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Alienation in Jerome David Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages in Partial
Fulfillment for the Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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2019/2020

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to:

My parents; to my exceptional mother, teacher, and my reason of being for her unconditional love, care, and patience, and to my father for inspiring me to become a stronger version of myself,

My little sister and the bravest person I know Hadil,

My larger family including my aunts Hafida, Mounira, Imen, Latifa, and especially Thoraya; my uncles Fouad, Ouael, and Chiheb; and their offsprings,

My best friend for five years and my support system Fatima Saouli.

Acknowledgment

First, my immense gratitude is devoted to Allah for giving me strength to accomplish this study, and for his uncountable blessings and immeasurable grace.

I would like to express my utmost gratefulness to my supervisor, Mr. Smatti Said, for his patience, guidance, and assistance throughout the process. His dedication and commitment are truly remarkable and motivational.

Abstract

This study investigates the theme of alienation in a setting of economic flourishing and social affluence as a means to accentuate the indispensability of estranged protagonists in the postwar American novel. These characters are a representation of real, traumatized, and estranged individuals. This research relies on J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) to demonstrate the purpose of this research through literature; to examine the protagonist's alienated psyche in relation to his environment. Salinger presents a basic yet vivacious plot to convey a realistic representation of society and its contribution in inducing estranged and tormented individuals. The protagonist's inability to adapt with a phony society causes him psychological troubles. Hence, he alienates himself and becomes extremely attached to childhood innocence. He refuses to enter adulthood to avoid phoniness, hypocrisy, and deceit. The author introduces a segment of society that resents certain principles and practices of authoritative institutions. These people are perplexed and affected by the postwar materialistic life. They are desperate for an authentic human connection and identity in an absurd world.

Keywords: Alienation, isolation, estrangement, phoniness.

Résumé

Cette étude examine le thème de l'aliénation dans un contexte de société Américaine en pleine expansion économique et met le point sur l'importance des personnages aliénés dans la littérature Américaine d'après-guerre. Le roman de J.D. Salinger *L'attrape-Cœurs* (*The Catcher in the Rye* 1951 traduit par Jean-Baptiste Rossi) dépeint la société Américaine de l'après-guerre et met en relief les traumatismes psycho-sociaux endurés par les individus de l'époque des années 1950. Ces maux sont dûs à une technologie en pleine effervescence et battant de son plein sur une société en consommation outrée et extravagante. Menant ainsi à une dislocation de toutes relations humaines. J.D. Salinger dans son œuvre élucide donc l'impact de l'individualisme frénétique montant sur la psyché des Américains de cette époque. Le personnage principal, un adolescent reflète l'aliénation vécu par l'individu Américain de l'époque. Il souffre de troubles psychologiques, manque de liens sociaux, et rejette le monde des adultes qu'il considère faux et hypocrite. Donc, il s'aliène et se réfugie dans son monde infantile et innocent. Il refuse de s'intégrer à une société polluée par le matérialisme et la consommation excessive aux dépens des relations humaines. Il représente tous les autres individus en quête d'une connexion humaine authentique et une identité dans un monde absurde.

Mots clés : Aliénation, isolement, éloignement, inauthenticité.

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General Introduction

The post-World War II repercussions invaded the lives of people and spread a sentiment of estrangement among them. They are unable to belong to a collective entity and to have a distinct individual identity. Their lives became absurd and meaningless as a result of the post-traumatic war experience as well as the emergence of a new international tension in the political sphere. Literature embodied the postwar paranoia and estrangement of individuals. Thus, American authors dedicated a decent amount of their writings to depict the alienation, fragmentation, loss of humanity, and confusion that overshadowed the American society of the 1950s. They relied on psychologically tormented characters to emphasize the effect of the socio-political aspects on people's psyche.

The 1950s are historically known as the years of economic prosperity and technological advancement in the United States. The postwar economy compensated the American people for the losses and horrors of the Second World War, and previously, the Great Depression. The majority of people enjoyed the profits of their labor and prosperity. At the same time, the period also witnessed a series of ongoing tensions. Aside from war, the country went through an early Red Scare, McCarthy's communist purge, and a second Red Scare known as the Cold War. These events intensified people's paranoia and skepticism. Concerning literature, the fifties introduced new literary genres and themes. However, the majority of the literary productions focused on depicting the psychological turmoil and spiritual emptiness of American individuals. They are portrayed as the victims of their own culture of materialism and consumerism. Literature of the 1950s is also defined by its skeptical nature that urges people to reconsider the authenticity of important values including family, religion, and identity. It criticizes the reliance of people on technology and its contribution in the loss of human connections. The protagonists are not necessarily heroic; they are regular, flawed, and psychologically troubled antiheroes who struggle to fit in their society.

Jerome David Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) is one of the innovative postmodernistic narratives that exemplifies the literature of the 1950s. The novel placed itself as one of the pioneering works that voiced the thoughts and emotions of the disaffected youth. It might be the cornerstone for the emergence of the entire genre of young adult narratives. The essence of the story is centered on the universality of the protagonist's, Holden Caulfield, common struggles and uncontrollable emotions. He is dissatisfied with his society and he desperately seeks an authentic human connection. The novel and the author are both a subject of scrutiny for the controversial tendencies manifested in Salinger's and the protagonist's lives. This might be a result of the sensitive subjects that the author tackles in the story. Through his character, Salinger criticizes society and blames it for the spiritual and mental disturbance of individuals. *The Catcher in the Rye* is praised by critics for its daring nature and its unparalleled ability to intrigue readers' emotions. It enables them to relate to the protagonist's troubles and search for identity in an absurd world.

J.D. Salinger relied in his personal experiences in war and personal life to provide a realistic tendency for his novel. His unpleasant encounters with people from his society and the horrors of World War II reinforced his belief that innocence is permanently lost in a corrupt world. This belief was translated in his novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*, where the protagonist believes that innocence only exists within children; therefore, they must be protected at all costs. The misfit hero's quest is based on protecting children's innocence by preventing them from reaching maturity and entering adulthood. Although it started as an inner thought, the idea of becoming the protector of innocence became an obsession for the protagonist. His disaffection with the phony society widened the gap between him and other people and reinforced his isolation.

The concept of alienation has been discussed by many philosophers, critics, theorists, and authors. The German philosopher and socialist Karl Marx is the most commonly associated

name with the term of alienation. He relates the psychological phenomenon of alienation to people's socio-political, economic, and historical aspects of life. In his work *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, Marx suggests that social classifications and the alienation of workers are correlated. Similarly, the French Philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau insinuates in his book *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* that alienation is a result of social restrictions that limit the freedom of individuals. In literature as well, the theme of alienation has been tackled by many authors; from Shakespeare and Homer, to Hemingway and Salinger. The narratives embody the universal transition of societies into wealthy but insecure entities.

This research investigates the theme of alienation in a materialistic postwar setting of the 1950s' America. The most important questions of this study can be: What is the role of technological advancement and economic prosperity in Holden's alienation in the postwar context? What are the problems that the alienated hero face? Why does the misfit hero find comfort in alienation? How did alienation affect Holden's psyche? And finally, how does estrangement help Holden to cope with his internal conflict and avoid his realistic problems?

This study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter presents an overview on the history and culture of the postwar American society. It traces the economic prosperity and the international political tension as the major factors in people's estrangement, and the counterculture as a reaction against conformity. In addition, it tackles the literary background of the 1950s by accentuating the postmodernist movement and the emergence of the coming-of-age protagonist. It also offers a glimpse on J.D. Salinger and his novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*, to introduce the study material of this research. The second chapter examines alienation for a theoretical perspective. It traces the origins of alienation in early religion and economy, its development into a philosophical inquiry, and its evolution into a range of psychoanalytic theories. In addition, it investigates the existence of alienation as a literary theme in reference to the misfit hero. The third and last chapter is the core of the research. It offers a detailed

investigation of the estranged hero in *The Catcher in the Rye* by relating the aspects included in the first two theoretical chapters to the novel. It is based on a contextual analysis of the novel's setting as well as a psychological examination of the protagonist's psyche. It portrays the protagonist's estrangement in reference to a corrupt capitalist society and personal trauma.

In order to accomplish this work, an eclectic approach is followed. It is based on a mixture of psychological, philosophical, and literary approaches to investigate alienation from different perspectives. It depends on the Marxist theory of alienation and social criticism to highlight the capitalist cultural and social milieu of the protagonist. It examines the post-World War II American context of social affluence and economic prosperity, and links the 1950s consumerism and materialism to the character's alienation. Moreover, it relies on philosophical analysis of the essence of alienation in reference to Feuerbach and Hegel's theories. In addition, it gives importance to the protagonist's psyche by relying on Freud's psychoanalytical theory concerning people's alienation. Among the most important works that assist the purpose of this section of the research is literary critic, James Bryan's, work *The Psychological Structure of The Catcher in the Rye*. It demonstrates the postmodern antihero as a tormented individual estranged from himself and his society. It also contains an examination of symbols and language of the alienated youth within the novel.

This research deals with the compelling aspects of the estranged antihero by relying on J.D. Salinger's protagonist in *The Catcher in the Rye*. He encompasses the complexity of the cultural, historical, and psychological aspects of life through his meaningless journey. It exposes these difficulties by acknowledging and identifying the protagonist's weakness, depression, inner conflict, and alienation. It also relates these problems to the postwar capitalist setting, the horrors of World War II and the Cold War, and a personal traumatic experience. In addition, it accentuates the misfit hero's rebellious tendency in challenging his conformist society and its phony members. The novel is a realistic depiction of estrangement in the 1950s.

Chapter One: The Postwar American Context: Between Affluence and Alienation

Introduction

Literature is a mirror that reflects historical events and cultural aspects of societies. For centuries, literature has served as a medium through which authors from different generations were able to communicate their thoughts and realities. The 20th Century literary productions embodied mainly the repercussions of World War II and reflected the anxiety and alienation of individuals. This introductory chapter provides an overview of the social, historical, cultural, and literary background of the United States during that era. It combines three complementary sections. The first section describes the crucial historical events and technological advents of the 1950s and their effect on people's perceptions and lifestyles. The second section discusses the influence of the post-WWII on literature in terms of genres, themes, and style. The third section presents J.D. Salinger as a postmodernist author who depicted the uncertainty and vulnerability of American individuals through his only novel *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). It also demonstrates the influence of the author's life on the novel as well as the novel's controversial nature and impact.

Section One: 1.Social Life and Popular Culture in the 1950s

The United States has witnessed a time of success and prosperity by the end of World War II and during the 1950s. The decade was stamped with many notable events including the post-World War II economic and technological flourishing, the beginning of the Cold War, and the spread of Civil Rights Movements in the United States. The period marked the beginning of an unprecedented growth in the USA and other European countries. However, the rate of the latter was significantly higher in America than in the rest of the world. It emerged as an industrial superpower that successfully managed to keep a decent income and reduce unemployment among its citizens. In this regard, the British ex-Prime Minister Winston Churchill states "...For this and many other reasons the United States stand at this moment at

the summit of the world” (453).The 1950s was a splendid epoch for the American citizens mainly because it was a time when people were very satisfied with their lifestyle. Yet, it exposed other underlying issues within people’s social and psychological structure.

1.1. Postwar Social Reconstructions and Social Fragmentation

The Second World War had been a costly war with almost 300,000 Americans dead, and more than 670,000 wounded; many of them permanently disabled. Millions of men who went to war returned sooner than most people had expected. In less than a year, the Armed Forces returned more than 12 million young men to civilian life. In 1944, the United States government passed The Mustering-Out Payment Act to provide financial support to the soldiers returning from the Second World War. Many seized the opportunity as most veterans were anxious to put the war behind them. They collected three billion dollars in mustering out pay and went looking for civilian jobs. Veterans got preferential treatment at the employment offices; they benefited from low-cost home loans and low-interest loans to help them buy a farm or start a business. (Ortiz 241)

The G.I. Bill was the most significant welfare legislation of the post-World War II era. President Franklin Roosevelt relentlessly attempted to provide servicemen and servicewomen returning from war with an advantageous social security system. Right after the Bill was signed in 1944, it granted U.S veterans many options and advantages. For instance, it gave the ones who desired to opt for a college degree a chance to do so without taking into account education-fees. Simultaneously, the G.I. Bill also offered them medical care and health insurance, set a 20 U.S. Dollars weekly unemployment grant valid for one year, and even established job counseling offices. In a nutshell, the bill gave them a chance to advance in life, and an opportunity to secure a ticket to join the American affluent middle class. (Livingston 71-81)

On a related note, the return of soldiers paved the way for a period of demographic revitalization known as The Baby Boom. More than 2 million veterans got married within one year; thus, it was the start of an unprecedented baby boom. It is believed that births increased immediately after the war because both marriages and pregnancies were no longer postponed. Van Bavel and Reher suggest that “people were preparing for a new era of peace and economic growth. Their optimism spurred a resurgence in both marriage and fertility” (269). By 1950, 21 million babies were born, and by then, people were convinced that securing a home for their wives and newborns became an urgent necessity. (269)

The majority of Americans longed for a sanctuary to escape from the horrors of The Great Depression and The Second World War. They felt a need to ensure a better life for their children; one of the pillars of the elusive American Dream. Yet, it was to some extent, a challenging task mainly because housing price estimations were significantly high. Since 1945, more than 5 million returning soldiers needed houses with affordable costs. Among those men was William J. Levitt, a lieutenant who served in the navy during World War II, and a co-founder of an instruction company. After the war, he returned to the family building business with a plan that combines his experience in both fields. He used the military methods to mass produce homes on old farm lands. He designed a project that served the purpose of offering plenty of houses with decent quality and reasonable prices. It was the birth of the infamous Suburbia. (Gans 3)

The 20th century mass suburbanization was a part of the Post World War II American socio-economic recovery plan to instill the culture of consumerism. Levitt’s mass production plan enabled around five thousand families to acquire their typical house each year. Between 1947 and 1953, the suburban population increased by 43 percent. People were no longer included in urban unity since they started living in isolated rural communities. They had their own schools, police stations and even a different tax system. Despite its pioneering and

idealistic vision, suburbanization was far from perfection. Some of its disadvantages were the segmentation of societies and the alienation of individuals, large mortgages debts, favoritism of the middle class over working class, men over women, and whites over other non-white ethnicities. (Cohen 418)

The Post-World War II era is often perceived as a time of consistency and conformity. Both men and women embraced their traditional gender roles and conformed to the societal anticipations. According to Lori Rotskoff, by the middle of the Twentieth century, the unpleasant events of the Great Depression and the Second World War turned into decayed memories. During the same period, wartime economic deficiency was replaced with a thriving economy. Subsequently, an unprecedented amount of Americans “invested themselves emotionally and financially” in a contemporary and a conformist household. The idealistic model of the middle class family was built on distinctive gender roles. Wives were supposed to be consumers, to take care of the children, and do house chores. While husbands were the jobholders and breadwinners of their families. (7)

The 1950s might be perceived as a period for consensus since the economic boom ascended many people to the upper middle class. They owned homes, cars, dishwashers, televisions and air conditioners. Conformity was in its full bloom as almost everybody enjoyed the same lifestyle. However, that perfect image started to deteriorate when the reality of the glamorous suburbs was unveiled. First, women rebelled against the role assigned to them by their conformist society. Regarding this issue, women’s rights activist, Betty Friedan, argues that “it is more than a strong paradox that all professions are finally open to women in America...women so insistently confine themselves to one role” (60). In addition, people of non-white decent realized that they were way less fortunate. They were not allowed to own a home in the suburbs, and even banks declined their applications for loans and classified them as risky investments. The government’s endorsement of such segregating behaviors widened

the gap mainly between whites and African Americans. Although the fight against discrimination started a long time ago, in the 1950s colored people gained more courage to defend their rights. The Civil Rights Movement shed light on many prominent figures such as Malcom X, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King Jr. who fought to achieve justice and equality for their fellow men and women. Organizations like the NAACP and the Black Panthers called for termination of police brutality, employment opportunities, and housing justice for everyone. (Romano and Raiford 11-15)

1.2. Consumerism as a Key Factor in People's Distress and Disorientation

For almost two decades between The Great Depression and World War II, Americans were forced to live with bare minimum essentials. But when the war was over, Cars, radios, cordless electric irons, and consumer goods of all kinds were leaving the assembly lines. The reconversion of war plans to peacetime pursuits was progressing at full speed. Once more, the automobile factories were seamlessly working on the first vehicles produced since 1942. With all facilitations, American consumers were able to purchase new vehicles. Hundreds of thousands of cars were available and accessible to the majority of the American people. Great Depression was just a memory as most Americans had prospered after the war. They had money and were eager to spend it. Millions of returning veterans got married, and it created a demand for new houses and new kitchen appliances. The rationing ended and food became sufficient. Overnight, it seemed that the traditional American cautious spenders became blatant consumers. (White 67)

People were driven by the urge to intensify the manufacturing process and to maximize the production. The United States government created new jobs and increased the incomes of its citizens. As the number of working men and women was continuously growing, poverty began to decline. The overall economy grew by 37 percent during the 1950s, unemployment dropped to as low as 4.5 percent by the end of the decade. The establishment of new companies

and industries led to a popularity of the principle of consumerism among American people. The average American family had 30 percent more purchasing power than they used to have a few years ago. Especially after solving the housing issue, “The suburban lifestyle required massive new investments and unending household purchases ranging from automobiles and refrigerators to backyard barbecue grills” (Beauregard 6). Consumerism and patriotism were considered as two sides of the same coin. Product placement was enormous and television shows were always placed in a house that should be equipped with the latest goods. People had more money to spend, and more items became available on a daily basis. American consumer culture’s major focus was not on the product itself as much as it was an investment in new ways of advertising, packaging, retailing, and buying on credit. Between advertising and debt, consumers were stuck into a materialistic trap. (Galbraith 124)

The spread of consumer culture during the 1950s impacted several aspects of society. Consumerism led to a very significant shift in social values, especially among the young generations. People started to challenge traditions by changing their appearances, adopting rebellious attitudes, and rediscovering their sexualities. Gary S. Cross, in his book *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America*, views that “...consumer goods came to embody a distinct and eventually dominant alternative to political and even religious visions of American life” (27). People sensed that they no longer belong to any institution, and that their dedication to consumerist culture rendered them disoriented.

The integration of media and advertising into Americans’ quotidian life was a revolutionary decision. Television was increasingly becoming a part of people’s daily life throughout the 1950s. People raced to purchase televisions and to replace reality with a virtual alternative. Watching television programs in the evening became a staple family activity. Cable companies introduced new game shows like *What’s My Line* (1950), and comedy shows like *I Love Lucy* (1950). The movie industry of the fifties also introduced the world to one of the most

iconic screen figures, Marilyn Monroe. (Feinstein 31) In one way or another, advertising schemes targeted every gender, age, and race of their consumer audience. They gave them an identity to embrace to control their consuming rate.

From another angle, the 1950s can be perceived as a deceptive facade that camouflages individual distress. The shift in economic strategies, suburban social classifications, conformist gender roles, and race-based discrimination contributed to the internal turmoil of American people. As everyone's main concern was achieving economic stability and striving for individualism, mental and spiritual well-being was somehow neglected. One of the many ways through which they manifested their frustration was through an excessive consumption of alcohol. People of different ages and backgrounds resorted to drinking to conceal their problems. The most common alcoholics were World War II veterans. Soldiers needed a coping mechanism to deal with their post-traumatic war experiences. In this regard, the historian William Tuttle Jr. (qtd. in Rotskoff) asserts that "alcoholism was rampant among returning fathers" (91). More common reasons for drinking were loneliness, boredom, and frustrations resulting from the governmental and social dissatisfaction.

Movies in the fifties portrayed the rebellious attitude of Americans. For instance, the 1945's movie *The Lost Weekend* was the first film to deal with alcoholism. It depicts a realistic simulation of the life of an alcoholic in the American society. Defeating the expectations of the audience, the protagonist was not a veteran whose addiction can be justified. Rather, he was a striving novelist who struggled with his secret homosexuality, and with his failure to fulfill his responsibilities as a mature man. Plenty of people sympathized with the character. Similarly, music was yet another outlet which allowed American younger generations to channel their insurgence and deviance from all sorts of constraints. Rock and Roll was a new musical genre created in the United States. It became a sensation for millions of American teenagers across the country as they praised its blatant, loud, and subversive nature in the voices of Elvis Presley,

Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis, and others. (Feinstein 34) Most Rock and Roll songs dealt with issues that were relatable to teenagers in need of an outlet to overcome their loneliness.

1.3. The Paranoid Society During the Red Scare

The end of World War II introduced the world to a new and an ongoing international tension between two superpowers; the United States and the Soviet Union. The conflict between the Capitalist America and the Communist Russia was mainly a matter of racing to dominate the world. In order to assert their influence, each side opted for a plethora of strategies to spread its ideologies among the less powerful countries of the world. From maintaining and promoting strong economies and endorsing space travel, to launching satellite technology and developing atomic bombs, they seamlessly strived to impose their supremacy over other countries. Consequently, the Cold War era witnessed a wide spread of fear and paranoia among people. They feared a spread of Communism in the United States and the loss of a distinguished individualist identity. From that point on, the 1950s was no longer a time of tranquility and peace, and the stress would eventually affect people's psyche.

The origins of the Cold War can be traced back to the beginning of the century when the first Red Scare took place. In 1919, people feared the spread of Communism and Anarchism inside the United States in the same manner as it did in the Soviet Union., The Seattle General Strike (1919) and Boston Police Strike (1919) were accompanied by anarchists' violent Bombing Campaigns which targeted many prominent political leaders. (Hagedorn 184) Initially, the United States president wanted to preserve the World War II alliance in order to eliminate conflicts of power and politics. In a speech delivered in New York, President Harry Truman (qtd. in Craig and Logevall) says that "[the world] cannot afford any letdown in the united determination of the allies in the war to accomplish a lasting peace" (59). In 1945, when the United States dropped a nuclear bomb on Hiroshima in Japan, the act was translated as a

political decision to threaten Russia. Later, the Soviet atomic espionage became public and revealed their ability to develop their own bombs. (65)

The anti-communist propaganda played a major role in spreading fear among the American people. By then, it was essential for everyone, particularly those who held a governmental position, to endorse the anti-communist strategies. In the midst of this fierce anti-communist campaign, Senator Joseph McCarthy took advantage of the mass hysteria to incriminate governmental officials, newscasters, and actors with no concrete evidence. McCarthyism was considered as a rushed reaction to the Cold War based on conspiracies, and its random purge of potential Soviet spies worsened the issue. (Theoharis 195)

As the United States and the Soviet Union continued to accumulate technological weapons, concerns of an atomic confrontation invaded the American society of 1950s. They started building shelters in their backyards and basements, distributed dog tags on students to enable their parents to identify their corpses in case an explosion happens, and made disasters' drills an indispensable routine in schools. Americans continuously feared a potential atomic warfare. People's fragmentation and alienation became popular during the cold war era. It is argued that the core of alienation arises from the low degree of integration imposed by the capitalist system on people. According to Amy Wendling, a philosopher and a college professor, the capitalist system "eliminates human agency from political revolution; and that makes alienation unthinkable" (4). The loss of self and identity in a capitalist world, when combined with the political tensions of post-World War II era, laid the foundation for the emergence of a new estranged generation that adopted alienation to free itself from the distress of the world.

1.4. The Counterculture Movement of Rebellious Youth

Despite the United States' thriving economy during the post-World War II era, the stability of social, political, cultural, and religious values was challenged by a new non-conformist generation. The American government used the money to fund its expansion plan to dominate the world and to reinforce its policy of containment against the spread of Communism. They exploited the resources of other countries and intervened in wars in Japan, Cuba, and Vietnam. The majority of young people belonged to the affluent middle class and enjoyed a luxurious lifestyle. However, they became resentful of the 1950s' conformity, anti-communism, consumerism, and wanted to break free from all restrictions. This rebellion developed into a movement which influenced the entire history of the United States.

The motivation behind the movement can be perceived through political, economic, and psychological lenses. Internationally, the United States was involved in several conflicts amid the Second World War including Japan, Cuba and Vietnam. The military involvement was not merely for the sake of people's well-being but rather because the non-capitalist countries were a threat to their economic interests. They feared that the 'domino effect theory' would be applied in this context if one country fell under the Communist sphere, others would follow and America would lose its power. (Zinn 439) On the local level, the Civil Rights Movement thrived as a reaction of the aggression and racial discrimination practiced by white supremacists against blacks. Although the movement led to some achievements, many people believed that the government became endangered by the peaceful activists and was behind their assassination and repression. (439) When the governmental institution's hypocrisy unveiled, many young Americans realized that a change must take place. Thus, they indulged in a series of anti-war and civil rights reforms protests.

The Beat Generation is a literary movement that criticizes the materialistic society of the American middle class during the 1950s. This generation rebelled against the horrors of

society by alienating themselves from it. The name was presented for the first time by Jack Kerouac, an American novelist of a French descent, to describe a non-conformist movement of writers. He explained that the expression insinuates that they are a 'beaten down' or 'tired' and even 'upbeat.' (Charters 41) The Beat writers experimented with style and topics; they neglected grammatical rules, used explicit language, discussed personal experiences, and explored the themes of rejecting American values and the fear of a nuclear war. They were inspired by Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman's Transcendentalist tendency to elevate spirituality, to connect with nature, to avoid disturbances, and to live in a harmonious and peaceful world. Some of the symbolic works of the Beats movement are *Howl* (1954) by Allen Ginsberg, *On the Road* (1957) by Jack Kerouac, *Bomb* (1958) by Gregory Corso, and *Naked Lunch* (1959) by William S. Burroughs. They introduced an important question about individual freedom to the American youth of the 1950s. (41)

The American Counterculture movement is characterized by American youth's rejection of the 1950s norms. It was an anarchist reaction against the uniformity of housing, conformity of behavior, and the restrictions of McCarthyism during the Cold War era. The rebellious American youth were called 'hippies' or 'hipsters'. They became distinct and unique due to their unusual appearance and taste in music, their excessive use of drugs, and their fluid sexualities. The counterculture way of living relied on peace, love, harmony, mysticism, psychedelic rock music, meditation, and drugs. It opened a new horizon for both men and women to start experimenting with their sexualities. However, the historian Paul Goodman notes that the experience did not serve the purpose of liberating females from the same sexist treatments that they faced before the movement. He concedes that due to the random sexual intercourse and "unmarried pregnancies", women were still thought of as codependent procreators. (13)

They were interested in Eastern religions and philosophies that focus on the psychological wellbeing of individuals and freedom of their spirits. For instance, Indian Sanskrit *Kama Sutra* was highly praised among hipsters for the sexual and emotional fulfillment it provides. According to their beliefs, these components are essential to the human's quest for an 'alternative consciousness' and spiritual awakening. The music industry embraced the counterculture movement and it openly portrayed their rejection of mainstream culture. Some of the major musical figures of that period are The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Neil Young, Jimi Hendrix, and Pink Floyd. (DeRogatis 34) The consumption of drugs, more frequently LSD, inspired notorious musicians to pioneer a refined version of the genre called 'acid rock'. The latter became an international sensation after the release of John Lennon's song *Tomorrow Never Knows* (1966) and The Rolling Stones' *Paint It, Black* that same year. Albert Hoffman (qtd. in DeRogatis), a prominent researcher in LSD effects on humans, comments that "every sound generated a vividly changing image with its own consistent form and color" (10).

Like Thoreau and other transcendentalists, hipsters praised the return to human essence to achieve ultimate happiness and peace. They believed that a simple life away from the materialistic world is the shortest way to happiness and gratification. (Rorabaugh 112) It was a movement of the alienated youth rebelling against a corrupt and unreliable world.

Section Two: 2. Post World War II American Literature

Literature is a reflection of life. It stimulates the mind to reflect, imagine, and to create. Literature can also be defined as the study of human condition; it portrays previous and current civilizations, cultures, as well as history. However, literature is not just a medium that transmits historical events, it is a dynamic factor in a particular moment in history. In his book *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, John Brannigan believes that "[the objective] is to see literature as a constitutive and inseparable part of history in the making, and therefore rife with the creative forces, disruptions and contradictions of history" (4). American literature of the

post-World War II era was a resistance of the sweeping generalization in themes and style. Authors of that era were extremely innovative and reflexive; they also gave much importance to self-awareness and psychology. In this regard, Scott F. Fitzgerald says “That is part of the beauty of all literature. You discover that your longings are universal longings” (Graham and Frank 260). During the 20th century, many intellectuals decided to emigrate from their countries to America and their movement reinforced the country’s intellectual status.

Most of the literary productions of that period were of a realist nature; therefore, they dealt with World War II excessively. Some of the novels that epitomize the era are *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) by Norman Mailer, *The Young Lions* (1948) by Irwin Shaw, *From Here to Eternity* (1951) by James Jones, *The Caine Mutiny* (1951) by Herman Wouk, and *Catch-22* (1961) by Joseph Heller. All of these novel are typical war narratives that glorify combats and describe the disturbing details of warfare vividly. Another post-war generation of authors focused on the individual’s personal growth, fate, and status within his family and society.

Robert Penn Warren was one of these writers whose novel *All the King’s Men* (1946) elucidated the gloomy repercussions of the American Dream. Arthur Miller was a very prominent dramatist, novelist, and biographer who seamlessly was able to prove that his writings are not limited by time nor place. When he published his play *Death of a Salesman* (1949) he reached the summit of his career. The piece appealed to the common man because of the similarities in the characters’ struggles and failures. He also wrote *All My Sons* (1947), a story of a man who willingly manufactures and sells faulty aircraft equipment during war, which ironically, became the cause of his sons’ death. The story was already contemporary and was considered as a criticism of America’s weapons commerce in the Cold War context.

In addition, *The Crucible* (1953), a story set in colonial times during the Salem Witch-hunt, condemned the wrongful accusations and executions of countless innocent people.

Similarly, during the time the play was performed, McCarthy was leading his anti-Communist crusades against many innocent people. Tennessee Williams was one of the first publicly non-heterosexual dramatist at that time who dealt with repressed emotions and sexualities especially in Southern families. By relying on Freud's theory of repressed desires to explain his anguished characters' loneliness, he produced his two most celebrated dramas entitled *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947). They succeeded because they were based on personal experience.

The 1950s was a time of affluence and alienation at the same time. It provided for the majority of people the prosperity they anticipated during the Great Depression of the 1920s and the Second World War. Nevertheless, loneliness and isolation became a ghost that haunted American individuals for years. The stereotypical successful yet miserable businessman became a recurring theme in the literature of the period. Authors like John O'Hara, John Cheever, and John Updike discussed the underlying feeling of loneliness within the seemingly lavish lifestyle. Some authors mirrored the individual's failure to achieve success; like in Miller's play *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and Saul Bellow's novella *Seize the Day* (1956). Others chose to voice characters with commitment issues as shown in Jerome David Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* (1952), and Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957). The period also witnessed the rise of Jewish writers' unique perspective of becoming alienated from their own heritage which was the case in Philip Roth's *Goodbye, Columbus* (1959).

The 1950s popularized science fiction novels including Robert A. Heinlein's *The Puppet Master* (1951), Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers* (1955), and Andre Norton's *The Crossroads of Time* (1956). The majority of the stories were based on a futuristic world-vision of extraterrestrials and Robots. On another note, Comic books triumphed the reading charts during the fifties; they were affordable, easy to read, and they restored people's hope in virtue's

win over evil. The classic superhero comics that used to be popular in the 1940s were replaced with new realistic stories. Few of the 1950s war comics were Atlas' *Battlefront* (1952), Magazine Enterprises' *The United States Marines* (1952), Farrell's *G-I in Battle* (1952), Harvey's *War Battles* (1952), and Mainline Publications' *Foxhole* (1955). The alienation of the 1950s inspired the next decade's literary generation to become more creative with their craft. During the sixties, the boundaries between writing fiction and reporting reality were neglected.

2.1.Postmodernism

Postmodernism can be defined as a shift in mainstream style and ideology manifested in a variety of disciplines including literature. Postmodern literature relied on some unusual literary conventions including paradox, fragmentation, paranoia, dark humor, unrealistic plots, parody, and unreliable narrators. It also rejected the limitations between genres and forms in writing literature. After the end of World War II, Postmodern writers were inspired by the European philosophical orientations and their belief that the world cannot be 'conceptualized', understood, or defined. (Sheeba 181)

Philosophically, the majority of postmodern principles are derived from thinkers like Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Fredric Jameson, and others. Each of them contributed to the overall development of the theory and the movement in their own way. Derrida followed a deconstructive approach to analyze discourse, and he focused on the hermeneutical method of interpretation mainly to study the works of Michel Foucault. Lyotard's contribution was evident in his interdisciplinary approach of dealing with a variety of topics at once. He also criticized the concept of 'universal truth' and inspected the impact of social and technological advancements. The American scholar Jameson linked Postmodernism with capitalism, consumerism, and media. He believed that postmodernist appraisal of aesthetics was a result of media influence. (Sheeba 186)

Postmodernism is an extension of modernist dissatisfactions, “it is a rejection of causality, a dissatisfaction with essence, object, the transcendental, and the idea of non-problematic signification” (Ryan 247). For modernists, the 19th century linear literary style of writing was a challenging obstacle which they struggled to overcome over the years. In terms of style, postmodernists distinguished their writings by adopting certain themes and techniques. Irony, playfulness, and black humor are amongst the most familiar aspects of postmodernism. It was common for postmodernist writers to treat serious issues using irony and humor. For example, both Heller’s *Catch-22* and Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49* novels addressed the events of World War II in a playful manner. They are based on a series of ironic events and funny characters’ names, when in reality, the novel structure and subject are complex. (Sharma and Chaudhary 193)

Concerning techniques, intertextuality might be the focus of study in postmodernist literature. It can be a reference or a parallel to another author, literary work, or style. For instance, the postmodernist Kathy Acker’s novel *Don Quixote: Which Was a Dream* is a direct reference to Don Quixote. Related to intertextuality, pastiche refers to the combination of different genres into one work. Like Pynchon use of elements from pop culture, detective and science fiction, and historical figures in his novels. (Sharma and Chaudhary 194)

Postmodernism cannot be entirely separated from modernism since the entire concept of the movement allowed and encouraged borrowing and parallelism between all existing literary works. This intermixture in style can occur unconsciously like William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). The novel included stream of consciousness, no clear linear plot, and fragmentation. J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* can also be considered as a postmodern narrative considering that it features postmodernistic characteristics such fragmentation and alienation, interrupted language, and mental disorder. (Gu 134)

2.2. Bildungsroman Narratives

The term bildungsroman was first introduced by the German Philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey in 1870. However, it gained popularity and became commonly used after its first English appearance in *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1910. (Boes 231) The bildungsroman novel, also known as a ‘novel of formation’ or a ‘coming of age novel’, is a narrative that displays the growth of characters and the events that shaped their journey. According to Jerome Hamilton Buckley, the Bildungsroman novel characteristics include “childhood, the conflict of generations...self-education, alienation, and the search for a vocation and a working philosophy” (18). Mikhail Bakhtin’s *The Bildungsroman and Its significance in the History of Realism* is a significant scholarly contribution. He suggests that the Bildungsroman novel provides the reader with an “image of man in the process of becoming” (19).

Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* can be viewed as a Bildungsroman narrative in which the character is exposed to psychological, physical, emotional, moral and social development. At the beginning of the story, the protagonist faces an emotional loss that urges him to start a journey; he struggles from countless internal and external conflicts and difficulties. However, it differs from other typical coming-of-age narratives in terms of plot, nature of the quest, moments of epiphany, and in providing answers to the readers’ questions and expectations.

2.3. The Jewish-American Novel

The 1950s promoted the prosperity of minorities’ literature as many voiceless groups found an outlet for their ideas and experiences through writing. The Jewish American literature, for instance, was centered on the dreams and hopes of the Jewish immigrants. It portrayed their suppression of the Holocaust’s horrors, cruel living circumstances of immigrants, alienation from the middle class, and struggle for integration and cultural acceptance. Initially, when Jewish immigrants entered the United States, they were considered and treated as non-white foreigners. The government’s prewar anti-immigration laws reduced the number of American-

born Jews by 8 percent by 1945. The shift in their social status was a long and complex process that has been affected by Americans' perception of the Holocaust. During the economic boom, multi-ethnic reintegration became mandatory. The workforce expansion amassed large numbers of Jews and reduced anti-Semitic attitudes. (Hoberek 71)

Prior to war, the Jewish novel was similar to the mainstream narratives at that time. Jewish-American authors' like Abraham Cahan, Anzia Yezierska, Mike Gold, Henry Roth, and Nathanael West writings were classified as immigrant, proletarian, and modernist novels. However, during the post-World War II period, the Jewish novel gradually morphed into an ethnically defined genre. This literary generation focused on Jewishness itself as well as inner conflicts such as alienation. On this matter, Vincent Brooks comments that "the distinction between Jew and non-Jew becomes ... the whole problem of perception and identity in postmodern culture" (23). Philip Roth's novella *Goodbye, Columbus* (1959) symbolizes the birth of the postwar Jewish intellectual's ability to belong, perceive, and critique the suburban middle class. (Hoberek 94) Few examples of the postwar New York Jewish narratives are J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), Bernard Malamud's *The Natural* (1952), Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), and Chaim Potok's *The Chosen* (1967).

Section Three: 3. J.D. Salinger and The Catcher in the Rye

Jerome David Salinger was born on January 1st, 1919 in New York City to a Jewish Father named Sol Salinger, an Irish mother named Miriam Jillich Salinger, and an older sister named Doris. His family was financially stable due to his father's successful cheese business. His parents had to hide the non-Jewish origins of his mother and even Salinger himself did not discover the truth until his Bar Mitzvah. In 1939, his parents enrolled him in Manhattan's exclusive McBurney School where he failed after only two years and was sent to a military academy. Then, in 1936 he entered New York University and left in 1937 to live Austria where to learn meat packaging techniques upon the request of his father. (French 15)

After he enrolled in a writing Course and having a few failed attempts, *The New Yorker* published his first short story entitled *Slight Rebellion Off Madison* (1941) featuring Holden Caulfield for the first time. In 1942, Salinger decided to join the military forces but he was rejected initially; he was given a counter-intelligence position eventually. By then, he was in love with the famous writer Eugene O'Neill's daughter Oona O'Neill to whom he constantly wrote lengthy letters. He also developed a strong friendship with Ernest Hemingway and he continued to draft the story of Holden Caulfield during the war. (French 16)

The experience of war was a turning point in his personal and professional life. By the time he returned to New York, he was traumatized. He checked himself into a mental facility to receive treatment for his Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In 1949, a film adaptation of his story *Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut* failed miserably that he never authorized any film adaptation of his works again. The year 1951 was a turning point in Salinger's life after he published his first and only novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*. The book gained instant fame and Salinger decided to distance himself from public life. Meanwhile, he searched for internal peace by exploring Eastern religions. In 1955, he married a college student Claire Douglas with whom he had two children; Margaret Salinger in 1955 and Mathew Salinger in 1960. (17) In her memoir entitled *Dream Catcher* (2000), Margaret Salinger describes her childhood in her secluded father's home. She mentions that he would surround the house with walls even though it was situated in an isolated area. (12) After divorcing his wife of 12 years, he started a chain of relationships with young women including the 18 year old Joyce Maynard. She also proceeded to write a memoir entitled *At Home in the World* (1998) in which she reaffirms Salinger's status as an extremely estranged person. She described his strong attachment to his characters and his desire to live their lives. (71)

The reclusive Salinger spent the rest of his life hiding from the world. His public appearances were very rare as he chose to spend the majority of his time in his isolated home;

presumably writing. Yet, none of his writings were published. He also blocked any attempt of hijacking his privacy. He even took legal action against Ian Hamilton to prevent him from quoting personal letters to write a biography. Salinger died January 27th, 2010 at the age of 91 in New Hampshire after successfully maintaining an isolated life.

3.1. *The Catcher in the Rye*

First published in 1951, *The Catcher in the Rye* is Salinger's most famous and only novel. According to David Shields and Shane Salerno, "J.D. Salinger spent ten years writing *The Catcher in the Rye* and the rest of his life regretting it" (xiiv). *Catcher* is a postmodern coming-of-age novel narrated by the seventeen year old Holden Caulfield. He narrates his story from a mental institution as he reflects on his three-day journey wandering the streets of New York. His journey starts the day he was expelled from Pencey Prep private school after failing few classes and engaging in a physical fight with his roommate. Since he did not want to raise questions by arriving home for Christmas break two days earlier than expected, he decides to explore the city. He interacts with teachers, old friends, a former girlfriend, a prostitute, and his younger sister Phoebe. Despite these interactions, Holden feels distanced from everyone and confused about himself.

Mainly, he accuses the majority of adults of being 'phonies' and praises children for their innocence. He perceives himself as the catcher in the rye, a protector of children playing in a rye from falling off the cliff as a metaphor of their innocence. Holden is a disaffected teenager who struggles to find a voice for himself and to transition from adolescence to maturity. He finds relief in alienating himself from the phoniness of the world and society. The protagonist on the verge of mental collapse became a muse to millions of people; from the disaffected youth to the seriously dysfunctional. After selling over 65 million copies, the book instantly became one of the 20th century most influential books. Yet, many people did not entertain the explicit language and tone of *The Catcher*, and as a result, it was banned in many

schools and libraries. After few years, some unfortunate incidents were associated with the book and reinforced the claims that it conveyed a disturbing message. The reclusive J.D. Salinger became an object of scrutiny after his novel's popularity.

3.2.Censorship and *The Catcher in the Rye*

The novel is a period definer that portrays life in the United States in post-World War II era. It has been described as unpatriotic, anti-religious, immoral for its vulgar language, and obscene for tackling taboo subjects such as sexuality. Shortly after its publication in 1951, many social groups called for censorship measures to eliminate this menace. The novel's fight to be accepted, read, and discussed in schools was a difficult yet worthy process.

The first attempt to censor the novel began in Los Angeles, California in 1954 and was followed by at least eight more attempts across the United States. Most of the attacks on *The Catcher in the Rye* were initiated by concerned citizens and parents for moral reasons. The novel was considered dangerous due to its rebellious and non-conformist nature. The main organization under which the rest of the censorship interest groups functioned was the National Organization for Decent Literature. It was established in 1938 by the Catholic Bishops for the purpose of protecting morality in the United States. Initially, it was set to monitor the content of comic books and magazines directed towards teenagers. After 1950, it augmented its authority by surveilling novels and textbooks in collaboration with local schools committees. In this regard, Steinle notes that "the censorship of the novel ultimately came down to individual schools and their school boards" (12).

More efforts to impose censorship on the novel that promoted 'juvenile behavior' were invested in a debate that took place in North Carolina in 1981. The debate was over the use of *The Catcher in the Rye* in high school classrooms upon the request of Pastor Randy Stone. The Calvary Free Will Baptist Church member argued that the novel uses 'God's name in vain'

therefore it should be banned. In opposition, Pastor Warren Wilson of the United Presbyterian Church condemned the act of censoring books instead of facing the social issues. (Steinle 78) Despite the continuous efforts to suppress the unparalleled novel, *The Catcher in the Rye* has managed to remain relevant to young readers of different generations.

3.3. *The Catcher's* Impact on Mentally Distressed Individuals

The stigma that surrounds *The Catcher in the Rye* was strengthened when the novel became associated with murder-attempts of different prominent figures. However, the most direct and popular murder connection is the incident of The Beatles' member John Lennon's assassination. On December 8th, 1980, news reports announced that the music icon had been tragically killed in front of his New York apartment after receiving five bullets in his back. The singer was taken to Roosevelt Hospital and was pronounced dead on time of arrival. The killer, David Chapman, was immediately identified by the police and was taken into custody. The investigations revealed that the killer was only carrying two items with him when he committed the crime; a pistol and a copy of J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. On the first page of the book, Chapman wrote a note that said "this is my statement." He claimed that he re-read it as he awaited for Lennon's arrival, and proceeded to read after killing him. Although Chapman previously suffered from a mental disorder, he claimed that the novel helped him in finding his purpose. He even wrote a letter to the press in which he states that "My wish is for all of you to someday read *The Catcher in the Rye*." He also announced that "All of my efforts will now be devoted toward this goal, for this extraordinary book holds many answers" (Montgomery).

In addition to Chapman, there were two incidents related to *The Catcher*. First, John Hinkley, a mentally unbalanced man who unsuccessfully attempted to kill U.S. President Ronald Reagan. And second, Lee Harvey Oswald who assassinated President John F. Kennedy. Both men possessed a copy of the book, but no clear connections were discovered. The media coverage of the incidents added to the negative attention to the novel. To many, Holden was no

longer a character in Salinger's story, but a part of crime and insanity stories. To all alienated individuals, especially someone who is mentally disturbed, the ordinariness of Holden made him extremely appealing and easy to identify with. (Whitfield 179)

Conclusion

The 1950s was a confusing decade for Americans. The World War II have resulted in significant losses of human life and less material damages. Therefore, the United States emerged as a thriving economic and technological power. Yet, materialism and consumerism has turned Americans into fragmented individuals. The paranoia increased with the political tensions and atomic fears of the Cold War, and it resulted in a counterculture movement of a rebellious generation. In literature, authors both influenced and were influenced by the circumstances. The postmodern protagonist is traumatized by the horrors of reality and uncertain about the future. He is alienated, confused, and in a constant search to assert his identity.

Chapter Two: A Theoretical Study of Alienation

Introduction

Alienation can be broadly defined as the state of being estranged from something or someone. In order to understand the notion of alienation, it is necessary to provide an overview of its history and usages. Therefore, this chapter is a theoretical examination of alienation and it is divided into three sections. The first section includes religious, economic, philosophical, and political insights on the origins and development of alienation. The second section traces alienation in psychoanalytic theories. The third section and last section reflects alienation as a literary theme and illustrates the development of the misfit hero.

Section One: 1.The Evolution of Alienation

In Aristotle's *Politics*, it is stated that humans are essentially sociable creatures. A person's life shares common features with other people's lives including the institution or the city where they all live. He notes that the human life is by nature political; it is an agreement which they established through language. However, a person might be apolitical by choice. Despite the relatively modern connotation of the term alienation, the concept existed many centuries ago and had its roots in ancient and complex issues. Some essential ideas and theories about alienation emerged in European intellect at least two centuries ago. However, alienation was associated with many problematics ranging from religion and economy, to philosophy and psychology. The reflection of social transformations and evolution of thoughts through history facilitates the comprehension of the concept of alienation. (Nielson 22)

1.1.The Origins of Alienation in Religion and Economy

Religion plays a major role in the lives of people and affects their intellectual and spiritual state. Thus, it is convenient to explore the religious dimensions of the concept of alienation. In Judeo-Christian mythology, the notion of being 'alienated from God' was extensively discussed. It is believed that mankind had 'fallen from grace' by violating the divine

order. The fall from grace started by 'the fall of man' from heaven, then by the shameful treason of Judah, and later by the neglect of religious practices by humanity in general. (Mészáros, Marx's Theory of Alienation 26) In order to redeem men, especially the Jews, from the state of alienation which they brought on themselves, messianic missions were launched. Paul the Apostle urged people to remember "that ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise." He continued to remind them that when they embraced religion "now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens [...] of the house of God" (27).

The universality of Christianity enabled it to promote Jesus Christ as the solution for man's self-isolation. On this matter, Karl Marx (qtd. in Mészáros) noted in his essay entitled *On the Jewish Question* (1884) that Judaism's promise of readmission into the grace of God presented a form of dominance and power over 'strangers'. In addition to the second promise of softening internal social class conflicts which benefited their unity when confronting 'strangers'. Strangers are those who do not follow Judaism. These covenants were considered worldly as they only assured Judaism's extension of power. Christianity, on the other hand, rejected any form of discrimination between any of 'its people' and 'strangers' and replaced it with the 'universal brotherhood of mankind'. Marx concluded that "Christianity is the sublime thought of Judaism. Judaism is the vulgar practical application of Christianity" (29).

The Jews gained a reputation of being materialistic individuals. According to Marx (qtd. in Mészáros), "the nationality of the Jew is the nationality of the trader, and above all of the financier" (27). Parallel to the world's tendency to develop economic strategies and profits, people became detached from abstract theological principles. Simultaneously, the Christian vision of universality became unattainable as more and more people tended to focus on their material interest and ignore spirituality. Partiality penetrated societies creating unprecedented divisions among people and leading them to alienation. (27)

Judaism, Christianity, and their metamorphosis into Judeo-Christianity were all supposed to eliminate alienation individually or collectively. They were complementary and essential to societies' efforts to adapt with internal conflicts. They both represent the attempt to accomplish a transcendence in order to restore the human essence and suppress the state of alienation. Especially after the emergence of notions like capitalism, monopoly, and competition. The mission of religion was to eliminate what they called 'the capitalist spirit' and to restore faith in God and Humanity. According to Balzac's ironic description, in the case of a secularized society, there is no value for sacred objects when even the Holy Spirit's worth can be estimated and sold. The terms 'saleability' or 'universal saleability' became prominent at that time to promote the possibility of selling all sorts of objects and creatures. Later on, during the undefeated rise of capitalism, all ideological trends with contradictory orientations were rejected. (Mészáros, Marx's Theory of Alienation 34)

Adam Smith (qtd. in Mészáros) observes that during the feudal system which relied on land and servitude, "the vassal cannot alienate without the consent of his superior" (34). Thereby, humans' alienation was determined by the extension of saleability into universal capitalism. It turned people from religious believers into materialistic beings who can only achieve self-satisfaction through producing and selling objects. Societies became fragmented due to individuals' pursuit of wealth. In this sense, it is believed that capitalism has turned people into egoistic individuals who obviously praised their selfishness and alienation. (34)

1.2. Alienation in Philosophy

The 18th century can be defined as the age of reason and enlightenment because people started to question the authenticity of the pre-instilled religious thoughts. Most philosophers argued that there is a direct link between religion and alienation. They believed that God and religion were created by humans for personal purposes. In order to generate a reasonable explanation of the world and societies, they had to eliminate the supernatural factors. God was

considered as an elusive image that represents the aspirations of human beings to achieve perfection, supremacy, and immortality. These views were seen as an act of blasphemy and defiance of all forms of organized religion including Christianity. Hegel's philosophical project entitled the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) comprises a detailed discussion of the role that alienation plays in the process of humans' consciousness development. Hegel argues that the self is initially alienated before reaching absolute knowledge. In order to overcome this self-alienation, the consciousness must embrace its alienation to stimulate its development. The experience of alienation is an undesirable yet a necessary one. Hegel (qtd. in Rae) concedes that "consciousness is, on the one hand, consciousness of the object, and on the other hand, consciousness of itself; consciousness of what it is for the True, and consciousness of its knowledge of its truth" (Rae 24).

Ludwig Feuerbach believed that alienation is the product of religious influence on people's consciousness. In 1841, he wrote *The Essence of Christianity* in which he argued that the 'divine being' is man himself but without the limits of a regular one. God is a polished facade of a perfect man worshiped by other beings who lack the unrealistic high standards. To overcome this obstacle, Feuerbach asserts that one must recognize that the concepts of God and religion were a human creation. He must accept his limits and remove deceptiveness. French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's studies contributed to both political philosophy and psychology. His works were based on identifying people's co-dependence as the reason for their alienation. He deemed the human reliance on the opinions of others for self-validation as a destructive factor of human authenticity and freedom. As a solution, Rousseau suggested the creation of a convenient political climate that promotes equality and freedom among citizens. He emphasized on the importance of fostering autonomous individuals to avoid self-destruction, hence alienation. However, he thought that the world and humanity cannot escape from the dystopia of alienation and lack of freedom. (Simon-Ingram 323)

1.3.Nihilism and Existentialism

For centuries, people generally assumed that they had a specific ‘inherent purpose’ granted for them by God and religion. Essentialism overshadowed every other concept because individuals were convinced that they have an essence that was granted for them before they were even born. Their quest in life is to discover their essence and to abide by it to achieve ultimate happiness. Then, during the 19th and 20th centuries, a group of philosophers challenged the core ideals that had been followed by mankind for hundreds of years. Among these philosophers are Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Camus, and Sartre who established new philosophies including Nihilism and Existentialism. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche’s scholarship criticized traditional European religion and morality. He accuses traditional philosophy, science, and religion especially Christianity of being faulty. According to him, nihilism is a meaningless, valueless, and purposeless experience. All questions about the existence of the world and humans’ personal existence have no answer. (Hinman 91)

While the core of philosophical thoughts was concerned with finding the human ‘essence’ and purpose, existentialism purely refuted all sorts of abstract reasoning. The term existentialism was coined by the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, and according to him, it is based on the refusal of logical and scientific philosophy. It is a philosophical trend in ‘bourgeois philosophy’ that emerged in the 20th century to cope with the modern mind-frame of intellectuals. The key concept of existentialism is the word ‘existence’ which was initially used by Kierkegaard in the religious context. He suggested that existence refers to one’s ability to attain self-possession in a world that had been determined by spirituality. (More 13)

The existentialist approach is centered on individual’s inner awakening which should be related to his own life and experience. Despite of its criticism of religion’s effect in hindering the spiritual growth of individuals, an existentialist is not necessarily an atheist. For instance, Kierkegaard himself was a theist who believed in the possibility of existence of God, but this

God does not grant people their meaning in life. Absurdity is an important notion in existentialism. The existentialist approach also discussed the idea of the futile effort of searching for meaning in a meaningless world. Albert Camus (qtd. in Sagi) believes that “the realization that life is absurd cannot be an end, but only a beginning” (43). Camus believes that the most serious philosophical question is the problem of suicide. An absurd reasoning might affect people’s sense of judgment on the worth of living. He asserts that the literal meaning of life is whatever the person is doing that prevents him from killing himself. The only difference between absurdism and existentialism is that absurdism promotes coexistence and the acceptance of a meaningless world, whereas existentialism urges people to define their own meaning of life. (43)

After World War II, people abandoned any belief in an ordered world, especially after the Holocaust horrors. The French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre philosophical views appeared to be pessimistic regarding humanity. Like the rest of the existentialist philosophers, he believed that man has to exist first, indulge in experiences by himself, and finally define himself afterward. Sartre’s works were focused on ‘freedom’ and ‘authenticity’. He asserts that unlimited freedom is a characteristic of consciousness similar to spontaneity, and that it is not defined by physical and social restrictions. (Mészáros, *The Work Of Sartre* 92) But with unlimited freedom, one’s responsibility is to make suitable choices depending on his own truth. Therefore, authenticity is achieved, and in case the person ignores to take responsibility of freedom, alienation occurs. (91-98)

1.4.Marx’s Theory of Alienation as a Socio-Economic Phenomenon

The 19th century brought an immense diversity in philosophical thought. Alienation became a broad category that includes all types of malaise, and it was discussed by a variety of thinkers including Marx. The Marxist theory of alienation was developed by the German philosopher and thinker Karl Marx. He analyzed the works of philosophers such as Hegel and

Feuerbach, political-economists including Smith and Sismondi's critique of *laissez-faire* economy, socialists like Rousseau and Fourier, and the working class analysts namely Engels and Guizot. He believed that most philosophers only interpreted the world in different methods, but could not find the means to change it. Marx thoughts on alienation are based on the belief that the economic framework determines the history of societies as well as their future. He argues that humans' fundamental alienation takes place in the productive means of their societies in coordination with the historical progress. According to Althusser, Marx has substituted the essentialist concept of man by the concept of mass-alienation in the confrontation between man and capitalism. Marx developed his theory of alienation in the light of the alienating factors of capitalism. (Churchich 47)

In Marx's critical-social theory of alienation, estrangement is, in a sense, the separation of individuals from themselves and the fragmentation that results from work. In his book entitled *Capital* (1867), Marx argues that alienation can be observed throughout the four stages of the process. He explained the notion of the 'alienated' or 'estranged labor' under the influence of capitalism where workers are alienated from the products they manufacture because they do not own them. They are also alienated from the process because they are gradually turning into machines. And effectively, they are alienated from their human essence as well as the human species. Inevitably, the economic and social alienation of man becomes a psychological one which in extreme cases can be manifested in neurosis. (Churchich 48)

Section Two: 2. Alienation in Psychoanalysis

In the late 19th century, the idea of psychoanalysis emerged and started to gain attention in the fields of neurology and psychology. The theory dealt with the structure and functions of people's psyche, and it introduced new psychotherapeutic methods for patients with neurotic and hysterical symptoms. Sigmund Freud, Carl G. Jung, and Jacques Lacan are the three most

prevalent names in the domain of modern psychology. They studied the human psyche and explored the causes and repercussions of mental disorders.

2.1. Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory

Freud's most notable contribution to modern psychology is based on the study of the unconscious. He proved that the unconscious is an active part that determines and influences the human behavior. According to him, the unconscious is a collection of all suppressed desires and forgotten wishes. Freud believed that humans are driven by two opposite desires which he called 'Eros' and 'Thanatos'. The 'Eros' represents the instincts of survival and sexual desires; 'Thanatos' signifies the urge to die and the wish to indulge in a state of peace and quietness. He assumed that the suppressed desires are normally encased in the unconscious; but when they find an exit, a conflict occurs between the conscious and the unconscious of one's psyche. He developed the tripartite theory of personality to distinguish and examine the three structural elements of the mind named the 'id', the 'ego', and the 'superego'. The 'id' is a natural source of all instinctive desires including libido, violence, and hidden memories. These instant desires usually do not change over time and experience, and they are not affected by reality or logic because they belong to the unconscious part of the mind. According to Freud, "an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces" (36).

Freud considered the 'ego' as a reality test; it is the mediator between the 'id' and the external world, and it establishes realistic means to control and satisfy the repressed desires. It is relatively weak; but, it balances the stability and safety of the psyche. It also represents the idealistic self-images and personal aspirations. The 'superego' symbolizes the societal morals and values, it tames the sexual and aggressive impulses of the 'id', and persuades the 'superego' to opt for moralistic values instead of reasonable ones. (37) In his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), Freud argued that the conscious works as a guard who prevents the unconscious

from manifesting the underlying desires. However, during sleep, dreams take control over the conscious and changes its content into distorted images and symbols; this process is called 'dream censorship'. He also stated that dreams are divided into a 'manifest content' and a 'latent content'. The 'manifest content' is the superficial part of the dream, and the 'latent content' is the hidden meaning of the dream. Thus, the interpretation of dreams enables the psychoanalyst to solve the mysteries of one's psyche. (225)

In *Three Essays on Sexuality*, Freud stated that childhood sexual experiences are stimulated by instinctual satisfactions and repressions, and that they are of great importance. The 'Oedipus complex' concept explains the process of overcoming the "incestuous phantasies" of one's childhood. According to Freud, it is "one of the most painful, physical achievements of the pubertal period...detachment of parental authority" (227). The 'Oedipus complex' establishes repression to control the prohibited desires. Thus, Freud believed that the 'superego' is a result of an effective 'Oedipus complex'.

2.2. An Overview of Jung and Lacan's Psychoanalytic Theories

According to Jung, the two types of the unconscious are the 'collective unconscious' and the 'personal unconscious'. The collective unconscious is determined by all past cultural and historical components; these components are called 'archetypes'. The personal unconscious is the intermediate between the conscious and the collective unconscious. He believed that there is an innate urge in all humans to reach the full capacity of their personality, and that this desire is an archaic and universal aspect of the human psyche. In his work *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Jung states that "society expects [...] every individual to play the part assigned to him as perfectly as possible" (Fordham 52). The archetypes that man encounters in his lifespan are the persona, shadow, anima or animus, the wise old man, and the self.

When a person is born, the 'ego' becomes the conscious that differentiates between the good and bad to determine the child's identity. 'Persona' is the social adaptability which the child conforms to from an early age. The repressed elements of the persona goes into the 'shadow' area or the personal unconscious. The 'anima', or the 'animus for women, is a projection of femininity and creativity in a man's soul. The 'wise old man' can be a reference to meaning or to a king, hero, and a savior that man turns to in case of hopelessness and confusion. After encountering the different archetypes, the most important and critical stage in developing personality is the 'self'. To Jung, it is the awareness of humans' unique nature and the 'oneness' of all species on a cosmic level. (Fordham 55)

Jacques Lacan re-examined the ideas of Freud and revitalized their complexity. However, instead of Freud's triadic mind structure, Lacan developed the trilogy of the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. He modernized the psychoanalytic theory through language, and he was investigated the relationship between language, culture, and psychology. He inspected the connection between language and the unconscious. In this regard, Malcom Bowie states that "language is the sole medium of psychoanalysis: for the patient as he speaks his dreams and phantasies, and for the analyst as he punctuates the patient's discourse" (Bowie 109). As he based his theory on Saussure's language theory, he referred to the language used by humans to represent themselves as the 'signifier', and referred to the person as the 'signified' or the 'subject'. He also introduced the idea giving meaning to words using their opposites such as 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong', and 'true' and 'false'; these pairs were called binaries. (Bowie 110)

Lacan believed that the 'mirror stage' in a child's life where he thinks of himself as a separate identity is in fact a fantasy. It is a *mise-en-scène* through which the child transitions to the 'imaginary' phase where he explores a realm of narcissism and imagination. Then, he ascends to the 'symbolic' stage and becomes exposed to the language of the 'other', and finally,

recognizes his 'desires'. Then in case a 'lack' of desires, the person develops dissatisfaction. These elements define the human 'subjectivity', but according to Lacan, the 'real' can only be based on experience before it gets a name or a purpose. (Bowie 113)

During the symbolic phase, the child acquires his identity and becomes a subject of a 'relational system'. The biological differences of the 'relational system' triggers sexual desire. When there is no access to his desires, the child becomes alienated from his 'real' self. Since language cannot define the 'real', it isolates the child. The repression of desires creates a 'pervasive' individual to find his 'jouissance'. They are often rebels, sceptics, and they cannot develop or maintain a relationship with people. Their fantasies and dissatisfactions alienate them from their surroundings. (Bowie 113)

Section Three: 3. Alienation as a Literary Theme

Alienation is the state of being estranged and rootless. In modern literature, the theme of alienation has been seamlessly and persistently explored. The alienated protagonist is a recurrent figure in a variety of the 20th century American and European literature. Alienation is a result of loss of identity; therefore, the search of identity in a hostile world became a common theme in modern fiction. In this sense, Edmund Fuller comments that "man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin, but from inner problems", he adds that man develops "a conviction of isolation, randomness, meaninglessness in his way of existence" (Fuller 9).

According to Bloom, the ultimate literary portrait of alienation should be traced back to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Homer's *Iliad*. Although, other more recent writers such as Melville, Joyce, Woolf, Dostoevsky, Stevenson, Kafka, Becket, T.S. Eliot, Plath, and Hawthorne have also created exceptional narratives with extraordinary protagonists. He also notes that the use and meaning of the word alienation in literature has changed over time. Especially, since the emergence of existentialism, it became a reflection of the post-war stigma. (xv)

Homer did not entirely agree with Aristotle's idea of dehumanizing the apolitical alienated human. He believed that although one's alienation from society and its good is tragic and might lead to inhumanity, it can also lead to a revitalized humanity. In the *Iliad*, the protagonist Achilles has some inhuman qualities such as savagery and violence, but he is also a god-like immortal character. By alienating himself from his society, its goods, and especially its cultural traditions, he ascends to renew a neglected virtue which is pity and love of the enemy. (Bloom 90) In *Hamlet*, the protagonist Hamlet is mentally alienated because of his loneliness. With the murder of his father, Hamlet became suspicious and obsessed with the idea of identifying the killer of his father. He had no one to talk to and he could not trust anyone either. In Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels* (1796), the protagonist Wilhelm identifies with Hamlet's alienation and his inability to revenge for the murder of his father. He wonders why Hamlet could not act and reflects on his interior alienation and self-torment. (85)

Concerning Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1864), Mochulsky notes that the underground man's alienation is a result of his 'over-analytical mind' and his realization that he is unable to change the world. He claims that man's consciousness of his inability to bring relief and put an end to human suffering can render him an isolated person. The nameless narrator is an isolated former civil servant who angrily describes his dissatisfaction with Western thought. The Underground Man insinuates that people will ultimately rebel against the imposed utopian image that contrasts the irrationality of humans. He is fragmented because he wants to break the barriers of nature's laws and reclaim his free will. (Bloom 130)

Albert Camus' *The Stranger* (1942) and *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) are, according to Sartre, complementary. He argues that *The Myth of Sisyphus* is the 'philosophical companion' to *The Stranger* due to its focus on absurdity. The novel's protagonist, Meursault, is an alienated person who exists outside of social norms. He appeared to be a naïve character who behaved in

an absurd manner following his mother's death. He went swimming, started an affair with a girl, and watched a comic film. He killed an Arab "because of the sun" and claimed to be happy prior to his execution. (Bloom 162) He wondered "how had I not seen that there was nothing more important than an execution...it is the only thing a man could truly be interested in?" (Camus 110) In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, which was published a few months after, the hero has a neutral personality and one cannot determine his good nor bad nature. He is stuck in an absurd reality and a state of hopelessness as he continues to roll a rock to the mountain top only for it to fall down. It portrays Camus' view of life as a meaningless struggle that leads people to their alienation.

In Kafka's *The Trial* (1925), Joseph K. is unable to infiltrate the tyrannous judicial proceedings of the court. He is even incapable of knowing what his offense was. The society insists on the conformity and obedience of all people and court supports this vision. Therefore, any individual who attempts to distance himself is not allowed to by the force of law. The trial is supposed to be a chance for the defendant to defend himself; but, it is impossible for him to defend his innocence in a society that incriminates a vocal individual. The protagonist's life is publicly scrutinized leaving him in a state of paranoia. Thus, the society made him an insecure, inferior, and alienated individual. (Bloom 173)

In Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), the protagonist of this fictional autobiography isolates himself from the society that used to manipulate him. He recounts his life events and his alienation from America's history, economy, culture, and ideology. He also realizes that his alienation is partially the result of his allegiance to authority. He is aware of the fact that a black man living in America between the Civil War and the 1940s is doomed to live in an 'alien nation'. His underground wandering is a manifestation of his freedom as he constantly acknowledges his invisibility. The underground might represent displacement, isolation, and

escape; but, it is also a place of redemption and freedom from the manipulation of society and government. (Bloom 107)

Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963) is a story of alienation and renewal. It is a depiction of the protagonist's, Esther Greenwood, alienation as she struggles for reconnecting with people and fears the loss of such connection in the future. It is a story of a coming-of-age character that shifts from adolescence to adulthood. She struggles with alienation and aspires for connection and renewal in a typical 1950s' American context. She initially attempts to adapt herself to the world. But as she tries to conform to the American urban life, she remains detached from herself. She is tormented between her true aspirations and desires and her conformist mainstream American lifestyle. (Bloom 12) Like many of the post-World War II protagonists, her inner division ultimately leads to the dismantling of her identity, fragmentation, and mental disturbance.

3.1. The Misfit Hero

The postwar decade in the United States was a time of national self-confidence, economic prosperity, social agreement, and global dominance. People were promised permanent prosperity and social stability, and they constructed an ideal image of the future. Americans wanted stable jobs, homes, and marriages to restore the domesticity that they lost during the war. They developed unrealistic expectations, and when those expectations were not met, discontent and confusion emerged. Instead of a peaceful life, the world leaders opted for violence to resolve conflicts. People realized that they became the slaves of their own creations, and that materialism deprived them from their natural freedom. With no authority over themselves nor their country, people questioned their government, religion, and existence. These sentiments led to the emergence of antiheroic figures within literature. According to literary critics Lilian R. Furst and James D. Wilson, "the anti-heroic mode [has become] the only viable form of moral and social honesty left available" (9).

The misfit hero is an indispensable element; especially in postmodernist narratives. The antihero is a mixture of the qualities of a villain and of a virtuous hero. He can be pessimistic, violent, and suspicious, but he might also have good intentions. Unlike the conventional protagonist of classical and mythological narratives, the antihero has a turbulent background and disturbing attitude. His poor behavior, lack of courage, weakness, and confusion often mirror the struggle of modern man in conforming to traditional social and moral norms. In modern literature, the weak and flawed hero who suffers from insecurities has replaced the epic hero. (Barksdale 10)

The antihero is usually depicted as a victim of his society, family, and his own thoughts. Each writer had a vision and a story for his character to tell. Depending on the circumstances, the unconventional hero can develop one personality trait as he can develop multiple qualities. Literary theorist Ihab Hassan comments that “anti-hero refers to a ragged assembly of victims: the fool, the clown, the hipster, the criminal, the poor sod, the freak, the outsider, the scapegoat, the scrubby opportunist, the rebel without a cause, the ‘hero’ in the ashcan and the ‘hero’ on the leash” (Hassan 12). The modern man cannot escape his estrangement because his faith in every pillar of life seemed irredeemable.

Joseph Campbell contends in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1948) that the idealistic vision of a self-determining individual, the technological inventions of power machines, and the establishment of new scientific research methods have “transformed human life that the long-inherited, timeless universe of symbols has collapsed” (387). He refers to the decline of the idealistic hero-figure in modern American fiction. In the postwar period, the anti-heroic figure seemed to become the only realistic and reliable form of social and moral honesty. The loss of faith of in the idealistic and heroic human made the character who embodies the former aspirations of his culture seem ridiculous. Readers preferred the ‘honest’ antiheroes of Sartre, Camus, Salinger, and Heller. (Simmons 6)

The tradition of an antihero became crucial to the American narrative of the postwar era. In addition to the horrors of war, the emergence of the Cold War, the Civil Rights movement, and the counterculture movement paved the way for a mass rebellion. The turbulent social and political climate was reflected in literature, mainly, through rebellious characters. Narratives such as *Catch-22* (1961), *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), *The Graduate* (1963), *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1963), *Little Big Man* (1964), *Midnight Cowboy* (1965), *Cool Hand Luke* (1966), and *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969) gained an immense success for their inclusion of rebellious individuals who challenged society and authority. According to David Simmons, "the emergence and proliferation of the anti-heroic form within the 1960s creates an aesthetic rendition that mirrors the countercultural zeitgeist" (1).

Conclusion

Alienation as a sentiment has existed for a long time. It stemmed from religion and ancient economic methods. Then, it developed to become a philosophical concept and a subject of debate for numerous thinkers. For years, they questioned the reasons behind people's estrangement, and as a result, many theories were formulated. When the world opted for a capitalist orientation, a socio-economic theory investigated the connection between man's social and economic status and his estrangement. In a world of modernity and technology, people had no choice but to become aloof so they can avoid the discomforts of the real world. Psychologists analyzed this phenomenon and established new methods to understand the mental state of disassociated individuals. Alienation is also a universal literary theme as the characters of the narratives depict the feeling of estrangement. Thus, the misfit hero became a symbol of rebellion and seeking freedom.

Chapter Three: Alienation in *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)

Introduction

Since the publication of *The Catcher in the Rye*, the story and language of the book attracted readers and intrigued their desire to understand the complexities of the novel. This final chapter is an analytical examination of *The Catcher's* events in reference to its postmodernist and capitalist background during the fifties. It also sheds light on the protagonist's tormented psyche and personal struggles. Moreover, it offers an investigation of the narrative's language and symbols as a means to convey Holden Caulfield's estrangement. It is an investigation of how the character epitomizes the paranoia and alienation of Americans during the post-World War II era.

Section One: 1.Contextual Analysis of Alienation in *The Catcher in the Rye*

The Catcher in the Rye is Salinger's only and most celebrated novel. It is a story of a boy named Holden Caulfield who is in the midst of transitioning from adolescence to adulthood. The storyteller in this first-person-narrative is Holden. He reminisces over the events written in his personal diary during his stay in a mental facility amid a mental breakdown. The story is set in the 1950s America and it gives the reader an insight on the social circumstances of that time. Holden is a part of that society, he is privileged to enjoy a comfortable lifestyle; yet, he criticizes and condemns some of the social practices and cultural aspects. According to Pamela Steine, a professor of American studies, "*The Catcher in the Rye* was written in the tradition of the American Adam yet conceived in a context of disillusionment and alienation from that very tradition" (43). The novel gained a huge audience of readers due to its familiar context and unusual thoughts. Literary critic James E. Miller claims that "Salinger had stirred more interest among the public and critics alike than any writer since Fitzgerald and Hemingway" (5). Salinger's masterful literary piece vividly depicts the conformist nature of the American society and shockingly introduces Holden as every anxious and estranged individual. On this matter,

literature professor Margot A. Henriksen notes that “In his 1952 novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*, J.D. Salinger introduced Americans to the cultural and psychological landscape of the age of anxiety” (83).

Holden, a troubled adolescent, illustrated the fears and troubles of the American youth in a postwar and atomic fear setting. Miller describes Holden as “a bright but sick boy whose psyche needs adjustment” as well as “an ideal rebel” and “a neurotic misfit” (8). His personal insecurities and search for identity becomes the quest of an entire generation. He is a perplexed character who puts the blame of his confusion on society and culture. At the same time, he seems to be smart and insightful person that tends to overanalyze everyone and everything. While many people spend their entire lives without questioning any pre-established concepts and principles, Holden chooses to do the complete opposite. Jonathan Baumbach explains in his article *The Saint as a Young Man: A Reappraisal of The Catcher in the Rye* that Holden wants to protect children’s innocence and he fantasizes about his ideal adult occupation. (265) Holden reflects on this wish by saying:

Anyway, I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody’s around—nobody big, I mean—except me. And I’m standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff—I mean if they’re running and they don’t look where they’re going I have to come out from somewhere and *catch* them. That’s all I’d do all day. I’d just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it’s crazy, but that’s the only thing I’d really like to be. I know it’s crazy. (Salinger 224)

Holden blames people for their ignorance and calls them ‘phonies’ due to their conformist attitude. He criticizes the domination of consumerism and materialism in the American society by criticizing the ‘phony’ people. Critics Carol and Richard Ohmann assert

that “Salinger’s creation of Pencey Prep, with all the petty horrors, the banalities... [represents] the final mediocrity of the typical American prep school” (26). They also conclude that America had lost its own innocence, and like Holden himself, it needed to “face the problems of growing up” (26). Holden’s criticism is not focused on individuals only, but also on any institution that represents authority such as family, society, school, and religion.

1.1. School as a Phony Authoritative Institution

The story starts with Holden announcing that he got expelled from school due to a fist-fight between him and his roommate, and before that, his poor academic performance. He rambles on the corruption of administrations and ‘phoniness’ of people in his then school Pencey Prep, and his former school Elkton Hills. They are a representation of the corrupt capitalist system and a class-based society. The seventeen-years-old boy detests the attitude of prestigious parents and greedy administrators. He condemns their joint effort to corrupt the innocence of young boys and force them to adopt a certain mentality and lifestyle. He mocks the school slogan ““since 1888 we have been molding boys into splendid, clear-thinking young men”” (Salinger 2) for its exaggeration. In this regard, Holden says:

One of the biggest reasons I left Elkton Hills was because I was surrounded by phonies. That’s all. They were coming in the goddam window. For instance, they had this headmaster, Mr. Haas, that was the phoniest bastard I ever met in my life...On Sundays, for instance, old Haas went around shaking hands with everybody’s parents when they drove up to school. He’d be charming as hell and all. (15)

Holden’s dissatisfaction with Mr. Haas’ attitude with wealthy parents is a criticism of social discrimination, school as an authoritative institution, and the capitalist system that worships money and its holders. Holden adds “Except if some boy had little old funny-looking parents...then old Haas would just shake hands with them and give them a phony smile and

then he'd go talk, for maybe half an hour, with somebody else's parents. I can't stand that stuff. It drives me crazy. I hated that goddam Elkton Hills" (15).

Holden is the symbol of the non-conformist rebel who challenges the educational institution because it is a part of the conformist and capitalist system. He constantly questions the integrity of teachers and students and thinks that the systematic education is useless. For instance, he thinks that his last school, Pencey Prep, was "full of crooks. Quite a few guys came from these very wealthy families, but it was full of crooks anyway. The more expensive a school is, the more crooks it has" (Salinger 4). According to literature professor Joseph Claro, regarding Holden's age, "school should be the most important institution in his life, but Holden has no use for it. Although he's intelligent and fairly well-read, school represents repression to him; it stands for the 'phony' standards and values" (7). Holden hates school because it contradicts with his non-conformist nature and it is full with superficial rich kids. He feels like he does not belong to that world; therefore, he willingly keeps failing in all of the different schools he went to.

Later in the story, when Holden meets with his old friend Sally, she asks him about boys' school. He responds by telling her how much he hates it because "it's full of phonies" (Salinger 141). According to him, all they do in schools is study so they can learn to be smart enough "to be able to buy a goddam Cadillac some day" (141). He believed that school is a phony institution filled with phony administrators and phony students. His commentaries on the values of such schools are a reflection of his conclusion that the whole vision of school as cooperative community is in fact a mask for an entire ideology. This ideology is based on intense competitive struggle between its members and social factions. (Brookeman 61)

However, when Holden got expelled, he wanted to say goodbye to his teacher Mr. Spencer. Although he mentions that he does not want to be lectured, he proceeds to flee from

the dorms and go to Mr. Spencer's house. Holden mentions to him that he failed at least four subjects during that term except for English. He wrote on his exam paper an apology to his teacher for not knowing enough information about the topic. He said that he is not interested and that he understands if he decides to flunk him, he adds "I am flunking everything else except English anyway" (Salinger 13). But to Holden, even his favorite teacher imposed his power on him when he asked him not to read his exam paper but Mr. Spencer read it anyway. He says "you can't stop a teacher when they want to do something. They just do it" (12).

Holden did not embrace the idea of being brainwashed into the mainstream educational system, even if it came from teachers that he actually liked. He seeks comfort in another teacher; "the best teacher [he] ever had" (Salinger 174). Holden trusted Mr. Antolini and considered him a role model with whom he shares his fears and opinions. But his admiration disappears after Holden decides to spend a night in his teacher's house and wakes up to him stroking his hair while he is asleep. Holden translates this act as a sexual harassment and realizes that everyone in his society is corrupt. Mr. Antolini becomes just another disappointment in Holden's life and another reason for the failure of the educational system.

1.2. Holden's Alienation from Family, Society, and Religion

Holden shares very few insights about his family and his background. Right from the start of the story, he declares "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 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" (Salinger 1). His relationship with his parents is almost non-existent. They rarely visit him while he was at Pencey Prep, except for the time when Mr. Spencer met them, they also never call or write him letters. They appear to be estranged from each other too, although Holden does not explicitly mention it. He says that his

mother does not sleep at night; she smokes cigarettes while his father constantly went on business trips. His family is a typical American family in the materialistic age of the 1950s.

Holden also mentions that his parents most likely do not want him to mention them, and that they are somehow sensitive. He states: “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” (Salinger 1). However, he provides a glimpse on their social status by saying “my father’s quite wealthy, though. I don’t know how much he makes-he’s never discussed that with me-but I imagine quite a lot. He’s a corporation lawyer. Those boys really haul it in” (107). His father seems to have powerful and influential acquaintances, and he tries to control Holden’s life without his consent. He wants him to go to Yale or Princeton, but Holden says that he would never go to such places. Holden desperately wants to separate himself from his father because he does not want to become a soulless corporate man like him.

The Caulfields live in a fancy apartment in upper Manhattan in New York. Although Holden hates living in New York, he cannot separate himself from his family and his home. When he got expelled from school, Holden went home because he wanted to see his sister Phoebe. He tries to avoid his parents because he is afraid they would confront him about the reason for his premature arrival. As he enters the building, he stalls the concierge and sneaks in without turning the lights on only to discover that they are attending a charity event. His sister Phoebe, however, is left with a nanny which indicates that they are rich enough to afford one. Author Jack Salzman notes that “Holden’s anxiety, then, is a specifically contemporary kind. Those adults...are neither wholly absent nor fully present...they are as controlling of Holden as is the impersonal, elusive authority which, he knows ultimately determines the values of his home” (89).

Holden's relationship with his siblings is quite remarkable. Although he criticizes his older brother D.B.'s profession, he admires his writings. He even mentions one of his brother's stories entitled 'The Secret Goldfish' in the list of his favorite literary pieces. His younger brother Allie died of leukemia when he was only eleven years old. Holden is always saddened by the memory of his late brother and mentions him whenever he gets the chance. He mentions how peaceful he looked in his coffin although he does not remember seeing him by himself. He says: "I wasn't there. I was still in the hospital and all after I hurt my hand" (Salinger 167). He says that his mother is always sad because she could never get over Allie's death, and that they'd frequently visit his grave when the weather is nice. Holden and his sister Phoebe have the closest relationship. He constantly thinks about her and admires her intelligence and innocence. He says that she makes him happy "the way old Phoebe kept going around and around...it was just that she looked so damn nice" (213).

Holden's society is materialistic and judgmental. He recalls his former roommate named Dick Slagle who has cheap-quality suitcases and how he tries to hide them under the bed. He feared that the other students would criticize him and mock his financial status. Holden becomes depressed whenever he remembers this incident, and he blames the social injustice for his roommate's misery. He demonstrates his dissatisfaction about the financial differences between him and Slagle and wants to make a change. Although changing an entire economic system is a hard task, his acknowledgment and awareness of the situation enables him to criticize the capitalist practices of his society. Holden decides to act, he narrates: "Here's what happened. What I did, I finally put my suitcases under my bed, instead of on the rack, so that old Slagle wouldn't get a goddam inferiority complex about it" (Salinger 129).

The social clash that dominated the American capitalist society was a subject of criticism for Holden Caulfield. He was very aware of the problem and its repercussions on people including Dick Slagle. Thus, after the suitcases incident, they both realized that the

distinction between their families is a complicated situation that is impossible to overcome. Slagle keeps ironically referring to Holden and his belongings as “bourgeois” although he was deeply bothered. According to Carol and Richard Ohmann, Slagle’s shame over his suitcases dominated his mind, but what he dislikes even more is the class injustice. At the same time, he secretly wishes to belong to the other side of society. (31) They both tried to escape this distinction, but they have failed miserably. Holden is forced to live in such a phony institutions, to enjoy a certain lifestyle, and to interact with certain people even though he does not approve of their nature and behavior. According to literature professor Lingdi Chen, “Phoniness, for Holden we can say, stands as an emblem of everything that’s wrong in the world around him and provides an excuse for him to withdraw into his cynical alienation” (145)

Concerning religion, Holden claims that he is slightly religious, or maybe not religious at all. According to Harold Bloom, “one of the most striking aspects of the book [The Catcher] is the secular, nonreligious, and even antireligious nature of much of the thought and behavior it presents” (44). Holden opposes religion as an institution because he believes that everything that is institutionalized is subsequently phony. He rejects it in the same way he rejects any form of authority that tries to impose its rules and principles on him, and prevents him from questioning its legitimacy. As a rebellious individual, Holden chooses to call himself an atheist; he explains: “I’m sort of an atheist. I like Jesus and all, but I don’t care too much for most of the other stuff in the Bible” (Salinger 99). When he mentions how he stopped visiting his brother’s grave because it saddens him, he says: “I know it’s only his body and all...and his soul’s in Heaven and all that crap” (167). This indicates his disbelief in the Christian notion of an afterlife.

In another occasion when Holden was attending a movie, a performance of a choir singing starts; he comments: “... ‘Come All Ye Faithful!’...Big deal. It’s supposed to be a religious as hell, [...] but I can’t see anything religious or pretty, For God’s sake, about a bunch

of actors carrying crucifixes” (Salinger 148). He seems to be interested in Eastern religion which he mentions during his conversation with Luce. He asserts: “I simply happen to find Eastern philosophy more satisfactory than Western” (157). Although Holden is not specifically religious, during his encounter with the two nuns, he was really compassionate. They discussed 17th century literature, and he shared with them his thoughts on *Romeo and Juliet*. He felt sorry for them for only having coffee and toast for breakfast while he was having bacon and eggs. He later decides to give them a ten-dollars-contribution. Holden’s thoughts on God and religion are a reflection of his post-Christian and post-religious environment. In a way, by mocking religion, he is criticizing the materialism of modern American life. (Bloom 45)

1.3. Holden on Capitalism and Materialism

Throughout the novel, Holden seems to be excluded from his environment by choice. He mentions that his father is a corporation lawyer who makes a decent amount of money. When his younger sister Phoebe suggests that he should become a lawyer, he responds that lawyers do not defend the innocent for the sake of the cause but rather to gain money. According to him, all they do is “play golf and play bridge and buy cars and drink Martinis and look like a hot-shot” (Salinger 100). He resists the idea of growing up and having responsibilities because it would mean that he has to lose his integrity and innocence. Therefore he questions the intentions of lawyers, and whether they save people’s lives because they really want to, or because they seek the approval of others. He asks “how would you know if you wanted to be a terrific lawyer with everybody slapping you on the back and congratulating you...the reporters and everybody...how would you know you weren’t being a phony?” (100)

The rules and rewards of the adult professional life are deceitful in Holden’s view. For instance, he calls his older brother D.B. a “prostitute” for becoming a successful script writer in Hollywood. He thinks that actors are phonies because they do not behave like normal people. Actors epitomize phoniness and hypocrisy, as Holden states “I hate actors. They never act like

people. They just think they do” (Salinger 117). Consequently, he hated movies as he declares at the beginning “If there’s one thing I hate, it’s the movies. Don’t even mention them to me” (2). He also describes the affluent lifestyle in the 1950s with people enjoying the city life, driving cars, reading magazines, and buying music records. In addition, Holden seems to consume alcohol excessively like the rest of the American people at that time, and he is also a heavy smoker. The novel incorporates the typical lifestyle of the postwar middle-class.

1.4. The Estranged Protagonist View on War and Violence

Holden offers a very unflattering image of postwar America. Admittedly, he portrays the United States’ military strategy as well as the suicidal tendencies of adolescents. Holden announces that he is “sort of glad they’ve got the atomic bomb invented. If there’s ever another war, I’m going to sit right the hell on top of it. I’ll volunteer for it, I swear to God I will” (Salinger 152). In reference to World War II, Holden says that although the idea of dying sounds appealing to him, he would not stand the army because the government would make him stay for too long. He mentions that his brother D.B. stayed in the army for four years and had even landed on D-Day. He adds that his brother said “the army was practically as full of bastards as the Nazis were” (151).

Holden tells the story of how he injured his hand the night his brother Allie died. He recounts:

I was only thirteen, and they were going to have me psychoanalyzed and all, because I broke the windows in the garage. I don’t blame them. I really don’t. I slept in the garage the night he died, and I broke all the goddam windows with my fist, just for the hell of it. I even tried to break all the windows on the station wagon we had that summer, but my hand was already broken and everything by that time, and I couldn’t do it. (Salinger 40-41)

Holden's aggressive behavior is a result of his brother's death. He was in a state of disbelief and immense pain, and his reaction was impulsive and unconscious. However, anger is a common sentiment among adolescents, especially the postwar generation. Holden is estranged from his school, family, society, religion, and from himself. When Allie died, Holden's attachment to innocence and hope died with him. Thus, Holden's accumulation of repressed emotions were translated in this act of violence.

All in all, the contextual analysis of *The Catcher in the Rye* offers an accurate insight on the social, economic, and religious aspects which affected the American individual during the 1950s. Holden Caulfield's reclusive life and mental estrangement is a result of such circumstances. He realizes that only few people remain uncorrupted by the manipulation of the consumer society. Therefore, he wants to be the protector of purity and innocence, he wants to be the catcher in the rye.

Section Two: 2. Psychoanalytic Examination of *The Catcher in the Rye*

Despite the indispensable significance of the social and cultural aspects in the process of analyzing *The Catcher*, Holden's psyche is worth the examination. Critics consider his behavior as an act of narcissism, including Lingdi Chen who believes that Holden's behavior "reaches far beyond any normal teenage impulses" and that "he has a negative attitude towards almost everything and everyone he meets" (146). In addition, critic David D. Galloway calls him "a misfit hero" (227). Holden seems uncomfortable whenever he communicates with people, and he becomes very confident when he shares his inner thoughts. During his interactions with various people including the nuns, teachers, prostitute, and Ernest's mother. Ernest is his former fellow student and he knows about his misbehavior. However when Holden talks to Ernest's mother, he lies and praises her son along with her. In his mind, Holden wishes

that he would not have to lie, and thinks that his mother should know about his true personality. But he hesitates and comments that “mothers aren’t too sharp about that stuff” (Salinger 60).

Holden often tends to be a people-pleaser who prefers to tell people what they want to hear instead of his real thoughts. He deliberately chooses to lie to Mrs. Morrow because he likes her, and thinks that by doing so, he would make her happy despite the fact that he detests her son. Holden lied with good intentions; he lied because he was trying to be kind. Another reason for his conscious choice of lying is to avoid conflict. Miller comments that Holden underwent “a number of guises” including the time when he introduced himself to Mrs. Morrow as Rudolph Schmidt. Miller believes that it is a part of his search for identity and the self. (13)

2.1. Holden’s Conscious and Unconscious Alienation

The story of Holden Caulfield was written in a time when psychoanalysis was prospering. Holden is introduced as a troubled individual who narrates his story to a psychiatrist while in a mental institution. He is the narrator of his story; he shares his direct conversations with his psychiatrist, and he shares his inner thoughts through interior monologues. Randal Stevenson elaborates that since the questions asked by the psychiatrist are unavailable, it is difficult to make a clear distinction between truth and lies, and between his consciousness and unconsciousness. Based on Freud’s concept, the unconscious is the character’s dreams and fragmented thoughts, and it is as important as conscious speech. (121)

While most of the time he tries to maintain a tough facade by judging people and calling them phonies, Holden unconsciously empathizes with the weak. He never calls children phonies because he also unconsciously believes that they are pure and innocent. Yet, he is also impulsive and reckless at times. He cannot control his anger, and consequently, he gets involved in several physical fights and even hurts himself. Holden’s positive comment about the invention of the

atomic bomb, his wish to be reunited with his deceased brother Allie, and his wish to be shot to death in war are indicators of his unconscious attraction to death.

The protagonist's constant anger and dissatisfaction might be also a result of his feelings toward his father. Holden describes him as strict and eludes that he is not always available for his family. For instance, when he was hiding in the closet the day he went to see Phoebe and did not want his parents to see him, he hears his mother telling Phoebe "you heard what your father said about using that word" (Salinger 191). Phoebe used the word 'lousy' to describe her dinner; a word that Holden uses quite often. Therefore, his constant use of explicit language might be an unconscious form of rebellion against his own father. Moreover, he mentions that he feels sorry for his mother because she spends most of her time alone and sad over Allie's death. He also mentions that he would not attend any colleges that his father has chosen for him. In a way, Holden's rebellion against society is a rebellion against another authoritative figure; his own father.

Holden's entire story is built on his refusal of other people's phoniness. Yet, he contradicts himself by willingly choosing to elaborate lies in different occasions. Aside from the time he lied to his classmate's mother about her son's behavior, he consciously wishes to move from his city and to lie about his identity. As he plans to move to the West, he says that he wants to "pretend I was one of those deaf-mutes" (Salinger 198). Holden recurrently expresses his disaffection in relation to life in the city of New York; therefore, all of his actions seem futile. According to Robert Puchalik, "The course of Holden's three day voyage around the streets of New York City is itself a representation of his disaffection. Unable to decide on anything to do, [...] his aimless wandering is only punctuated by momentary impulses: to drink, to see a friend..." (31). Holden's disaffection is an unconscious defense mechanism that allows him to justify his alienation.

2.2. Holden's 'Thanatos' and 'Eros' in Relation to His Estrangement

Childhood memories are of great importance when analyzing one's desires. Holden's most obvious desire is to protect innocence and prevent himself and others from growing up. However, Holden manifests a hidden desire to become mature. His most notable childhood memory is the loss of his beloved brother Allie. When Phoebe asks him to mention at least one thing that he did not hate, he tells her that he likes Allie. (Salinger 184) The traumatic experience of Allie's death made him isolate himself in the garage where he tried to deal with the idea all by himself. He feels guilty, and he regrets breaking the garage windows. He explains: "I hardly didn't even know why I was doing it, and you didn't know Allie" (41). He explains to the psychiatrist that he was not fully aware of what he has done, and that he recalls this memory as an unconscious action. Holden problems are essentially sexual and moral. His messianic compulsion to protect innocence is a result of a conflict between morality and repressed desires. (Bryan 14)

Holden constantly praises his siblings, but simultaneously, blames himself for all the wrong things that he or they encountered. Salzman explains: "The guilt does not seem to spring from anything obvious as repressed sibling rivalry: the jealousy 'the dumb one' in the family feels toward a brilliant, saintly brother." He adds that some of Holden's guilt "stems from the fact that it was Holden who was spared while his more deserving brother was lost" (48-49). Holden only shows strong emotions and grief when he speaks about Allie. He struggles to cope with his loss, and his reactions are one way of expressing his repressed sadness. Holden tells the therapist that he talks to his dead brother when he feels hopeless. When Holden says "Allie, don't let me disappear. Allie, don't let me disappear. Allie, don't let me disappear. Please, Allie" (Salinger 213), it seems that his consciousness and unconsciousness become intertwined. The trauma of Allie's death seems to be the reason behind Holden's repressed desire to die. Ultimately, all he wants is to be reunited with his dead brother.

Amid a traumatic experience, avoidance appealed to Holden as the perfect strategy. He avoids his problems, responsibilities, parents, society, and even confrontations with his own self. He avoids getting close to Sally on their date because he feared that he would lose her, so, he decides to spare himself the misery of losing someone else. Holden imagines that he would leave New York and live in a place where nobody knows him. At the same time, he realizes that his escape will remain a dream that he enjoys but may never realize. He dreams about dying of Pneumonia, and of becoming deaf and mute. He gets really excited over these ideas and he longs to death. But, he thinks about his sister and desires to “say good-bye to old Phoebe” (Salinger 214).

During his narration, Holden admits that he is a virgin. Throughout the entire novel, the only intimate encounter between him and a girl took place when he met with Jane. She is the only person with whom he shares personal details about himself, for instance, she is the only non-family person who saw Allie’s baseball glove. When he thinks about her, he becomes excited, although, he willingly but forcefully prevents himself from contacting her. When she goes to his school for her date with Stradlater, Holden decides not to see her even though there was enough time for him to do so. He prefers to maintain the exact image of Jane that he captured during the summer they spent together in Maine. Therefore, Holden’s repressed sexual desire seems to be an emotional one; a bond that he created with Jane and that he wishes to maintain.

Holden’s sexual abuse incident with Mr. Antolini seems to be not the first time he becomes the victim of such perverted practices. He comments: “Boy, I was shaking like a madman. I was sweating, too. When something pervery like that happens, I start sweating like a bastard. That kind of stuff’s happened to me about twenty times since I was a kid. I can’t stand it” (Salinger 193). Although he was a virgin, Holden was very interested in sex. He states: “in my mind, I’m probably the biggest sex maniac you ever saw” (36). When he reunited with

his friend Carl Luce, he kept asking him questions about sex. He says: "Old Luce. What a guy. He knew quite a bit about sex, especially perverts and all" (154).

Holden also asks about Luce's girlfriend, and he replies "...she's probably the Whore of New Hampshire" (156). Holden condemns Luce's behavior and tells him that what he said 'isn't nice', he repeats that twice. He is also nice to Sally, even when he could not tolerate her, he tried to be nice. He offers to walk her home, and to cut wood for their fireplace for Christmas. Even when he bursts in anger at one point, he regrets it and calls her to apologize. Moreover, he loves his sister Phoebe, and often appreciate other girls' beauty too.

However, in another part of the story, Holden claims that his lack of aggression is preventing him from ever sleeping with a woman. He believes that women want a man who asserts his power and control over them. For instance, when he decided to spend a night at the Edmont hotel, the elevator operator offers to bring him a prostitute if he pays five dollars. While he accepts the offer and waits for her in his room, when the prostitute named Sunny arrives, Holden panics. She tries to seduce him by removing her dress and sitting on his lap. However, the nervous Holden tells her that he is unable to have sexual intercourse with her because of a recent surgery on his 'clavichord'. He only talked to her, and then paid her to leave.

Even though he was very interested in conversation that involved sex talks, and despite his encounter with a prostitute, Holden's most repressed desire is to protect his sentiment toward Jane. As for the repressed desire to die, Holden remains strongly attached to the memory of his late brother, blames himself for his loss, and wishes to die only so he can keep Allie's company. Yet, his ultimate dream is to become the protector of innocence in a corrupt world. Holden continuously avoids intimacy and human contact, yet he desperately seeks a sense of belonging and the approval of others. (Kheirkhah and Pishkar 240)

Section Three: 3. Language of the Alienated Youth in *The Catcher in the Rye*

Holden's sarcastic language is his way of criticizing educational systems, religious customs, and social inequalities. Salinger's novel is a critical piece that scrutinizes the bourgeoisie, privilege, social-class divisions, cultural superiority, and sexual exploitation of the 1950s' America. According to Carol and Richard Ohmann, the study of J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* cannot only be based on literary analysis, but also on a linguistic examination. Critics from the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, and the *Saturday Review of Literature* all specifically mentioned the authenticity of the novel's language. They considered its language as a real depiction of adolescents' colloquial speech. (16)

The language of the novel is authentic colloquial teenage discourse. J.D. Salinger's intention was to create a character with whom individuals can identify; therefore, he used recognizable teenage speech. Although Holden's language is typically teenage discourse, Salinger's emphasis on certain words and expressions gave the protagonist's speech a sense of individuality. For instance, it is common for most teenagers to use phrases like 'and all,' 'I really did,' and 'It really was' to express uncertainty or insistency. But Holden frequent and overpowering use of such phrases became a distinct part of his personality. Holden's language characterizes him and illustrates his alienation. (Costello 173)

Literary critic Donald P. Costello notes that Holden's use of 'and all,' 'or something,' and 'or anything' does not represent a linguistic merit. In fact, it insinuates a looseness in expression and thought. Such expressions refer to Holden's awareness of the futility of his effort to discuss or comment on a certain issue. Holden asserts that he is not going to bother explaining in multiple occasions such as:

...how my parents were occupied and all before they had me (Salinger 5)

...they're nice and all (5)

I'm not going to tell you my whole goddam autobiography or anything (5)

...was in the revolutionary war and all (6)

Holden also feels the necessity to reinforce his sincerity and reassert his truthfulness in a phony world by saying after every statement 'it really is' or 'it really did.' (174) Arthur Heiserman and James E. Miller conclude that Holden's insistences "reveal his age, even when he is thinking much older" and that "he is so aware of the danger of slipping into phoniness himself that he has to repeat over and over 'I really mean it' and 'It really does'" (136).

Holden's skepticism is also manifested in his casual speech. The Divine name is used frequently, he says 'God,' 'God's Sake,' and 'goddam' in situations where he criticizes a person or an action. Ironically, he also uses 'for Chrissake,' 'Jesus,' and 'Jesus Christ' in a non-offensive manner when he condemns the phony religious practices. Moreover, when Holden visited his teacher, Mr. Spencer, he tells him that life is a game to which Holden replies, without actually saying it, "Game, my ass." In this situation, he questions the credibility of his teacher's judgment about life. (Costello 176)

'Hell' serves most of the meanings in Holden's vocabulary. The most common use of 'hell' is as a second part of a simile. For instance, something can be 'hot as hell' or 'cold as hell'; 'sad as hell' or 'playful as hell'; 'old as hell' or 'pretty as hell.' In this case, 'hell' has no relation to its original meaning. Similarly, 'bastard' and 'sonuvabitch' are not connected to the regular connotation of accidental birth in Holden's vocabulary. Such strong words are reserved to express Holden's dislike of phoniness. As for the most frequent slur 'goddam,' Holden often uses it only to express extreme anger. For example, when he was furious about Stradlater's poor treatment of Jane, 'goddam' appeared seven times on a single page. (Costello 176)

Holden casual use of the phrase 'all of a sudden' indicates his inconsistency in thoughts and emotions. In some sentences, he would describe his hate for someone and how 'all of a

sudden' he becomes insanely in love with them. This may be the result of the fact that he is on the verge of puberty. Holden is a bildungsroman character who is going through a phase of instability in thoughts and actions. Nevertheless, his opinion on phoniness is extremely clear. He constantly mentions how much he hates 'phony' words and phrases such as 'grand,' 'prince,' and 'angels.' At times, he claims to be crazy whenever he thinks he has revealed more information or emotions than he should. More regularly, 'It drives me crazy' indicates that he violently hates something and 'I'm crazy about' indicates that he likes it. (Costello 177) Holden also refers to his sadness and isolation, he says:

'Did you ever get fed up?' I said (Salinger 140)

...my address book only has about three people in it (147)

... I told him 'Please. I'm lonesome as hell. No kidding (160)

...I was feeling so damn depressed and lonesome (164)

I just felt blue as hell. (165)

Holden's language portrays him as a timid and hesitant character despite his rebellious attitude and mindset. It appears from his discourse that he struggles to put his rebellion into action. His use of phrases like 'I did not feel like it' or 'I did not want to' imply that he is indecisive, he refuses to take action, and that he is detached from his surroundings. Such phrases might be interpreted as Holden's reluctance and refusal to become engaged in the phony world. He does not want to assert himself; therefore, Holden's rebellion and boldness are limited to thought and speech which cannot be translated into action. He contemplates rebellion but chooses withdrawal and alienation. (Kinane 122)

3.1. Symbols in *The Catcher in the Rye*

Elkton Hills and Pencey Prep are two institutions that represent a symbol of authority and phoniness. In Holden's view, they represent the cruelty of their administrators; thus, the cruelty of the capitalist world. Their advertisements are misleading featuring high-maintained guys riding shiny horses when Holden has never seen one horse in that area. There is, however, one guy that can fit the description in Holden's opinion. Stradlater is a representation of a typical student at either of those schools. He is a superficial person who relies on his appearance and wealthy background to maintain a polished image among his peers. He counts on Holden to write his essays because he is well educated and has an exquisite style of writing. Stradlater is a symbol of the corporate man. Holden condemns the cruelty that he has seen at prep schools; he tells Sally that "It's full of phonies" (Salinger 142). Holden is ashamed of himself for being affiliated with his schools' communities, and he dislikes their exclusivity and prejudice. He blames people's discrimination at Elkton Hills for his former classmate's, James Castle, suicide. The two schools are illustrative of a corrupt system created by phony adults. One of Holden's many struggles is being born in a privileged society.

Holden bought his red hunting cap for one dollar while he was wandering the streets of New York. After he lost the equipment of his school's fencing team on the subway, the red cap caught his attention. Whenever he wears it, he feels more confident. For instance, he wears it when he contemplates calling his acquaintances, or when he writes. Although, it looks unusual and not suitable for everyday use, it represents Holden's attraction to strange things. He also realizes that it is unfashionable and cares about who should not see him wearing it; yet, he loves wearing it anyway. He likes to wear it backwards like a baseball 'catcher' would. This might be a reference to his brother Allie who used to play baseball, or to the position of a catcher; something he aspires to become. Moreover, the cap's red color makes him noticeable to people

which is ironic because he presumably wants to be aloof. It is also a hunting cap; a symbol of Holden's search for identity. (Trowbridge 21)

Holden accompanies Phoebe to spend a quality time and he takes her to play. She rides a carousel that has ponies where the children would sit, and a golden ring. They try to grab the ring whenever they pass by it as the carousel rotates, and whoever succeeds at that wins a prize. When Phoebe catches the golden ring at the carousel, Holden realizes that he might have reached a new perspective in life. He says:

All the kids kept trying to grab for the gold ring, and so was old Phoebe, and I was sort of afraid she'll fall off the goddam horse, but I didn't say anything or do anything. The thing with kids is, if they want to grab for 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. (Salinger 273-74)

Therefore, the gold ring might be a symbol of hope, a dream, or a chance that people must reach for to attain. Holden understands that children must be free enough to try to reach their goals, and that adults should let them be free. The circulation of the carousel might represent the circle of life; some people would try and succeed while others would fall off and fail. People must understand that things like birth, death, and growing-up cannot be prevented.

The museum represents the static nature of certain things in life. Holden had different views about rigid objects exhibited in the Museum of Natural History. It is his favorite place because he relates it to his and Phoebe's childhood. His views refer to the concept of growing-up and the changes that occur in one's life. He says: "I mean you'd be different in some way...certain things they should stay the way they are. You ought to be able to stick them in one of those big glass cases and just leave them alone" (Salinger 119). In addition, it might also symbolize the static nature of death. After seeing the mummies, Holden reflects on death by

saying: "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 F- You. I'm positive, in fact" (121).

Holden carries his brother's, Allie, baseball glove with him almost everywhere he goes. Although, Allie was left handed and the size of the glove is significantly smaller, Holden is attached to it. It can be a symbol for his unconditional love for his brother. He thought that the glove is as unique as his deceased brother; it was covered with poems written in green ink. Allie would read the poems written on his glove whenever he gets bored in the baseball field. Holden shows this glove to Jane only since he trusts her and feels comfortable whenever she is around. Holden's extreme attachment to this object makes him write an entire essay about it when Stradlater asks him to help him with his assignment. Stradlater would not appreciate it because he does not understand the emotional significance of the glove to Holden.

When Holden went to The Radio City Music Hall, he attended the annual Christmas show performed by the Rockettes. Then, he would watch a painfully sentimental war movie and a performance of religious Christmas songs. Holden seems to despise all of them because they each represent one aspect of phoniness. The Rockettes show is a symbol of mainstream media and pop culture; two things that are considered as inauthentic form of art that brainwashes the masses. The movie is a symbol of manipulation of the audience for its sentimental glorification of war and the military; an institution that Holden thinks is phony. He explains: "The part that got me was, there was a lady sitting next to me that cried all through the goddam picture. The phonier it got, the more she cried" (Salinger 151). Finally, his criticism of the religious choir is a symbol of the phoniness of religious practices. Holden comments: "for God's sake, about a bunch of actors carrying crucifixes all over the stage...I said Jesus probably would've puked if He could see it" (Salinger 149).

Conclusion

Salinger's literary and artistic skills enabled him to write *The Catcher in the Rye* in the most creative manner, and making it a valuable material for reading as well as critical analysis. Holden Caulfield, the protagonist, is a postmodern antihero who alienates himself from the 'phony' world he lives in. He escapes reality by engaging himself in a chain of thoughts and contemplates strategies to rebel and preserve the innocence of children. He views society as a corrupt environment controlled by privileged adults and built on financial standards. He is traumatized by people's actions and the death of his beloved brother, and he struggles to become a part of his society. Through the protagonist language, the masterful use of symbols, and the depiction of realistic images, Salinger created a reliable representation of the 1950s' American capitalist society. He portrayed the absurdity of materialism and fragmentation of individuals.

General Conclusion

The 1950s is a confusing era in American history. It was set to become the most prosperous period by providing for Americans all the luxuries they needed; yet, it deprived them from their individuality and uniqueness through the culture of conformity. The post-World War II economic boom and technological advancement defined the American society and obliged it to conform to a consumerist lifestyle. People raced to obtain more money and purchase more items, and they neglected the non-materialistic aspects of life. Unlike this category that preferred integration over individuality, the rest of society became skeptical and developed suspicions over authoritative institutions. This mistrust was manifested in their non-conformity to the mainstream culture of consumerism and materialism. With the emergence of the clash of civilizations known as the Cold War, paranoia dominated the lives of American citizens as they became more confused and uncertain about the future. All of these factors combined led to the emergence of a counterculture movement that represents the disaffection of youth. They chose to disassociate themselves to escape the cruelty of reality.

This research investigates the impact of the postwar context and materialistic society on the American individual, and how they caused the loss of human essence. It inspects the sadness, depression, identity crisis of individuals, and their alienation from themselves and their society. The struggles of the postmodern man in the postwar social and historical setting are best depicted in American fiction. Literature reflects people's troubled psyche as a result of their objectification by governmental schemes that aim to assert power and dominance on the expense of humanity. Postmodernist American authors, including J.D. Salinger, wittingly criticized the postwar culture through their narratives. Salinger depicts the psychological repercussions of living in a capitalist and conformist society. The story is based on his personal experience because he himself belonged to the affluent society of the fifties. Therefore, he offers

the reader a realistic image constructed by a regular conflicted individual torn between conformity and alienation.

The Catcher in the Rye is Salinger's perception of the negative aspects of life in a capitalist system. The protagonist, Holden Caulfield, condemns his society for being driven by corrupt and unauthentic people. The novel is based on his witty and sarcastic comments regarding the social customs and practices during the fifties. Salinger's creativity allowed him to express his concerns and speculations in a distinct manner that appealed to readers. The novel challenged their convictions and stimulated their minds to reconsider the valuable aspects of life including religion, family, and identity. Shortly after its publication, the novel became an instant sensation for youth in different parts of the world and mainly in the United States. They believed that Holden is a relatable character because he voiced their problems, concerns, and frustrations against their conformist society in an unprecedented and blatant manner. He is a character that incorporates the disaffection of a whole generation that preferred estrangement over conformity.

The Catcher in the Rye encapsulates the protagonist's search for authentic human connections in a chaotic world; a common quest for many people at that time. Holden's experiences during his brief journey only reinforce his belief that humanity is lost in a corrupt world, and that the only solution to avoid phoniness is isolation. He criticizes the social inequalities and people's obsession with material things. Therefore, he decides to become alienated from everyone to prevent himself from becoming phony like the rest of the adults. He views himself as the only sane person and claims that he does not care about other people and their opinions. Yet, his reactions in various occasions tend to be impulsive and reckless. He often uses slurs and curse words to criticize the phony adults in order to maintain a tough appearance. At the same time, he seems fragile and vulnerable when he reminisces about his late brother Allie, interacts with his sister Phoebe, and remembers a few pleasant events or

people. His inability to overcome Allie's death affects his psychological wellbeing and intrigues his underlying longing for death. His depression prevents him from building a real connection with people. Alternatively, he chooses to cope with this crisis by admiring the innocence and beauty of childhood. Holden is an alienated and tormented individual attempting to become a catcher in a field of rye; a protector of children's innocence in a corrupt world.

Alienation is a universally shared sentiment and a complex concept that encompasses the different traits of the troubled and estranged psyche of individuals. *The Catcher in the Rye's* protagonist, Holden Caulfield, is an alienated individual that struggles to connect with others spiritually and physically. He avoids commitment and intimacy because he thinks that these sentiments would eventually cease to exist; thus, he becomes more damaged. He cannot trust the phony adults of the capitalist world, and he estranges himself to seek a better environment. Holden embraces his alienation, tries to understand it, and attempts to find a suitable coping mechanism. Although he feels lonely and depressed, he assigns himself a mission of protecting children's innocence. It costs him a mental breakdown to finally realize that all of his contemplations are an illusion. He recognizes that it is impossible to protect the innocence of all children nor to escape his own transition into adulthood. Some aspects of life such as maturity, birth, and death are uncontrollable and avoidable. Therefore, alienation is an inevitable condition that results from certain psychological, socio-economic, and historical aspects. It affects humans' psyche and determines their perception of the world.

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