svogun, Bryan, and others. Interestingly, writing six years previous to her 2009 essay, Svogun herself actually seemed to agree with me on this precise point, for in a 2003 essay, she aptly sums up Phoebe's role in Holden's reformation in a reading that is both forceful, easy to agree with, and — as opposed to her more recent essay — less cynical and more optimistic:

> Phoebe continues to function throughout the episode as a confidante, counselor, and source of insight and knowledge, insisting that Holden examine his real feelings and motives, and Holden recognizes Phoebe's unusual gifts … Clearly, Holden's pilgrimage to see his beloved younger sister, and her talents for advising, listening, and enlightening, provide him with the insights, awareness, and guidance he will rely on to begin to come to terms with his despair—just as a mythic hero's consultation with an oracle may help him to resolve a crisis. (Svogun 2002, 110)

4. Agents of socialization in *The Catcher in the Rye*

> IF YOU REALLY want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth. In the first place, that stuff bores me, and in the second place, my parents would have about two hemorrhages apiece if I told anything pretty 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. —Holden Caulfield (Salinger 1991, 1)

The opening passage of *The Catcher in the Rye* constitutes one of the most famous introductions in literary history. It gives us a glimpse of the specific nature of Holden's rebellious soul, or his "psychological gyroscope," as Riesman (1961, 16) would call it. The very first sentence — besides setting the angst-ridden tone the entire novel is laced with — tells us, via a reference to Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*, that despite his young age, Holden has managed to delve into the Western canon. Holden's allusion to *David Copperfield* evokes unavoidable comparisons between the two books and an in-depth investigation into the similarities and differences between them would certainly be a fitting subject for further study, but suffice it to note here that whereas *David Copperfield* is famously about "the first mistaken impulse of the undisciplined heart" (Dickens 2001, 347) and how David learns to rein it in, *The Catcher in the Rye* puts forth the question of what actually *constitutes* a disciplined heart and whether having one is unambiguously desirable in the first place.

The second sentence yields the first instance of a trait of Holden that is displayed time and again in the course of the book, which is Holden's sensitivity toward his parents and other authority figures — an often-misinterpreted aspect of the book. Writing about Holden's relationship with authority figures, Tolchin (2007, 34), for example, writes that *Catcher* "features the immediate discrediting of most authority figures". Kazin (2006, 117) in turn writes that "Holden Caulfield condemns parents and schools because he knows that they are incapable of

understanding him". Miller (2007, 63) suggests that Holden is merely "pretending to respect the feelings of his parents". Privitera (2008, 2) goes perhaps the furthest, writing that "Holden labels his parents phonies and representatives of everything wrong with society, and claims to want to have nothing to do with them". Privitera's claim — one which she fails to reinforce with a citation of any kind — is so patently false that one wonders whether Privitera has been reading a different book altogether, for neither of those things actually take place anywhere in the novel.

One central aspect of social conformity in *The Catcher in the Rye* is its protagonist's relationship with and attitude towards authority figures, such as parents and school teachers. It is an aspect of the book that is often misinterpreted in that Holden is often viewed by casual readers and scholars alike as being strictly and prototypically dissident and intractable towards both of the aforementioned entities when the case is far from that simple. In what follows, I intend to demonstrate that on the whole, Holden is tactful towards his parents' feelings and that instead of flat-out refuting all authority figures, Holden actually mostly agrees with their assessments. Even when he finds himself in disagreement with them, it is not that Holden opposes them simply for the sake of gainsaying authority figures because it is in his nature to do so; rather, it is the stale social traditions and patterns of conformity they obliviously and perhaps even unwittingly subscribe to and on occasion mechanically repeat that sets Holden on edge. The difference may be difficult to grasp at first, but I hope to cast light on it in what follows. After discussing authority figures such as parents and teachers, I will proceed to discuss the role that other agents of socialization — that is, sources of tradition-direction, inner-direction, or other-direction — play in *The Catcher in the Rye* and, in specific, Holden's relationship with those agents.

4.1. Parents

Since Holden's parents are almost solely present by allusion, there is little evidence to investigate the role they play in implanting direction into Holden's life, but analyzing Holden's views and behavior with regard to his parents is certainly possible. On the whole, Holden's demeanor can not honestly be described as consistent, but one abiding aspect of his life is that he does not want to cause trouble to or disappointment in his parents or other authority figures in his life. Indeed, not once during the course of the entire novel does Holden assign blame to his parents for anything — often the exact opposite is true. A case in point is when Holden goes to see Mr. Spencer, his history teacher, one last time before his expulsion, Spencer speaks highly of Holden's parents:

> "I had the privilege of meeting your mother and dad when they had their little chat with Dr. Thurmer some weeks ago. They're grand people."
> "Yes, they are. They're very nice."
> Grand. There's a word I really hate. It's a phony [sic]. I could puke every time I hear it. (9)

What Holden internally protests is Spencer's use of the word "grand", which is on Holden's long list of things he considers "phony". Proof that this protest is not indicative of his attitude towards Mr. Spencer as an authority figure is found later in the book when Holden voices his disgust at the word when his tentative romantic interest Sally Hayes uses it: "If there's one word I hate, it's grand. It's so phony." (106). Holden's objection to the use of the word might leave Holden's feelings towards his parents open to misinterpretation to the casual reader, but the thing Holden actually takes issue with is Spencer's word choice and likely what he perceives to be the "phony" intent behind it. The notion of his parents being decent people Holden accepts without demur.

Indeed, whenever Holden describes his parents, it is difficult to detect even an undercurrent of contempt towards them. This is true even he talks about his father, who, by virtue of

his occupation is surely an embodiment of many of the things Holden *actually* despairs against and where his most forceful fits of hopelessness stem from:

> My father's quite wealthy, though. I don't know how much he makes — he's never discussed that stuff with me — but I imagine quite a lot. He's a corporation lawyer. Those boys really haul it in. (107)

As mentioned above, as with other aspects of the book, here, too, critics seem to run rampant assigning traits to Holden without merit: Alsen (56), for example, suggests that "in Holden's view, even his own father is a phony because he is more interested in making money than in helping others". The passage Alsen refers to is towards the end of the book, when Holden is talking with his little sister Phoebe about his prospects as a productive member of the society:

> "Well, a lawyer—like Daddy and all."
> "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. And besides. Even if you *did* go around saving guys' lives and all, how would you know if you did it because you really *wanted* to save guys' lives, or because you did it because what you *really* wanted to do was be a terrific lawyer, with everybody slapping you on the back and congratulating you in court when the goddam trial was over, the reporters and everybody, the way it is in the dirty movies? How would you know you weren't being a phony? The trouble is, you *wouldn't*." (172)

There are various scenes in the novel where Holden could speak out directly against his parents, but on each occasion he conspicuously refrains from doing so, and this scene is no exception. Contrary to what Alsen suggests, in this passage, Holden is not singling out his father or speaking out against him in particular in any way. Rather, he goes on a tirade on how he feels about the legal profession and its inherent phoniness; he is voicing his suspicion that there is an inherent lack of integrity and altruism in a profession that is purportedly based on just those two values and that its practitioners are unwitting egotists instead of the selfless philan-

thropists they might see themselves as. Rowe (2001, 114) summarizes Holden's line of thinking neatly:

> Trying to imagine himself a lawyer like his father, Holden wonders if his father knows why he does what he does. Holden knows that lawyers who rake in the cash don't go around saving the innocent. But even if you were such an idealistic fellow, "how would you know if you did it because you really *wanted* to save guys' lives, or because what you really *wanted* to do was be a terrific lawyer, with everybody slapping you in the back and congratulating you in court. …" In a society as replete with verbal falsities as this one, how do you trust your own words, your own thoughts? How do you know when you are telling yourself the truth?

Holden, then, is not assigning blame to his father: he sees him not as a culprit but more as a *victim* of the human condition, even though nothing would be more normal or indeed "proto-typical" (Pinsker 1993, 35) than for an adolescent such as Holden to direct his disaffection and discontent towards his father as a prime representative of the condition he is so distraught over.

Holden does not and cannot feel indifferent toward his parents' or anyone else's feelings. His entire escapade is based on the premise that he does not want to face the disappointment of his parents and aggravate his mother's mental health issues stemming from the death of his little brother Allie by informing them that he has flunked out of yet another school. For this argument, each of the following passages stands as evidence:

> "And how do you think they'll take the news?"
> "Well… they'll be pretty irritated about it," I said. "They really will. This is about the fourth school I've gone to." I shook my head. (9)

> I figured my parents wouldn't get old Thurmer's letter saying I'd been given the ax till maybe Tuesday or Wednesday. I didn't want to go home or anything till they got it and thoroughly digested it and all. I didn't want to be around when they *first* got it. My mother gets very hysterical. She's not too bad after she gets something thoroughly digested, though. (51)

> She hasn't felt too healthy since my brother Allie died. She's very nervous. That's another reason why I hated like hell for her to know I got the ax again. (107)

Holden's motivations are no doubt tinged with a healthy dose of self-preservation from his parents' admonishments, but that is only human, not rebellious. The thing to note is that Holden neither wears the force field of indifference (feigned or otherwise) nor does he lapse into a fit of pure unadulterated anger, as a run-of-the-mill adolescent rebel might do. After all, when he tells us about Allie's death in the beginning of the book, he reveals that his parents tried to have him psychoanalyzed when he broke all the windows in the garage in his anguish about Allie passing away, he adds: "I don't blame them. I really don't" (39).

A final, powerful piece of evidence of Holden's remarkable sensitivity towards his parents is found towards the end of the book, with Holden perched upon a bench in a dark Central Park, contemplating his dead little brother, Allie. With depression taking a stronger hold of Holden than perhaps anywhere else in the book, he contemplates on what would happen if he died of pneumonia. He pictures "millions of jerks coming to my funeral and all" (154) but he has only concern for his mother's feelings:

> Anyway, I kept worrying that I was getting pneumonia, with all those hunks of ice in my hair, and that I was going to die. I felt sorry as hell for my mother and father. Especially my mother, because she still isn't over my brother Allie yet. I kept picturing her not knowing what to do with all my suits and athletic equipment and all. (154)

Among those millions of jerks are aunts and cousins and an annoying grandfather, who seem to be jerks mostly because Holden associates them with Allie's death, but not his mother, who he knows would be devastated were he to die too.

That Holden is not so much concerned with his own feelings regarding his death as the effects it would have upon his parents speaks, of course, to the depth of Holden's desolation, but it is also a clear demonstration of how Holden's brand of non-conformity does not manifest itself in a simple and clear-cut indifference or hatred towards his parents. Nor is Holden's relationship with other authority figures suffused with unambiguous resistance: Mr. Spencer

and Mr. Antolini, both former teachers of Holden, make attempts to stabilize Holden's inner gyroscope (to evoke Riesman's metaphor of an inner-directed person), and to our surprise, as we will see in what follows, they are successful to an extent, because Holden takes heed of the advice of both. At the beginning of the novel, however, there is no question that Holden's psychological gyroscope is out of kilter, for as Riesman (1961, 24) notes, one of the central characteristics of inner-direction is stability:

> Since the direction to be taken in life has been learned in the privacy of the home from a small number of guides and since principles, rather than details of behavior, are internalized, the inner-directed person is capable of great stability.

What with the death of his brother, his expulsions from a number of schools, his absent parents, his tumultuous transition into adulthood, stability is an aspect distinctly missing from Holden's social circumstances.

Among other things, then, *Catcher* is also a novel about inner-direction: about Holden's helter-skelter psychological gyroscope and its shifts and whirls during the course of the novel; about, as Whitfield (1997, 593) writes, "history veering out of control, about the abyss into which parents could no longer prevent their offspring from staring, about the impotence to which a can-do people was unaccustomed"; and about the unraveling of that predicament. What follows is an investigation of Holden's encounters with two former teachers of his, Mr. Spencer and Mr. Antolini, his relationship with them as authority figures, and what comes of their attempts to set his psychological gyroscope on course.

4.2. Mr. Spencer

If Holden walks softly on the emotional landscape that is his parents' feelings, he is no less sensitive towards other people, including other authority figures in his life, such as his teachers — or at least former teachers, which is the only kind of teacher Holden interacts with in the

novel. In the opening chapter of the book, Holden goes to meet Mr. Spencer, his history teacher, which in itself is a very curious thing to do. After all, what kind of a rebel goes to see his indisposed history teacher, one of the people behind the verdict to expel him from Pencey? Nonetheless, visit him Holden does. During their chat, Mr. Spencer is nothing but decidedly impolite, unpleasant, and aloof: "He wasn't even listening. He hardly ever listened to you when you said something" (10). Throughout their encounter, Holden is inarguably a picture of politeness, always addressing Mr. Spencer as "sir" and doing his best to answer all of his questions. When Mr. Spencer embarks on his endeavor to embarrass Holden, he asks Holden to bring him Holden's exam paper. Holden acquiesces, saying that it "was a very dirty trick, but I went over and brought it over to him—I didn't have any alternative or anything" (11). But he *did* have an alternative: he could either have forgone his visit to Mr. Spencer altogether or leave rather than take Mr. Spencer's psychological abuse. Holden is too straight-laced of a rebel to simply up and leave, however, so he stays to take in all of Mr. Spencer's admonishments and advice.

During his meeting with Spencer, Holden is put off by two things: Spencer's decrepitude and the platitudes he doles out. Holden wonders "what the heck [Spencer] is still living for" (6) and is repulsed by his bad posture, bumpy chest, pale, hairless legs, and his incapability to pick things up from the floor himself. Considering Holden's idealization of the innocence of childhood, that he flinches at the visual manifestations of old age is unsurprising, but again, should be taken as no indication of his opposition to authority figures — only to the corrupting effects of age and experience, whose physical manifestations Mr. Spencer is riddled with. When it comes to the "advice" Mr. Spencer sees fit to offer Holden, it boils down to the tired maxim of "life is a game":

> "Life is a game, boy. Life is a game that one plays according to the rules."
> "Yes, sir. I know it is. I know it." (8)

About Holden's meeting in general and this passage in particular, Pinsker (1993, 33) suggests that "Holden is engaged in nothing less than a contemporary revolution against authority figures". Tolchin (2007, 34) in turn writes that *Catcher* "features the immediate discrediting of most authority figures" and continues as follows:

> Holden's interior monologue automatically corrodes the impact of the advice proffered, in large part because the advice itself hovers on the level of the cliché … Holden immediately discards the advice, although he does pretend to agree.

While I concede that this is perhaps the one place in the novel that one could imaginably interpret as Holden discrediting an authority figure, contrary to what Pinsker and (to a lesser extent) Tolchin suggest, Holden does not discard Mr. Spencer's advice because of his status as an authority figure: rather, he acknowledges Mr. Spencer's good intentions but justifiably views the refrain of "life is a game", originally recited by Dr. Thurmer, Pencey's headmaster, and facilely repeated by Mr. Spencer, as nugatory.

Mr. Spencer's habit of dispensing second-hand platitudes, together with his attempt to use shame — the primary guiding mechanism of the tradition-directed character type — to get Holden on the course that is expected of him, marks the old teacher as a representative of the tradition-directed character type. As Riesman (1961, 25) writes in a near-perfect summary of Spencer's behavior, the "tradition-directed person takes his signals from others, but they come in a cultural monotone; he needs no complex receiving equipment to pick them up". It is worth mentioning here that while it might seem from all that we have learned so far about tradition-directed characters that to be tradition-directed is to be everything Holden is not, we must note that Holden is not completely oblivious to tradition in that he recognizes the need for social conventions and manners. This is demonstrated when he meets the new boyfriend of his older brother D.B's ex-girlfriend. Although he is a person Holden is not the least bit interested in meeting, he remains polite and sociable: "The Navy guy and I told each other we

were glad to've met each other. Which always kills me. I'm always saying 'Glad to've met you' to somebody I'm not at *all* glad I met. If you want to stay alive, you have to say that stuff, though" (87). As Kaplan (1956, 77) writes, Holden "does not understand the world, but he knows how one should behave in it". Indeed, it is difficult to argue that Holden is a rebel of any kind when it comes to the matter of social manners.

Holden's receiving equipment for receiving social direction is somewhat more complex than that of the tradition-directed person. If life is indeed a game "one plays by the rules", Holden might ask, "Who wrote the rules? Are the rules any good? Do they make any sense? Is it reasonable to expect that the same set of rules are applicable for everyone?" He notes that if life is indeed a game, the game is rigged:

> Game, my ass. Some game. If you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it's a game, all right—I'll admit that. But if you get on the other side, where there aren't any hot-shots, then what's a game about it? Nothing. No game. (8)

As far as Holden is concerned, being able to consider life a game is a luxury reserved for "hot-shots" like Stradlater, Carl Luce, and Ernie the pianist — those who, by some mechanism of direction or other, have no issues adjusting to the patterns of conformity society is imbued with. For people like him, there is no game to be played because the rules do not make sense and the referees have never even stopped to think about it.

Rather than trying to discredit Mr. Spencer as an authority figure, however, Holden seems earnest in his belief that his old teacher is trying to help him:

> "I'd like to put some sense in that head of yours, boy. I'm trying to help you. I'm trying to *help* you, if I can."
> He really was, too. You could see that. (14)

It is as Holden himself says to Phoebe towards the end of the novel when he is telling her about "this one old guy that was about fifty" who was at Pencey for a reunion:

> He kept talking to us the whole time, telling us how when he was at Pencey they were the happiest days of his life, and giving us a lot of advice for the future and all. Boy, did he depress me! I don't mean he was a bad guy—he wasn't. But you don't have to be a bad guy to depress somebody—you can be a good guy and do it. All you have to do to depress somebody is give them a lot of phony advice while you're looking for your initials in some can door—that's all you have to do. (168–169)

In other words, it is not that Holden is calling into question Mr. Spencer's authority as such; it is more that he feels Mr. Spencer is mindlessly parroting conventional wisdom that he perhaps has not invested much thought into himself. Holden's grievance, then, is not the people who think in a certain way — it is that most people seem to think the way they do without ever even considering any alternatives. Furthermore, Holden later acknowledges that his predicament is in all likelihood temporary, but Mr. Spencer is not convinced:

> "Look, sir. Don't worry about me," I said. "I mean it. I'll be all right. I'm just going through a phase right now. Everybody goes through phases and all, don't they?"
> "I don't know, boy. I don't know."
> I hate it when somebody answers that way. "Sure. Sure, they do," I said. "I mean it, sir. Please don't worry about me." I sort of put my hand on his shoulder. "Okay?" I said. (15)

Pinsker (1993, 35) convincingly argues that in Holden's encounter with Mr. Spencer, "Spencer is the more childish of the two" and that Holden makes no objection to his teacher's admonishments: instead, he pleads guilty and agrees that failing Holden was the only option for Spencer. Even though Holden puts up no resistance, Pinsker (1993, 35) points out, Spencer pettily proceeds to "grind Holden's nose in his impossibly bad exam essay". I agree with Pinsker that Spencer surfaces as the less amicable of the two in their encounter, but with regard to the passage as a whole, Pinsker's reading stands somewhat in contrast to mine. He correctly describes (1993, 33) Mr. Spencer as "well-meaning" and "obviously distressed because he has to flunk Holden in history" but also standing for "sanity," which seems to me an especially prejudiced judgement: does Pinsker suggest that people like Holden, adolescents who

are unable to buy into the social contract written by people with a worldview drastically different than their own, who are in the process of being shaped by their still-developing social sensibilities, are insane? Pinsker (1993, 34) also paints a rather snobbish picture of Holden by implying that he is supercilious because he comes from a privileged economic background:

> Spencer is destined to become yet another bead in Holden's long string of disappointments. For one thing, Holden is depressed to note that the Spencers are, by Holden's glib economic reckoning, poor: without a butler, they must answer knocks at the door; without a maid, Mrs. Spencer serves whatever refreshments their meager funds can afford.

There is no doubt about two things: that Holden's behavior at the Spencer residence is "glib" (meaning 'fluent but insincere') in that he does not explicitly comment on the economic status of the Spencers or voice his distaste at Mr. Spencer's advanced age and at him sitting on the bed with his bathrobe half open and that Holden comes from a privileged background. With regard to the first point, as discussed above, Holden taking issue with Mr. Spencer's age is to be expected considering his deification of the purity and innocence of childhood, but it is a point of contention whether Holden's behavior could truly be described as "glibness" or simple common courtesy.

When it comes to the economic disparity between Holden's family and the Spencers, to say that Holden feels superior in the fact is a reading laden with bias and one that ignores how he talks about the subject in later scenes in the book. If anything, he feels uncomfortable, sad, and perhaps even guilty. When he talks about being "a spendthrift at heart" (107) and having a habit of forgetting to pick up his change, he says that it is a habit that "drives [his] parents crazy. You can't blame them" (107) — which, again, is clearly not something he would say if he had severe animus towards his parents. In his encounter with the two nuns at Grand Central Station, Holden feels bad that they probably never get to go "anywhere swanky for lunch or anything" (114) on account of being poor. He notices they have inexpensive suitcases and

says that he hates it "when somebody has cheap suitcases", after which he relates a story about his former roommate, Dick Slagle:

> For a while when I was at Elkton Hills, I roomed with this boy, Dick Slagle, that had these very inexpensive suitcases. He used to keep them under the bed, instead of on the rack, so that nobody'd see them standing next to mine. It depressed holy hell out of me, and I kept wanting to throw mine out or something, or even trade with him. (108)

Wanting to dispose of an expensive item upon seeing someone with a cheaper equivalent is surely antithetical to the definition of snobbishness; rather, Holden seems to feel guilty about his economically privileged status. When considered in this light, we are spurred towards an interesting discussion about the role of other-direction in Holden's life, for as Riesman (1961, xxxii) writes, an other-directed person "seeks less a snobbish status in the eyes of others than assurance of being emotionally in tune with them" — which, I argue, is precisely Holden's motive for acting the way he does.

The Slagle incident, argues Brookeman (1991, 70), is a prime example of Holden exhibiting diffuse anxiety and "of the climate of anxiety and fear in which Holden exists, and in which the antennae of his radar have to be continually alert to detect other people's identities, values, and probings". Even more so, however, it is a valuable demonstration of Holden's bafflement at the desire for outward conformity, at the monomaniacal drive towards adjustment, which is in fact what Holden's impotent rebellion is predicated upon. It is not, after all, that Holden is on an indiscriminate crusade against other-direction: quite the opposite. As Brookeman (1991, 72) notes, Holden himself is an acute "victim" of the kind of diffuse anxiety Riesman had observed was on the rise in the postwar American society, pointing out that "the dominant agency of social control in Holden's world is the peer group". Holden's empathy for Slagle exemplifies the "considerateness, sensitivity, and tolerance" that Riesman (1961, 16) counts among the more buoyant aspects of other-direction. Slagle's motivation, on the

other hand, is "to become invisible beyond comment within a group" by trying to maintain an illusion of relative wealth. As far as both patterns of behavior are responses to signals from peers — blips on a radar, if you will — both can be classified as other-direction, but while Holden's behavior is largely predicated upon empathy and compassion, Slagle, with his inferior suitcases, is a victim of what Brookeman (1991, 70) calls "status anxiety", which is "the desire to become invisible beyond comment within a group". For Slagle, the main thing is to fit in; for Holden, conformity is irrelevant and empathy is key.

Having given Holden hollow advice, Mr. Spencer proceeds to rub Holden's nose in his failure to pass history by stating repeatedly how Holden "knew nothing" and reading aloud one of his essays. As Rowe (2001, 115) writes, "Mr. Spencer, the history teacher who *seems* to take a fatherly interest in him, is actually most interested in shaming and humiliating him". He accomplishes this by doing his very best at crushing any potential future aspirations Holden might have:

> "Do you feel absolutely no concern for your future, boy?"
> "Oh, I feel some concern, all right. Sure. Sure, I do." I thought about it for a minute. "But not too much, I guess. Not too much, I guess."
> "You *will*," old Spencer said. "You will, boy. You will when it's too late." (24)

Having done his utmost at utterly destroying Holden's spirits, Mr. Spencer assures Holden that he's trying to help him. As mentioned above, Holden does not dispute that fact and thanks him for the words of wisdom and assures him that they're simply "on opposite sides of the pole" (15). In other words, he is not gainsaying Mr. Spencer, but he acknowledges that they are in different places and looking at Holden's predicament from different angles. In addition to offering insight into the precise nature of Holden's particular brand of cultural resistance, the scene with Mr. Spencer casts light on the inability of the school system to handle students like Holden, which would be an interesting and fertile subject for further study. In a way, Mr. Antolini, another former teacher of Holden's who has a prominent role in the book, is simulta-

neously a representative both for and against the merits of education, and it is this dynamic we move on to investigate next.

4.3. Mr. Antolini

Holden's encounter with Mr. Antolini in the antepenultimate chapter of the book is an odd scene in many ways. With regard to the subject at hand, it is also perhaps the most significant one, which is why it deserves a more thorough treatment than the other sections. What most readers likely remember from the scene is its ending, in which Holden wakes up to Mr. Antolini "petting … or patting [him] on the goddam head" (192). Since the question of whether Antolini's actions amount to an attempt at sexual molestation is relevant to our discussion in that it is related both to Holden's relationship with authority figures as well as to the themes of sex and sexuality above, I will dedicate a few paragraphs to discussing the issue here.

Critics are in some disagreement as to whether Mr. Antolini's actions are sexually motivated. For example, Tolchin (2007, 35) describes it "a moment that may or may not constitute an overture to sexual activity". Edwards (1977, 561) in turn has concocted a theory so facile that I hesitate to even cite it, but I include it here since it illustrates the variety of critical opinion on Holden's encounter with Mr. Antolini:

> … the difference between patting and petting is great: we pat children and pet lovers. Furthermore, nothing that Holden says about Antolini's response to Holden's wild flight in the night suggests that Antolini is guilty of making a sexual advance. Besides, what matters most of all in incident is Holden's distortion of experience, specifically, his overreaction. Even if Antolini did make an improper move, Holden is safe: Mrs. Antolini is in the adjoining room; Antolini is by no means aggressive; and Antolini has agreed to go to bed.

Setting aside the fact that we also pet animals (an act laden with a sexual agenda only in extremely exceptional cases), one once again wonders whether Edwards has actually been reading some other book than *Catcher*. To briefly recapitulate Holden's visit to Mr. Antolini, paying

special attention to cues that might shed light on Antolini's motives: when Holden arrives at the Antolinis, Mr. Antolini takes Holden's coat and says: "I expected to see a day-old infant in your arms. Nowhere to turn. Snowflakes in your eyelashes" (180). If you dedicate anything more than a passing thought to it, the latter phrase is especially odd coming from a teacher and certainly feels romantically charged. When Mr. Antolini leaves Holden to go to sleep, he says to him: "Good night, handsome" (191) — again, really quite an odd and inappropriate thing to say to an student, previous or current. When Holden wakes up to Mr. Antolini patting or petting him, Holden asks him, "What the hellya doing?" to which Antolini responds, "Nothing! I'm simply sitting here, admiring—" (192). Regardless of whether he was petting or patting, what exactly was he admiring? I have a difficult time imagining what his next word might have been besides something related to Holden's physical appearance.

When Holden is making to leave, he says Mr. Antolini "was trying to act very goddam casual and cool and all, but he wasn't any too goddamn cool. Take my word" (192). If Antolini did not intend to commit any transgression, why is he not "cool"? Add to all this that Antolini is "a pretty heavy drinker" (181) and "pretty oiled up" (188) by the time they decide to retire, if one remains unconvinced about Antolini's ulterior motives, one can simply imagine the same scene and the details I described above but with Holden as a sixteen-year-old girl instead of a boy and I suspect all doubts that might linger will simply vanish. In light of all this evidence, when it comes to Edwards's reading, we can safely discard the claim that "nothing … suggests that Antolini is guilty of making a sexual advance" as utterly without basis. Even if we disregard said evidence, the notion that Holden "overreacts" is even more absurd: if one imagines oneself in Holden's position, waking up to the indeterminate touch of a former teacher holding a cocktail glass in his hand, how many of us would have the presence of mind to conclude that the teacher's wife is in the next room, he is not aggressive, and that he has agreed to go to bed, ergo there is nothing to worry about? Very few, I would wager.

Returning to the topic of Holden's relationship with authority figures and teachers in specific, what might not be immediately obvious is that as with the scenes with Sunny and Phoebe (see sections 3.3 and 3.4), there are numerous interesting parallels and contrasts between this scene and the scene with Mr. Spencer at the very beginning of the book. Holden runs to Mr. Spencer's house, without even knowing why he is running, and the weather is "terrifically cold, and no sun out or anything, and you felt like you were disappearing every time you crossed a road" (5). To Mr. Antolini's house Holden takes a cab because he feels "funny" and "[s]ort of dizzy" (181). On both occasions, Holden has to wait for what seems like a long time to get in; at the Spencers, he waits impatiently for Mrs. Spencer to open the door and at the Antolinis, he has to wait for the elevator boy: "the elevator boy *fin*ally let me up, the bastard" (181). In both scenes, Holden experiences a sudden and pressing need to leave: at the Spencers, it is because there is such a great figurative distance between them that he feels he and Mr. Spencer are on the "opposite sides of the pole" (15) and because Mr. Spencer is making him feel depressed, and at the Antolinis it is because Antolini gets all too close to Holden when he wakes Holden up with his sexual advances. Mr. Spencer is so old Holden wonders what he is still living for, while Mr. Antolini is relatively young — around the same age as Holden's older brother D.B., whom Holden idolizes, which to Holden means that "you could kid around with [Antolini] without losing your respect for him" (174). Mr. Spencer teaches history, a subject Holden flunked, whereas Mr. Antolini is an English teacher, the only subject Holden did *not* flunk. The Antolinis live in a "very swanky apartment over on Sutton Place" (180), whereas the Spencers "didn't have too much dough" (5). Both teachers are wearing bathrobes when Holden goes to see them, but whereas Mr. Spencer's "very sad, ratty old bathrobe that he was probably born in or something" (7) makes Holden depressed, Holden considers the similarly bathrobe-clad Mr. Antolini a "pretty sophisticated guy" (181). Yelling plays a part in both scenes: with Mr. Spencer was "always yelling, outside class. It got on your

nerves sometimes. The minute I went in, I was sort of sorry I'd come" (7). With the Antolinis, however, "[y]ou were always yelling when you were there. That's because the both of them were never in the same room at the same time. It was sort of funny" (182). Also, Mr. and Mrs. Spencer have their own rooms, and Mr. and Mrs. Antolini are never in the same room. There is sickness in both apartments: Mr. Spencer has the grippe and Mrs. Antolini "had asthma pretty bad" (181).[8] At the Spencers, the preferred substances are hot chocolate and Vicks Nose Drops and at the Antolinis, highballs, cigarettes, and coffee. Some of the contrasts and correspondences listed above serve mostly to highlight Holden's favorable disposition toward Mr. Antolini, youth, and wealth and his receptiveness to Mr. Antolini's influence, but as we will see in the analysis that follows, some of the contrasts have deeper meaning, and taken as a whole, they comprise a signifier of how the formative journey Holden embarked upon in Pencey Prep has shaped his way of thinking.

When Holden and Antolini sit down to discuss Holden's flunking out of Pencey, Antolini persuades Holden to tell him why he flunked Oral Expression. Holden tells him that it was because when every student was assigned to give a speech in front of the class, the teacher for that course, Mr. Vinson, graded students based on the extent to which they digressed during their speech, and seeing as Holden's narrative technique in *The Catcher in the Rye* is practically digression stacked upon digression, it comes as no surprise that Mr. Vinson's methodology is an ill fit for Holden. He tells Antolini about Richard Kinsella, who picked his father's farm as the subject of his speech but who then veers off course and, in a rather close approximation of Holden's narrative technique, excitedly starts talking about his uncle getting hospitalized because of polio and so forth. Antolini suggests, not unreasonably, that one might want to "stick to his guns" after choosing a subject or that they should have picked a different subject in the first place, but for Holden, things are, once again, not quite as simple as that:

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[8] Interestingly, according to Holden, Mr. Antolini "smoked like a fiend" (186) inside the house in spite of his wife's illness.

> … I mean I guess he should've picked his uncle as a subject, instead of the farm, if that interested him most. But what I mean is, lots of time you don't *know* what interests you most till you start talking about something that *doesn't* interest you most. I mean you can't help it sometimes. What I think is, you're supposed to leave somebody alone if he's at least being interesting and he's getting all excited about something. I like it when somebody gets excited about something. It's nice. … (184–185)

This line of thinking demonstrates Holden's impulsive character and makes a reappearance in the scene where Phoebe ask Holden what he would like to become as an adult and Holden demurs, ruling out the two traditionally respected fields of science and law, until he comes up with his famous misinterpretation of the Robert Burns poem "Comin' Thro' the Rye" and tells her how he would like to become a catcher in the rye, standing in a field of rye "on the edge of some crazy cliff" (173), catching children before they fall off — not exactly a specific, well thought-out career path. Holden himself condenses his view into a single nugget of adolescent acuity at the very end of the book when people keep asking whether he is going to apply himself when he goes back to school: "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. I *think* I am, but how do I know? I swear it's a stupid question" (213).

Holden's sentiment regarding Richard Kinsella's speech, then, not only plays into Holden's often reiterated preference for substance over form but it also demonstrates how Holden initially not only lacks but does not even miss having an "internalized set of goals" (Riesman 1961, 8) acquired early in life, a pivotal trait of the inner-directed character type and a detail that is also manifested in other aspects of his life, such as giving a speech. It is not that Holden exhibits an utter lack a set of internalized goals instilled in him by authority figures, but with regards to professional ambitions, there is no force in his life that would propel him towards a future career. Rather, for Holden, it is impossible to know whether something really interests you until you start doing it. This is one aspect where Riesman's historical character types become insufficient for classifying Holden's variety of social non-conformity and a prime exam-

ple of Holden's anomie manifesting itself; so far in the novel, there has been no social entity that has been able offer Holden direction in a way that satisfies him. Mr. Antolini is his last resort as an authority figure and it is on him Holden hedges all his bets on in hopes that he can offer him moral support and guidance and offer him a way out of his anomie.

The most important parallel between the scenes with Mr. Spencer and Mr. Antolini, however, is how both of them preach the values of an academic education. Whereas Mr. Spencer tries to achieve that goal by using guilt and admonishment — the tools of inner-direction — Mr. Antolini tries to convince Holden of its virtues as a means to gain insight into human behavior and gauge the expanse of one's mind and what sorts of thoughts it can hold. Unfortunately, as noted before, Mr. Antolini is, in Holden's words, "pretty oiled up" (188), having partaken of an unknown amount of highball cocktails prior to and during their meeting, which has the effect of rendering some of his advice quite indecipherable in intent:

> He started concentrating again. Then he said, "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. The whole arrangement's designed for men who, at some time or other in their lives, were looking for something their own environment couldn't supply them with. Or they thought their own environment couldn't supply them with. So they gave up looking. They gave it up before they ever really even got started. You follow me?"
> "Yes, sir."
> "Sure?"
> "Yes."
> He got up and poured some more booze in his glass. (187)

The falling metaphor is appropriate enough, but what does he refer to by "[t]he whole arrangement"? Designed by who? To these questions there is no answer, which leaves Mr. Antolini's metaphor quite limp. Tolchin (2007, 33) appears to have some insight into the matter, for she writes:

> Antolini recognizes his protégé's turmoil, authenticates it, and shows him a way out of his supposed isolation. In fact, Antolini does not merely validate Holden's existence; he describes a utopia of adult Holdens, a place Holden himself has not imagined and cannot grasp.

That Mr. Antolini recognizes Holden's predicament, validates his existence, and proposes a solution is indisputable, but he "describes a utopia of adult Holdens" only in the sense that he simply points out that Holden is not the first person to feel as he does at his age. In other words, he is not suggesting that there is a multitude of adults "suffering" from the same anomie Holden has contracted and that Holden can identify with, displaying the same "vehement hatred of institutional confines" (Whitfield 1997, 587) Holden does; only that there are people who are adults now who have experienced some of the same things Holden is now experiencing. After all, he warns Holden of "a special kind of fall, a horrible kind" (187), not a world where his anomie is the norm and the whole notion of adjustment is irrelevant. Instead, like the protector Holden himself seeks to become to the innocent children that come after him, Mr. Antolini is "standing on the edge of some crazy cliff" (173), trying to prevent Holden from falling off it, and he is proposing to Holden a way to achieve that exact same goal. Mr. Antolini explains to Holden how education can help him gain knowledge Holden is interested in and how he can one day pass on information to someone else:

> "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. You'll learn from them—if you want to. Just as someday, if you have something to offer, someone will learn something from you. It's a beautiful reciprocal arrangement. And it isn't education. It's history. It's poetry." (189)

While Mr. Antolini's delivery is inconsistent in that he tries to impress upon Holden the importance of academic education but the apotheosis of his sermon is that "it isn't education", it nonetheless has a profound effect on Holden. After leaving the Antolinis, Holden feels sick. Besides noting that he feels "more depressed than I ever was in my whole

life" (194), his headache has worsened and his eyes "felt sore and burny" (195). A magazine he reads at Grand Central furthermore convinces him that he has bad hormones and terminal cancer. Moreover, he mentions feeling like he is going to vomit without knowing exactly why three times in the chapter that follows his escape from Mr. Antolini's "perverty" clutches. That Holden is feeling terrible is an understatement: it is almost as if he is struggling with digesting Antolini's message, be it because the import and magnitude of the message itself or because, as Tolchin (2007, 35) says, "Salinger places 'truth' in the mouth of a pedophile".

In the beginning of the book, when Holden is running to Mr. Spencer's house, the weather is "terrifically cold", the road is "icy as hell" (5), and he experiences the feeling of disappearing upon crossing Route 204:

> After I got across the road, I felt like I was sort of disappearing. It was that kind of a crazy afternoon, terrifically cold, and no sun out or anything, and you felt like you were disappearing every time you crossed a road. … I was really frozen. My ears were hurting and I could hardly move my fingers at all. (5)

In a yet another parallel between the scenes with Mr. Spencer and Mr. Antolini, after leaving Mr. Antolini's apartment, Holden is walking down Fifth Avenue when he describes how "something spooky started happening" (197) every time he starts crossing the street at the end of a block:

> Every time I came to the end of a block and stepped off the goddam curb, I had this feeling that I'd never get to the other side of the street. I thought I'd just go down, down, down, and nobody'd ever see me again. Boy, did it scare me. You can't imagine. I started sweating like a bastard—my whole shirt and underwear and everything.

Before being stained by the experience of the "madman stuff" (1) that befalls him during the course of the novel, Holden is unmoved upon symbolically crossing the threshold into adulthood because he is so vehemently opposed to the notion of adulthood that he does not stop to give it a second thought: "I don't even know what I was running for—I guess I just felt like

it" (5). When Mr. Spencer asks asks him whether he feels any concern for his future, as mentioned above, Holden admits that he does not: "Oh, I feel some concern, all right. Sure. Sure, I do" (24).

After his encounter with Mr. Antolini, however, Spencer's prophecy is proven false in that even though it is arguably yet not too late, Holden starts experiencing the "special kind of fall" Antolini spoke of and starts sweating profusely, in contrast to the "terrific coldness" he feels in the beginning of the book. The fall drives Holden to such a fit off terror that he begins invoking Allie — who to Holden is the avatar of childhood innocence and perpetuity — every time he steps off the curb, entreating him not to let him disappear upon crossing the road:

> Every time I'd get to the end of a block I'd make believe I was talking to my brother Allie. I'd say to him, "Allie, don't let me disappear. Allie, don't let me disappear. Allie, don't let me disappear. Please, Allie." And then when I'd reach the other side of the street without disappearing, I'd thank him. (198)

Sensing impending doom, Holden literally deifies Allie, praying to him instead of God or any other traditional deity for salvation. When his dead god-brother grants his wish and keeps Holden anchored to the mortal world, it dawns on Holden that clinging to the gossamer of childhood innocence forever is nothing more than a castle in the air — a dismal realization that is concretized when he concedes defeat to a "Fuck you" sign someone scratched on the wall of Phoebe's school with a knife: "If you had a million years to do it in, you couldn't rub out even *half* the "Fuck you" signs in the world. It's impossible" (202).

Holden then proceeds to concoct a fantasy that would allow him to cross the border into adulthood without being exposed to any of the phoniness it is so thoroughly corrupted with: "I thought what I'd do was, I'd pretend I was one of those deaf-mutes. That way I wouldn't

have to have any goddam stupid useless conversations with anybody" (198).[9] Eager to let Phoebe know that he has figured out an answer to the question she hounded him with, Holden starts for Phoebe's school to let her know about his plans, seemingly with a lack of regard for his own safety: "So all of a sudden, I ran like a madman across the street—I damn near got killed doing it, if you want to know the truth" (199).

It is then, in the second to last chapter of the book, that Holden seems to take heed of Antolini's advice and apply his academic knowledge in a scene where his meetings with Spencer and Antolini converge in an interesting way. Holden is waiting for Phoebe at the Museum of Art when he meets two boys who ask him where the mummies are. Holden takes them to the tomb with the mummies and proceeds to give them a brief lecture on Egyptian burial habits:

> Finally we found the place where the mummies were, and we went in.
> "You know how the Egyptians buried their dead?" I asked the one kid.
> "Naa."
> "Well, you should. It's very interesting. They wrapped their faces up in these cloths that were treated with some secret chemical. That way they could be buried in their tombs for thousands of years and their faces wouldn't rot or anything. Nobody knows how to do it except the Egyptians. Even modern science." (203)

The essay Holden wrote for Mr. Spencer that he reads out aloud to Holden, we remember, is comprised of five sentences about mummification: what Holden says to the two boys is, in essence, the gist of the essay. To recall Mr. Antolini's speech, Holden has "something to offer" to the two boys, in passing onto them this piece of information, Holden is partaking in the "beautiful reciprocal arrangement" (189) Mr. Antolini spoke of and unwittingly becoming an agent of inner-direction in the process, trying, albeit somewhat unwittingly, to instill direction into the boys' lives early in their life cycles (Riesman 1961, 159).

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[9] Interestingly, this quotation has a strong presence in the Japanese animated series *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*. The series abounds with *Catcher* references, but this quote is perhaps the most prominent of them all: it is etched on the logo of The Laughing Man, the "villain" (for the lack of a better term) of the series. The intertextuality between the series and *Catcher* would be an invigorating (not to mention pioneering) subject for further study.

After Holden has given his lesson and the boys leave, he is left standing alone in the tomb, feeling "nice and peaceful" (204), when he sees a "Fuck you" written "with a red crayon or something under the glass part of the wall, under the stones" (204). Seeing those corrupt words leads Holden to conclude that true serenity of the kind he is endeavoring to achieve is beyond his reach:

> That's the whole trouble. You can't ever find a place that's nice and peaceful, because there isn't any. You may think there is, but once you get there, when you're not looking, somebody'll sneak up and write "Fuck you" right under your nose. Try it sometime. I think, even, if I ever die, and they stick me in a cemetery, and I have a tombstone and all, it'll say "Holden Caulfield" on it, and then what year I was born and what year I died, and then right under that it'll say "Fuck you." I'm positive, in fact. (204)

After feeling depressed[10] to the extent of contemplating suicide and its potential effect on the people close to him multiple times throughout the course of the novel, Holden arrives at the conclusion that even in death would he find no solace: there will still be people scratching "Fuck you" notes in places where children can see it, where one child already tainted by previous experience would proliferate the corruption onto others.

The only thing that remains is to continue the struggle for autonomy, although even then he would do so in the seclusion of a Thoreau-esque retreat (in something of a reprisal of the escape he suggests to Sally earlier in the novel), in a remote cabin in the woods, where he would have "this rule that nobody could do anything phony when they visited me" (205) — a place that is "nice and quiet", as close to a grave as possible. It is crucial to note that Holden is not in the business of trying to *change* the society he lives in, he simply wants no part of it. This fact unequivocally precludes us from labeling Holden a social rebel, because according to Merton (1938, 676, emphases in original), social rebellion

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[10] Holden mentions feeling depressed at least on pages 8, 28, 33, 41, 44, 46, 49 (four occasions), 51, 52, 53, 54, 58, 59, 62, 64, 71, 82, 91, 104, 105, 108, and 113.

> represents a … response which seeks to *institutionalize* new procedures oriented towards revamped cultural goals shared by the members of the society [and] thus involves efforts to *change* the existing structure rather than to perform accommodative actions *within* the structure.

Holden, though frustrated with the status quo, is not in the business of trying to introduce a new social order (see Merton 1938, 678) to mold the society and its cultural goals to his liking: he simply seeks to retreat from the current society because he is incapable of even understanding why anyone would seek to achieve the cultural goals he feels are being imposed upon him. As Whitfield (1997, 587) puts it, "Holden's fantasy of secluding himself in a cabin in the woods is scarcely a prescription for social activism" and even goes on to suggest that *Catcher* is, as a consequence, "utterly apolitical". Indeed, out of Merton's modes of adaptation, Holden perfectly exemplifies the mode of retreat, for he has not only abandoned the prevalent cultural goals in his society but he has also deemed all means to achieve those goals out of his reach, which leaves him only with the option of escaping from said society.

After Holden leaves the tomb with the mummies he has to go to the bathroom: "I sort of had diarrhea, if you want to know the truth" (204). When he exits the bathroom, he proceeds to lose consciousness:

> When I was coming out of the can, right before I got to the door, I sort of passed out. I was lucky, though. I mean I could've killed myself when I hit the floor, but all I did was sort of land on my side. It was a funny thing, though. I felt better after I passed out. I really did. My arm sort of hurt, from where I fell, but I didn't feel so damn dizzy any more. (204)

Earlier, when Holden was leaving his parents' apartment to go to the Antolinis, he tells us he feels so dizzy he has difficulty even finding a cab, and he continues to feel dizzy when speaking with Mr. Antolini. He also says he "even had sort of a stomach-ache, if you want to know the truth" (184). A literary parallel to Holden's experience is found in Walt Whitman's poem "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer" (1959, 84):

> WHEN I heard the learn'd astronomer;
> When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me;
> When I was shown the charts and the diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them;
> When I, sitting, heard the astronomer, where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
> How soon, unaccountable, I became tired and sick;
> Till rising and gliding out, I wander'd off by myself,
> In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
> Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

If Antolini is the astronomer, Holden plays the part of the narrator, so struck with the clarity of his mentor's message that he becomes bilious. After heeding Mr. Antolini's mostly-cryptic advice and giving the two children a lesson on the mysteries of Egyptian embalming methods, Holden walks out of the tomb and discharges waste from his body — the diarrhea a grotesque symbol for the anomie and alienation Holden is expelling from him own body. After that, he passes out, and wakes up feeling not dizzy but *better*: after walking out of the tomb of Tentkhonsu and other pharaohs, Holden is essentially reborn (however temporarily) in his realization of the role he might have to play. If Holden strives to be a savior of the innocent like Jesus, his journey from Pencey Prep his Via Dolorosa and the New York Museum of Art his Golgotha, and for Holden, only children are innocent and deserving of salvation.

After leaving the museum, Holden spots Phoebe, who is wearing his "crazy hunting hat" (205) and dragging his old suitcase with her. To his shock, he discovers that Phoebe wants to run off into the wild with him:

> "I'm going with you. Can I? Okay?"
> "What?" I said. I almost fell over when she said that. I swear to God I did. I got sort of dizzy and I thought I was going to pass out or something again. (206)

Phoebe, sporting Holden's red hunting cap of non-conformity, to Holden's horror, proceeds to simulate his behavior. In shock about Phoebe wanting to join his retreat, Holden tells her to "shut up" four times, to which Phoebe soon responds in kind:

> "I said I'm not going back to school. You can do what you want to do, but I'm not going back to school," she said. "So shut up." It was the first time she ever told me to shut up. It sounded terrible. God, it sounded terrible. It sounded worse than swearing. She still wouldn't look at me either, and every time I sort of put my hand on her shoulder or something, she wouldn't let me. (208)

In a thrilling and intense reversal of roles, Holden, in a horrible realization that his anomie is of a contagious kind, tries to persuade Phoebe to go back to school. In other words, Holden is channeling nearly every central authority figure in his life when he tries to get Phoebe to pursue education instead of following the same path Holden is on; he is effectively inner-directing by proxy. Other-direction is not applicable here because Holden is trying to pass onto Phoebe what Lewis-Kraus (2013) describes as "the inculcated authority of the vertical (one's lineage)" — that is, inner-direction — instead of "the muddled authority of the horizontal (one's peers)" inherent to other-direction.

Phoebe throws Holden's attempts back in his face both figuratively and literally by throwing his red hunting cap back at him in a gesture that "nearly killed" (207) Holden — this time not because he finds it amusing or endearing but because of its symbolical significance. Holden effectively becomes Mr. Spencer, Mr. Antolini, the psychoanalyst at the end of the book, and every other force of direction in his life all rolled into one when he asks Phoebe whether she will "go back to school tomorrow like a good girl", to which Phoebe replies "I may and I may not" (207) in an almost exact echo of the "how do you know what you're going to do till you *do* it" sentiment Holden voices at the end of the book. Phoebe then continues simulating Holden by darting across the street without any regard for her own safety, in exactly the same way as Holden does just a few pages before, simultaneously mimicking his mad dash from Pencey towards adulthood without any concern for his own safety: "Then she ran right the hell across the street, without even looking to see if any cars were coming. She's a madman sometimes" (208).

After taking heed of Mr. Antolini's advice and educating the two boys about mummification, Holden sheds some of his anomie upon gaining insight into the part he might be able to play in society, and because the two boys leave at once after he has finished talking, the consequences of his actions are never brought into light and Holden is left incognizant of the effects of his speech. With Phoebe, however, he realizes that as a soon-to-be-adult, the example he sets has consequences and that the innocent children whose purity he so desperately wants to preserve might model their actions and behavior on him brings him once again to the brink of despair. Horrified by the realization that his anomic condition is communicable and that he has the potential to infect innocent children like Phoebe, Holden effectively tries to become a force of inner-direction and tries to keep Phoebe on course by trying to persuade her to stay in school.

What follows is Holden's futile attempts to placate Phoebe until, in the novel's climax, Holden coaxes Phoebe to ride a merry-go-round playing the famous show tune "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes". In that moment, for Holden, the lovely flame of the song that dies is his chimera of being able to save children from falling off the crazy cliff of innocence; the smoke that gets in his eyes his bittersweet realization of the fact that his deepest desire is nothing but a phantasm, hopelessly out of his reach:

> All the kids kept trying to grab for the gold ring, and so was old Phoebe, and I was sort of afraid she'd fall off the goddam horse, but I didn't say anything or do anything. The thing with kids is, if they want to grab the gold ring, you have to let them do it, and not say anything. If they fall off they fall off, but it's bad if you say anything to them. (211)

Rowe (2001, 82) eloquently summarizes Holden's predicament:

> The bathos of American society turns out to be the real illness from which Holden suffers. In the degree to which we respond to his voice, to the bid his apostrophes make for our allegiance, his condition of loneliness and longing becomes a mirror of our own predicament.

It is, without a doubt, precisely this facet of Holden's character that is one of the major reasons behind the massive popularity *Catcher* has garnered throughout its published history and why people continue to find Holden's character so identifiable.

4.4. Peers and the mass media

For the other-directed person, there are two forces of direction more powerful than others: peers and the mass media. As Riesman (1961, 31) writes, the other-directed person is chiefly concerned with "continuously obtaining from contemporaries (or their stand-ins: the mass media) a flow of guidance, expectation, and approbation". In *The Catcher in the Rye*, both play a significant role as forces of direction for Holden as well as other characters in the book. In this final section of the thesis, I will investigate the role those agents of socialization play as forces of direction in Holden's life. I will also briefly discuss the social aspects of the massive, enduring popularity of the novel has enjoyed throughout its published history and expound the more ironic aspects of that popularity.

To fit Holden into the refractory mold forged by social conventions in the postwar United States is trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. It is not, however, enough to simply attest that Holden is resistant to the idea of settling in to a life of nine-to-five acquiescence and leave it at that: *The Catcher in the Rye* exposes and explores different forms of conformity and non-conformity, some more privileged than others. Holden's closest schoolmates, Ward Stradlater and Robert Ackley, offer intriguing counterpoints to Holden's particular type of resistance to social norms and expectations: while Ackley is clearly nearly as much of a misfit as Holden, his social non-conformity manifests itself in a decidedly different way than Holden's, and Stradlater, as we have seen, is a picture of adjustment, a character that would be at home in any story that calls for a stereotypical jock character trope.

While Holden despairs against such things as the end of childhood, the unavoidable loss of innocence associated with it, and the social norms and expectations imposed by the monolithic social structures that surround him, Ackley's rebellion is a different beast altogether. Unlike Holden, Ackley is uncongenial, unkempt, and entropic. Even if Ackley and Holden do abut on the coordinate system of social adjustment in that neither of them is either capable or willing to adjust, with his complete disregards towards manners and personal habits, Ackley seems much less concerned with what other people think of him than Holden, who, as we have seen, does "suffer" from the kind of diffuse anxiety Riesman described to some extent and certainly is not immune to the signals of approval other people send. In fact, Brookeman (1991, 62) goes so far as to consider other-direction a primary trait of Holden:

> His ability to fathom the mind-sets of his peer group gives him a radar-like awareness of social and psychological messages, often to the point of paralyzing overload. In many ways the burgeoning myth of Holden the sullen outsider obscures the degree to which he is also very gregarious and manipulative. Holden needs other people in order to define himself. He is endlessly in pursuit of company, calling people on the phone, both acquaintances and strangers, and waylaying his colleagues at Pencey as they are washing or dressing.

While Holden is clearly not immune to other-direction nor does he even try to distance himself from all of its aspects, there is an undeniable degree of hypocrisy in his demeanor in that he simultaneously despises overt aspects of other-direction in the behavior of others while ignoring similar motivations in himself. On other occasions, as we shall see, Holden does recognize his susceptibility to signals of other-direction and voices his frustration at his inability resist those signals — especially when those signals come from the mass media.

The aspect that links Holden and Ackley is that neither is capable of or willing to play the role society expects of them — "He was probably the only guy in the whole dorm, besides me, that wasn't down at the game" (19) — but the manifest difference in the kinds of non-con-

formity they brandish is something even Ackley seems to be unable to grasp. Ackley "hated *ev*erybody's guts, damn near" (19) Holden notes, but, notably, not Holden's:

> Even without looking up, I knew right away who it was. It was Robert Ackley, this guy that roomed right next to me. There was a shower right between every two rooms in our wing, and about eighty-five times a day old Ackley barged in on me. … He hated Stradlater's guts and he never came in the room if Stradlater was around. (19)

Because he perceives himself as an outsider like Holden, Ackley either senses or tries to will into existence an affinity between himself and Holden, and while his incapability or unwillingness to conform is of a completely different variety than Holden's, there is some ineffable bond between the two, for Holden cannot help feeling some sort of sympathy for Ackley even though he finds him a deeply unpleasant person: even though Holden tells us about Ackley's innumerable unsanitary habits and how he has a "terrible personality", Holden asks him to go to the movies with him and another boy because "Ackley never did *any*thing on Saturday night, except stay in his room and squeeze his pimples or something" (36). Holden even explicitly admits feeling sorry for Ackley, despite his terrible manners: "That guy had just about everything. Sinus trouble, pimples, lousy teeth, halitosis, crumby fingernails. You had to feel a little sorry for the crazy sonuvabitch" (39).

If we investigate the parallels and contrasts between Holden and Ackley, we come to the conclusion that while Ackley is defined almost exclusively by his social non-conformity and how clearly it stands in contrast with Holden's worldview, Holden — whose brand of non-conformity is of a hazier sort — cannot be viewed through the same myopic lens: after all, Ackley is described as ill-mannered, impolite, and unsociable whereas Holden, as we have seen, can honestly be described as none of those things. Instead, Holden is above all defined by his desperate clinging to the notion of childhood innocence, his vacillation on the cusp of adulthood, and his frustration of things everyone around him seems to take for granted. While

both are without question anomic, Ackley is almost completely inner-directed while Holden is largely (but not solely) other-directed.

Holden's roommate Ward Stradlater stands as a near-perfect foil to both Ackley and Holden. He is, as we have already established, a prime example of an adjusted character who seems to have the ability to effortlessly conform to social mores. Stradlater is, we learn from Holden, attractive in the sort of way that looks good in a school yearbook — a "conceited sonuvabitch" (24), according to Ackley. When Stradlater asks Holden to write his English composition for him, we learn that he is not concerned with learning new things as with attaining *ostensible* success in school: he gives off the impression of being a budding careerist for whom good grades are more a thing of keeping up appearances and something that might bestow potential social benefits in the future rather than, say, an instrument for developing your intellect — something that would allow him to partake in the "beautiful reciprocal arrangement" (189) Antolini spoke to Holden about. Stradlater's preference for form over substance is demonstrated repeatedly in the novel. For instance, keeping up appearances seems to be one of his main occupations: according to Holden, it takes him an hour to comb his hair and he "always shaved himself twice, to look gorgeous"(30). Stradlater, like Ackley, is a slob, but the difference is that while Ackley's scruffiness is of the overt kind, Stradlater is more of a "secret slob":

> He always *looked* all right, Stradlater, but for instance, you should've seen the razor he shaved himself with. It was always rusty as hell and full of lather and hairs and crap. He never cleaned it or anything. He always *looked* good when he was finished fixing himself up, but he was a secret slob anyway, if you knew him the way I did. (27)

That Stradlater lacks substance does not matter to him since he is only in it to play "the game" Mr. Spencer spoke of; true substance is of no concern to him. Another demonstration of this is when he asks Holden to write his English essay for him and he asks Holden not to

"stick all the commas and stuff in the right place" (28) to keep their English teacher from suspecting any foul play. Stradlater is more concerned with outward appearances than meaningfulness of experience: to Stradlater, an essay is what it *looks* like to the reader rather than presentation of ideas and he knows that if he can make it look the part, that is enough. For Holden, this line of thinking causes anxiety:

> That's something else that gives me a royal pain. I mean if you're good at writing compositions and somebody starts talking about commas. Stradlater was always doing that. He wanted you to think that the only reason he was lousy at writing compositions was because he stuck all the commas in the wrong place. He was a little bit like Ackley, that way. I once sat next to Ackley at this basketball game. We had a terrific guy on the team, Howie Coyle, that could sink them from the middle of the floor, without even touching the backboard or anything. Ackley kept saying, the whole goddam game, that Coyle had a perfect build for basketball. God, how I hate that stuff. (28–29)

Holden's dismissal of people like Stradlater who are more concerned with form than substance is another manifestation of his beady-eyed observation of everything that is "phony": Ernie the pianist, who has a big mirror that allows the audience to see his face as he is playing[11] and who keeps putting "all these dumb, show-offy ripples in the high notes" (84); Sally Hayes's mother, who would only collect money for charity if she got to wear fancy clothes and "if everybody kissed her ass for her when they made a contribution" (114); actors who act "like they knew they were celebrities and all" (126), to mention a few examples.

When it comes to actors, it is not this "phoniness" that is Holden's only gripe about the mass media and its representatives. Indeed, actors and celebrities are where Holden's hatred of the glib and the ostentatious culminates; in particular, he reserves much of his ire for the mass media and Hollywood movies and Broadway shows in particular. Riesman (1961, 21) singles out mass media as one important force of social direction, writing that "the pressures

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[11] Salinger himself was also evidently dismissive of such mirrors: the first edition of *Catcher* initially had a large photograph of him on the jacket, but he had it removed in subsequent printings — an unusual move for a debutante novelist, to be sure.

of the school and the peer-group are reinforced and continued … by the mass media: movies, radio, comics, and popular culture generally. Under these conditions types of character emerge that we shall here term other-directed". It is precisely the immense capacity of the mass media to sway both those immersed in it as well as those who consume it that lies at the heart of Holden's oft-verbalized aversion towards its representatives, and it is those agents of other-direction we shall move on to investigate in what follows.

Holden's contempt of such agents of the mass media as shows, most actors, newsreels, celebrity-worshippers is well-documented, but he reserves the bulk of his enmity for movies. On that subject, Holden makes his opinion abundantly clear: as he declares at the very beginning of the novel, "[i]f there's one thing I hate, it's the movies. Don't even mention them to me" (2) and later tells us that he "hate[s] the movies like poison" (29). He laments Hollywood's tendency to ruin well-intentioned people, noting how his older brother D.B. became a "prostitute" (2) for Hollywood and the film business when, before, he was "just a regular writer" (1) who wrote short stories so wonderful that they spurred Holden to rank his brother among such luminaries of the literary world as Isak Eliot and Ring Lardner.

Holden's views on movies and their effects on the audience are jumbled and complex. For Holden, a movie's worth is measured by the reader (or watcher) response: if the people he is watching the movie with are people he likes, the actual merits of the film seem to be unimportant. For instance, if he is accompanied to the movie theater by his little sister Phoebe and they are watching her favorite movie, that Phoebe knows "all the talk by heart" (67) and imitates gestures shown in the movie is endearing enough to Holden that he is willing to sit through ten showings of the same movie with her. Conversely, people like his schoolmates Ackley and Brossard laughing "like hyenas at stuff that wasn't even funny" (37) merely exasperates Holden and the people who keep "talking about the play so that everybody could hear and know how sharp they were" (126) during intermission drive him to the brink of madness.

Despite Holden's self-professed hatred for movies, he admits that, just like Phoebe, he gets "a bang imitating them" (29), like when he tap-dances for Stradlater in a one-man reproduction of a scene from a musical. That "bang" takes on an altogether new meaning after Holden gets mauled by Sunny's pimp Maurice and Holden finds himself entertaining a fantasy of being the film noir leading man of a hard-boiled detective film and coming back at Maurice with a vengeance:

> About halfway to the bathroom, I sort of started pretending I had a bullet in my guts. Old Maurice had plugged me. Now I was on the way to the bathroom to get a good shot of bourbon or something to steady my nerves and help me *really* go into action. I pictured myself coming out of the goddam bathroom, dressed and all, with my automatic in my pocket, and staggering around a little bit. Then I'd walk downstairs, instead of using the elevator. I'd hold onto the banister and all, with this blood trickling out of the side of my mouth a little at a time. What I'd do, I'd walk down a few floors—holding onto my guts, blood leaking all over the place—and then I'd ring the elevator bell. As soon as old Maurice opened the doors, he'd see me with the automatic in my hand and he'd start screaming at me, in this very high-pitched, yellowbelly voice, to leave him alone. But I'd plug him anyway. Six shots right through his fat hairy belly. Then I'd throw my automatic down the elevator shaft—after I'd wiped off all the finger prints and all. Then I'd crawl back to my room and call up Jane and have her come over and bandage up my guts. I pictured her holding a cigarette for me to smoke while I was bleeding and all.
>
> The goddam movies. They can ruin you. I'm not kidding.

The passage above — which Mark David Chapman referred to in explaining *Catcher*'s role in inspiring his murder of John Lennon — illustrates Holden's conflicted relationship with movies. He gets lost in a short-film fantasy starring himself in the role of a private dick vigilante in the vein of Philip Marlowe, replete with the bourbon and dramatic grisliness that is the lifeblood of hard-boiled detective stories like the ones Holden takes his inspiration from. At the end of describing his fantasy, Holden recognizes the influence movies can have over their audience and the realization that the "prostitutes" in Hollywood have managed to pierce his armor of indifference makes him feel utterly wretched: "The goddam movies. They can ruin you. I'm not kidding" (104). His fantasy, while adult in subject matter, is inherently child-

like: after all, who among us has not once upon a time transformed into their favorite action hero during playtime?

Holden, however, cannot celebrate what seems to us a naïve make-believe: it has, after all, been churned out by the "prostitutes" toiling away in the corrupt machinery of Tinseltown. Moreover, it has been sullied — just as the lower school wall with "Fuck" scratched on it — by those for whom the innocence of children like Phoebe and his lost little brother Allie is as meaningless as to the imaginary "perverty bum" (201) who debased the dream-school of his childhood with such vulgarity. Holden has a similar revenge fantasy about that vile transgressor, albeit it is much more succinct, plain, and notably devoid of action-movie flair: " I kept picturing myself catching him at it, and how I'd smash his head on the stone steps till he was good and goddam dead and bloody" (201). Holden is disconsolate in his knowledge that it is not only that people direct movies: movies also direct people, and they plant into our minds seeds of ideas that eventually overgrow our more innocent fantasies.

Although Holden (perhaps unwittingly) champions what Riesman considered the positive aspects of other-direction, he is diametrically opposed to mass media as a force of other-direction and despairs in his inability to resist that very agency. Even stronger of a sentiment, however, is his dislike of people who openly display their approval of representations of mass media — or at least the wrong kind of display or the wrong kind of media. Holden's already-doomed attempt at practicing sex for marriage is dealt a definitive deathblow when Sunny, the prostitute with whom he is about to "get it over with", confesses that she whiles away the days by going to the show: "I don't think I could ever do it with somebody that sits in a stupid movie all day long. I really don't think I could" (96). The transcendent dancing abilities of Bernice, one of the three girls Holden meets at the Lavender Room, are almost negated by her and her friends' obsession with movie stars like Peter Lorre and Gary Cooper and their intention to catch the first show at the Radio City Music Hall: "I'd've bought the whole three

of them a hundred drinks if only they hadn't told me that" (75). Interestingly, even though Holden's view of Broadway shows is anything but favorable, Holden decides to take Sally to see S. N. Behrman's play *I Know My Love* for their date and promptly dubs her "the queen of the phonies" (116) for liking the Lunts, the brightest stars of Broadway, who star in the play, and goes on to explain his aversion to Broadway shows:

> In the first place, I hate actors. They never act like people. They just think they do. Some of the good ones do, in a very slight way, but not in a way that's fun to watch. And if any actor's really good, you can always tell he knows he's good, and that spoils it. (117)

It is once again the trespass against authenticity that precludes Holden enjoyment of a work of art. Holden's way around the subject is to read the plays by himself instead and bring the characters alive in his own mind, for literature, it seems, is largely free of the glib imitation that movies and Broadway shows are so thoroughly disseminated with.

As we have seen, however, movies, with their pervasive potency for what Holden perceives as the undesirable sort of other-direction, provide for Holden yet another thing to despair over. After all, regardless of his often-voiced hatred of films, Holden is plainly not immune to their other-directing wiles — a fact that causes him no small amount of distress. This is aspect of *Catcher* that famously (and on occasion lethally) transcends the realm of fiction into reality: for if Holden borrows a certain stylish, stand-offish affectation for his murderous revenge fantasy from the hardboiled protagonists of writers such as Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, so have throngs of youths and young-minded people taken aspects of Holden's philosophy and incorporated them into their own identities. Holden's almost unsurpassed degree of identifiability brings us to a an almost cosmically ironic aspect of *The Catcher in the Rye*, which is its deeply ambivalent relationship with mass media. It has, after all, enjoyed an immense and consistent level of popularity since its publication. There is no question that in that role, it played a significant role in shaping the social landscape of the US from the

1950s onwards. Hamilton (1988, 155) writes that by the late 1950s, *Catcher* had "become the book all brooding adolescents had to buy, the indispensable manual from which cool styles of disaffection could be borrowed". Brookeman (1991, 63) notes that book became to enjoy "a cult status among teenagers" and suggests that because it shows Holden coping with the myriad influential agencies in the contemporary society, it "has the quality of a training manual on techniques of survival".

Catcher's immense popularity brought its author to the brink of ruin. Not only did Salinger experience severe consternation because of the legions of fans who made pilgrimages to his private residence in New Hampshire and reporters who desperately sought an audience or an interview with him, but he was doubtless also dismayed by the deadly acts of Mark David Chapman, John Hinckley Jr., and Robert Bardo[12], who either claimed or were claimed to be inspired by Holden and *Catcher*'s philosophical import. Holden would likely be equally anguished to witness the effect his story has had and to see his behavior emulated and his diaphanous philosophy subscribed to, just as he is distraught to see Phoebe infected with his anomie in the closing chapters of *Catcher*. The following the novel has gathered means, after all, that it has become a cog in the machinery Holden so vigorously denounces throughout the novel: the Hollywood prostitutes and their blockbuster movies, the conceited showmen, the shallow "altruists", the vacuous spokesmen for tradition, "the game", and other manifestations of phoniness and agents of bad influence he finds so difficult to cope with: in other words, that it has grown into a force of other-direction to be reckoned with. If, as Riesman (1961, 85) suggests, "the storytellers of the mass media play a considerable role among other-directed children", there is no doubt that in the wake of *Catcher*'s success, Salinger would be firmly and permanently established among those storytellers.

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[12] Bardo, who shot actress Rebecca Schaeffer in 1989, reportedly threw a copy of *Catcher* into an alley as he was running from the police (Dawsey and Feldman, 1989).

The irony of the magnitude of *Catcher*'s social significance has not gone unnoticed. Medovoi (2005, 83), for example, notes that eight years after the publication of *Catcher*, critic George Steiner (the coiner of the term "the Salinger Industry") denounced Salinger as a "faithful lackey of mass-market product guidelines" and "a prostitute to his audience" — in other words, precisely the sort of literary sellout Holden sternly condemns in *Catcher*. Indeed, it might be difficult to reconcile *Catcher*'s status as a mass-market hit with the philosophy it espouses. Cheever (2010, 25) notes that in its role as "socially sanctioned … denunciation of society", *Catcher* "produces the very uniformity of behavior it ostensibly condemns because it is a book that virtually an entire class of person … reads". The irony of this dynamic arises not only from the obvious paradox between the philosophy the novel sanctions and the task it has been appropriated for in the academic context, but also from the fact that Holden's (as well as his author's) agenda was always to *retreat* from society rather than try to change it through active social rebellion: for the majority of *Catcher*, the cultural goals of the society whose productive member he was expected to become seemed nothing less than absurd to Holden and for him, there was no possible reconciliation of that fact other than him shirking that responsibility altogether and escaping into the wilderness.

Along the same lines as Cheever, Medovoi (2005, 84) writes that according to *Catcher*'s proponents, "*Catcher*, precisely through its status as a mass-market hit, had successfully popularized Holden's compelling denunciation of massified [sic] literature and of the tendency of all too many Americans to ape its other-directed logic". As we have seen, Holden actually does not denounce literature in *Catcher*: in addition to his aforementioned preference for reading plays like *Hamlet* rather than watching even an esteemed actor like Sir Laurence Olivier perform them, in his retreat fantasies, he dreams about buying "a lot of books" (199) for his future children and preventing his brother D.B. from writing movies and forcing him to only write "stories and books" (205). That aside, the important thing is that throughout its pub-

lished history, *Catcher* has earned a lasting place as a representative of mass media with an undeniably forceful capacity to affect peoples' behavior and way of thinking. As for the argument of *Catcher*'s status as a mass culture icon compromising its artistic message, Medovoi (2005, 84) reports that apologists instead opt to think of *Catcher* as uniting "literary quality and quantity, artistic merit and cultural democracy". Both points could be argued, of course, but as the unrelenting interest in both the author and the book itself demonstrates, that *Catcher* continues to play a significant role in shaping the social sensibilities of its readers even 60 years after its publication is no point of contention.

5. Conclusions

In this thesis, I have shown that we can fruitfully apply the theories David Riesman presents in his seminal 1950 sociological work *The Lonely Crowd* to various aspects and characters of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. I have begun by demonstrating that when it comes to depictions and descriptions of sexuality in the novel, *Catcher* offers what is almost a case study of Riesman's universal types of adjustment, autonomy and anomie, for they are all represented in the novel, in the characters of Ward Stradlater, Carl Luce, and Holden and Sunny respectively. Each character is a near-perfect archetype of the universal type they represent, and as such, I posit that the types are the rebars that shore up their sexual identities.

I have argued that Holden finds the power of the sexual experience to carry one over the threshold of childhood or adolescence into adulthood simultaneously compelling and distasteful, especially when it comes to girls of his age, such as Jane Gallagher and even Sunny the prostitute. Unlike his roommate Stradlater, Holden is not oblivious to the transcendental (in more than one sense of the word) aspect of sex: rather, he despairs in it. His encounter with Carl Luce evinces that he seeks in sex for more than physical intimacy: he yearns for a more meaningful, even spiritual experience. I agree with Tolchin (2007, 35) who argues that "Holden seems driven not by a desire for gratification of his libido but rather by a zeal for a 'more authentic, more spiritual alternative' to inauthentic relation". However, in his confusion over conforming to social mores — that is, in feeling compelled to act the way the society as a whole expects him to act, to be autonomous instead of anomic — he momentarily regresses to the level of a more stereotypical sixteen-year-old. He simultaneously claims to be a "sex maniac" (62), but when he is confronted with the possibility of having sex, he "just wants to get it over with" (93).

Moreover, I have demonstrated that as opposed to what a number of previous critics have suggested, a close look at the evidence in the novel reveals that there is little to indicate

that Holden harbors illicit, incestuous sexual desire towards his little sister, Phoebe. Rather, Phoebe is Holden's moral lodestar, the person with whom he seeks solace after his anticlimactic encounter with Sunny the prostitute; an encounter where he stumbles on his luggage both literally and figuratively upon attempting to make the leap into the world of adulthood. Phoebe, to him, is essentially childhood innocence embodied, and if Holden is not ready to defile the innocence of someone whose deals in the pleasures of the flesh as a profession because Holden deems her no more an adult than he deems himself, we can say that he is certainly disinclined to do so to his own little sister.

With regard to authority figures, I have argued that as opposed to traditional critical perceptions, Holden's relationship with them is not strictly diametric: rather the opposite. Contrary to what critics such as Tolchin (2007), Kazin (2006), Privitera (2008), and Miller (2007) claim, Holden does not oppose or disregard his parents and there is certainly scarce evidence to suggest that he hates them. Unlike Privitera (2008, 2), for example, claims, he distinctly even refrains from labeling them as "phonies", unlike he does so many other people. In truth, the emotion Holden most often displays towards his parents — besides taciturnity — is concern and discretion; all traits demonstrated in the very first paragraph of the novel, where he tells us that he will refrain from telling us anything personal about his parents to keep them from having "about two hemorrhages apiece" (1) and says that even though they are touchy like that, they're also "nice and all" (1). It is not, then, that efforts to instill inner-direction in Holden have necessarily failed because of an inflamed parental relationship — we must look (and in this thesis, have looked) elsewhere for the causes of that failure.

If Holden is sensitive towards his parents, his relationship with other authority figures in his life is equally un-antagonistic. Holden's tale opens with a rendezvous with his old history teacher Mr. Spencer, a meeting he is in no way obligated to attend but chooses to nonetheless. The meeting is punctuated by Holden scoffing at the third-rate "advice" (that is, indiscrimi-

nate distribution of tradition-directed edicts) Mr. Spencer offers him, to be sure, but that is only because it "hovers on the level of the cliché", as Tolchin (2007, 34) puts it — not because the advice is coming from an authority figure. Indeed, the novel includes a number of exchanges between Holden and authority figures, and no one could compose out of them a narrative that would expose a unquestioning and unequivocally negative attitude towards authority figures in Holden. As such, calling Holden a "prototypical rebel" (Pinsker 1993, 35) is unfair, and, as we have seen, even "social rebel" is off the mark because Holden does not consistently work toward a new world order: he simply seeks to escape the current one. As Kinnick (1970, 31) puts it, "Holden Caulfield, if he is a rebel at all, is a rebel against the human condition and as such he deserves his small share of nobility". It is in part this succinct quote that I have set about to validate in this thesis.

In *The Lonely Crowd*, Riesman (1961, 52) uses the Icarus myth as a metaphor to describe what might happen when an inner-directed child goes astray:

> Homing pigeons can be taught to fly home, but the inner-directed child must be taught to fly a straight course away from home, with destination unknown; naturally many meet the fate of Icarus.

As I have argued in this thesis, while there is no doubt that there have been attempts to instill inner-direction into Holden and that that endeavor has failed, while his destination famously remains unknown at the end of the novel, it is not because Holden's wings are burned off by the sun or occluded by the damp sea air: rather, Holden is loath to take flight in the first place, unsure as to whether the voyage is worth the trouble at all. Holden finds the "life is a game" maxim Mr. Spencer offers him decidedly unconvincing: to him, the game is so rigged that one might as well not play it at all. To subscribe to that view, as Holden does, leads down the path of anomie, or "a mismatch between individual circumstances and larger social mores" (Star et

al. 1997), as Durkheim called it in a definition as pithy as anything I could think of to describe Holden's predicament in *The Catcher in the Rye*.

I agree, then, with Rowe that Holden is anomic and with Brookeman that Holden is other-directed, but I have also attempted to expose different forms of other-direction in the novel, some more privileged than others. In Holden's estimation, excessive emphasis on substance over matter and making the adulation of others the prime guiding factor in your life are chief among the non-privileged aspects of other-direction. In general, Holden's other-direction is manifested in that he"needs other people in order to define himself" (Brookeman 1991, 62), which might be one reason he tells us he starts "missing everybody" (214) at the end of his retelling of his story. However sensitively tuned Holden's radar is to the signals of approval (or disapproval) of other people, he is quite sure that he does not need — or at least he does not *want* — movies and their ruinous capacity for other-direction to affect his definition of the self. He perceives the overwhelming puissance of the mass media to affect people and demonstrates symptoms of that very contagion when he indulges in a movie-like fantasy of exacting revenge on someone who has wronged him. I have argued that when it comes to such representatives of mass media as movies and Broadway shows, Holden is more fixated on the signals from his peers, the people he is with, than on the signals from the stage or the movie screen. In Holden's view, actors are, by definition, incontrovertibly lacking in authenticity. The people he is with he may give the benefit of the doubt — at least if they are children like Phoebe.

Although Holden has resisted inner-direction himself, we see him quite unexpectedly and perhaps unwittingly becoming an agent of socialization himself; the proverbial catcher in the rye, as it were, although perhaps not in the sense he was hoping for. Once he has his anomie validated by Mr. Antolini, a former teacher who then tries to sexually molest him, he undergoes understandable difficulty both digesting the import of Antolini's message as well as

reconciling the profundity of the lesson with the questionable intents of its author. He comes through, however, and soon finds himself partaking in the "beautiful reciprocal arrangement" (189) that is at the crux of the intoxicated Antolini's sermon by becoming an agent of socialization himself, trying to instill into children both knowledge and inner-direction he first assumes the role of an ersatz instructor to two boys at a museum, teaching them what he knows about mummification — a subject he was profoundly uninterested in at the beginning of the novel. Later, he is dejected to see that his little sister Phoebe is in danger of contracting his anomic condition, so he adjures her to stay in school and to stop acting like a madman, in an uncanny reprise of what most authority figures have tried to press him to do throughout the novel and, we suspect, after its conclusion. If, through its popularity, *The Catcher in the Rye* came to represent the accepted form of denunciating social conformity, so did Holden come to represent those social actors he was purportedly affiliated with.

When it comes to further research, using Riesman's theories in connection with a modern literary work, or a *Bildnungsroman* in specific, might be a warranted endeavor as such, but in such a study, one should not feel restricted to strictly using Riesman's character types: I believe contemplating on whether a character is motivated by internal, external, or traditional social factors is a worthy tool in gaining insight into that character, with or without the help of Riesman's theories. Similarly, a scholar undertaking such a study might find it useful to consider whether a character can be seen to subscribe to a notion of a set of cultural goals on the one hand and whether there is evidence that the character is actively trying to pursue that set of goals or whether they have perhaps abandoned that pursuit.

With regard to *The Catcher in the Rye*, no study that comprehensively compares and contrasts *Catcher* with either a contemporary work such as Nicholas Ray's *The Rebel Without a Cause* or Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* or a modern story such as Jon Krakauer's nonfiction book *Into the Wild* or Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (reportedly in-

spired by *Catcher)* has been done, to the best of my knowledge. I believe that is a field that is ripe for further study and one where a scholar inspired by Riesman's theories could achieve magnificent results.

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