

Alienation in Adolescence in J.D. Salinger's

The Catcher in the Rye

الشعور بالعزلة في مرحلة المراهقة في رواية

الحامي في حقل العلف للكاتب جي دي سالنجر

Iman Abdulsattar Abdulatif

ايمان عبد الستار عبد اللطيف

Abstract

Alienation is a feeling that inflicts people especially adolescents due to certain reasons. As they grow up, adolescents tend to face certain psychological disturbances. They somehow feel indifferent to their surroundings and hence it would be quite hard for them to express their notions in the reality world they live in. So they either rebel against society and become aggressive members or they might console themselves in an alienated world that they create in their minds.

This paper depicts J.D. Salinger's (1919-2010) novel **The Catcher in the Rye** where its protagonist, Holden Caulfield, is an adolescent who feels there is no linkage or connection with the traits of his society. He is a teenager who portrays his innermost concerns and disillusionment toward a world that he feels unable to fit in. He likes to take decisive actions but feels helpless since his resolutions are thwarted by certain factors of life, e.g., parents, customs and social codes. He feels distant in his relationships with others and absolutely baffled about the uncertainty of his future. Holden Caulfield clings to the innocence of the childhood world and feels total empathy toward children because they still have not been corrupted and shaped according to the mores of society.

Holden realizes that growing up, the maturing process, indicates that he should assume responsibility in a world where he thinks only superficial and insignificant issues occur. He like many others seems to have difficulty fitting into a world that seems disintegrated and filled with defacement. Holden is caught in the disturbed transition of his life-from the state of childhood into adulthood. He thus faces anxiety and alienation and wants to detach himself from all the false values surrounding him.

Holden's therapy at the hospital after his nervous collapse due to his alienation, makes him realize that life consists of limitless ambiguities. It is a mixture of the good and the bad. Hence, part of Holden's therapy is his realization that he cannot remove all the impurity and retrogression, but instead he must become part of the society that he rejects. His inference, by the end of the novel, is that life's mystery can only be solved and perceived if one fathoms the mistakes of others through the love and understanding of mankind.

Alienation is a feeling that inflicts people especially adolescents due to certain reasons. As they grow up, adolescents tend to face certain psychological disturbances. They somehow feel indifferent to their surroundings and hence it would be quite hard for them to express their notions in the reality world they live in. So they either rebel against society and become aggressive members or they might console themselves in an alienated world that they create in their minds. Some could become both aggressive and alienated where in this case they might have to undergo some psychological therapy.

This paper depicts J.D. Salinger's (1919-2010) novel **The Catcher in the Rye** where its protagonist, Holden Caulfield, is an adolescent who feels there is no linkage or connection with the traits of his society. It is noteworthy to mention that Salinger shares an important trait with his protagonist- a powerful need to separate himself from society. **The Catcher in the Rye** fits into the category of Young Adult Fiction. This category includes serious novels that deal with the plight and disturbances of teenage characters. In such novels, the protagonist is a teenager who portrays his innermost concerns and disillusionment toward a world that he/she feels unable to fit in. They like to take decisive actions but feel helpless since their resolutions are thwarted by certain factors of life, e.g., parents, customs and social codes.

Young Adult Fiction as Alison Marshall-Rubin states, " mirrors the lives of these teens in a thematic and emotional way... . It also provides social commentary and raises important moral questions for teens"(1). She later identifies Young Adult Fiction that it is " any text that centers upon a protagonist between the ages of 12-18 who endures both internal and external conflict, which in turn shape his/her identity and worldview"(2). When **The Catcher in the Rye** was published in 1951, there was no such category as Young Adult Fiction but Salinger proved to be a groundbreaker for such a classification. Salinger wrote in frank language about the pains and crises of being a teenager. Other writers along with Salinger also wrote about the perspective of teenagers in regard to loneliness, sexuality and failure.

The Catcher in the Rye is about a sixteen year-old protagonist (adolescent) who feels marginalized from his community. Deep inside (as most adolescents feel), Holden Caulfield needs to understand his identity. He feels distant in his relationships with others and feels absolutely baffled about the uncertainty of his future. Gerald McCauley states, " Holden Caulfield personifies the sensitive individual at bay in a crass and superficial world. He sees his society for what it is, and he longs for what he wants it to be" (3). Holden is a sensitive character who feels unable to interpret his thoughts in the adult world. That is why he clings to the innocence of the childhood world and feels total empathy toward children because they still have not been corrupted and shaped according to the mores of society. As noted by the psychological theorist Erik H. Erikson, " the growing and developing youths, faced with this physiological revolution [the need to understand their identities and their place in their community] within them, and with tangible adult tasks ahead of them are now primarily concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are"(4).

Novels of such Young Adult Literature genre showed that teens share the same experience of turmoil and difficulty when dealing with as Pamela Sissi Carroll explains, "their new bodies and sexuality, with changing relationships with parents and friends, with more philosophically advanced ways of thinking about themselves, the world, and their place in it"(5).

One can feel, for instance, that Holden (though not explicitly stated by him) wants to instigate change against the shams and "phoniness" of the adult individuals. He wants to protect and save the innocence in children because he thinks the adults misunderstand the young people, i.e., cannot interact positively with them.

The Catcher in the Rye tackles certain themes that some teenagers encounter while growing up such as alienation, death, sexuality, through the narrative voice of a teenager. The story focuses on Holden Caulfield, the novel's narrator, who recounts his story from a mental hospital. Holden has been expelled from three schools, the last is Pencey school, for poor academic performance. He leaves his Pencey school a few days before he is expected home for the Christmas vacation. He stops at his old History teacher's, Mr. Spenser, who tells him that life is a game but one has to know how to play it according to the rules. Though Holden seems to agree but he cannot express his disagreement completely before his teacher because he knows that adults have the tendency to stick to their opinions and never deviate.

After his fight with his roommate Stradlater, Holden decides to go to New York city where he wanders for a few days before he returns home because he is afraid to announce his school dismissal to his family. Moreover, Holden's loyalty is so greatly embedded in him that he knows the pain that would be brought upon his parents if they knew of his expulsion. June Edwards states, "loyalty is a very strong value for Holden. His own predicament stems from the belief that he himself is letting down his family and thus unworthy of their love"(6). The novel does not consist of a series of events that build into a plot, but rather it is an exhibit of Holden's visits and conversations with people that reveal his comments and views of the world around him.

Holden relays to his readers that he has an older brother, D.B., who is a writer and lives in Hollywood. Holden calls him a prostitute because he has prostituted (sold) his writing talents and became a hack script writer in Hollywood. Holden's fight with his roommate Stradlater is over a girl whom Holden used to date the previous summer, Jane Gallapher. Jane as Holden recalls, kept her kings at the back row in the game of checkers which is a symbol that Salinger wants to manifest that she never had a physical relationship. She was still pure and innocent. But on knowing that Jane was to date the handsome Stradlater who is also popular for his sexual attributes, Holden gets irritated as he realizes that she might lose her innocence and chastity with Stradlater. Holden's irritation and anger is because he wants to maintain her innocence and anybody else's who is dear to him. He cannot come to terms that life changes people and sooner or later the child is apt to grow up and enter the realm of adulthood. That is why he has this inner conflict or the struggle between two worlds- childhood and adulthood; i.e., one he cannot return to and the other he fears to enter.

Through the narration of Holden, the readers realize the great love and sympathy that Holden has toward his younger brother, the thirteen year-old Allie who died of leukemia three years earlier. Holden still clings to the memory of his dead brother and is puzzled why death has deprived Holden from Allie. Deprivation of someone who is dear to a person is a feeling shared by most teenagers. They rarely realize this is the circulation of life and that a person is destined to die at his specific time, i.e. , when he is ordained. Holden never gets over the feeling of losing his brother and thus his depressive mood

overwhelms him. Many teenagers who undergo such an experience may face melancholy and loneliness specifically the sensitive ones and this might later lead them to feel alienated.

Holden checks into a hotel with the money that he has, having sold his typewriter and the money sent to him by his senile grandmother in the previous months. Opposite his room-window at the hotel, Holden sees some scenes of perversion in the other rooms. There are certain comments and viewpoints that Holden states in regard to these scenes which will be discussed later in the paper. Despite his moral opinions against these scenes, Holden begins to feel sexually excited so he decides to call a stripper whose number has been given to him by a Princeton boy. To his surprise, she declines his request telling him it is late at night. Since it is a Saturday night, Holden goes to the hotel club where he meets three ladies but finds them annoying and leaves to another club after paying for their drinks. While there, a girl with an officer greets Holden because she is an acquaintance of his brother D.B. He finds her boring and thus leaves back to his hotel. He finds the actuality of the conversations with the aforementioned ladies very shallow. This will culminate his depressive mood and ascertain his remark of living in an insignificant preposterous world, a world that is full of hypocrites and look for appearances.

Holden walks back to the hotel where the elevator boy, Maurice, asks him if he needs a woman. Feeling downcast, Holden accepts the elevator boy's proposition. Helen Frangedis points out to Holden's acceptance of the offer is because, "he is desperately lonesome; this is but another vain attempt to seek out human companionship"(7). Though it may sound paradoxical but, teenagers even adults at certain times need to compensate their loneliness and alienation at the company of others. Kings and queens (especially in old times) have chaperons not only to aid them with domestic matters but they can also be of use to their loneliness.

The prostitute, as Holden thinks, can also provide him with the practice he needs if he gets married as he admits diffidently that he is still a virgin. The sight of the young prostitute, Sunny, pulling her dress intensifies Holden's depressed mood. He feels sorry for her as she is about his own age and wishes she had rather preserved her purity instead of taking this job. Again Holden acts like a protector and savior to other people's innocence and hence he sends Sunny away giving her the five dollars as her price agreed earlier between him and the elevator boy. She argues him out for another five dollars but Holden refuses to pay her the extra money for it has not been agreed as such. She then sends the elevator boy where a fight ensues between them and the dispute is ended by Holden being punched in his stomach while she grabs the extra money from Holden's wallet. As they leave, Holden begins to cry strongly feeling even more miserable.

On the next morning, a Sunday, Holden checks out of the hotel and puts his luggage in a locker at Grand Central Station. He calls an old girlfriend, Sally Hayes, and arranges to meet her at the theatre that afternoon. While having breakfast, Holden meets two nuns where they are assigned as teachers in Southside Chicago. Holden is so fascinated by these two nuns' humility and gentleness that he donates ten dollars for charity. On realizing that the nuns have never asked him if he were a Catholic, he wishes he had donated more. He might probably be making a contrast between the two humble nuns with cheap suitcases and the boys at Pencey school where the upper-class boys are discriminated (recognized) from others due to their expensive luggage. These are one of the points that harbors

Holden. He realizes that his society is powerfully engrossed in material matters and this is an actual fact where it induces Holden's burden into becoming alienated from the shams of his society. He is against segregation and appearances that seem to have more power and superiority in the reality world. To Holden as Clinton Trowbridge states, "the adult world is dominated by categories. ... It is this vision that leads Holden to value the child over the adult (the child has not yet learned to experience the world in terms of categories)"(8).

He then walks to buy a hard-to-get record for his ten-year old sister Phoebe, whom he has a great affection toward her and tries his utmost efforts to preserve and protect the innocence in her. After going to the Museum of Natural History, Holden meets Sally Hayes where they watch a play. He discovers that Sally is like the rest of his society members where she is indulged in appearances. The afternoon ends with Sally and Holden quarreling especially after Holden's rude remark.

After watching a Christmas show, Holden meets an old friend at a bar where again Holden needs some advice concerning girls. When his friend leaves, Holden gets heavily drunk and wanders in the park thinking about his dead brother and about what happens to the ducks in the lagoon at Central Park in winter time. One can say that Holden's behavior of getting drunk is a kind of escape from reality; no one seems to understand his plight nor his notions toward life. And his thinking about what happens to the ducks when the lagoon is frozen reflects a crucial matter in him. The ducks as Leonard Baer states, "symbolize innocence; their staying power near a frozen space represents his ability to remain as a child in a protected environment. At the lagoon, drunk and tired, he does not find the innocence that he was seeking... The lagoon is a visual representation of his identity, caught between two contradictory states of being [childhood and adulthood]"(9).

On knowing that he is left with only three dollars, Holden decides to return to his home. After sneaking in the house, he finds his sister sleeping in D.B.'s room so he wakes her up and she tells him his parents are out and will not return till late. The conversation between them is very crucial to the novel. Phoebe can recognize Holden's expulsion from his third school despite her young age. She even accuses him of not liking anything or anyone in life and thus indirectly criticizing Holden's cynical view about life. It is here that Holden tells Phoebe he wants to be the catcher in the rye. Holden then phones one of his best teachers, Mr. Antolini, where he is invited to see him right away. After the parents arrive home and the mother checks on Phoebe, Holden hides in the closet. Before leaving, Phoebe lends Holden her eight dollar Christmas savings, he cries at this gesture and gives her his red hunting cap that is considered as an emblem of his protection.

Mr. Antolini welcomes Holden and gives him some very important advices on life and that he should apply himself to his studies because education is the only positive vision to achieve one's goals. Feeling exhausted, Holden hardly listens to Mr. Antolini's advice and he falls asleep. He is awakened by the feeling of Mr. Antolini patting (caressing) his head and Holden quickly jumps off and leaves. Holden is startled at the thought of Mr. Antolini being a pervert, though not completely sure of it. He spends the rest of the night sleeping on a bench at Grand Central Station and when he wakes up around nine o'clock, he wanders up Fifth Avenue feeling quite dejected and melancholic. He thus decides never to return home and takes a job as a gas station attendant out West. He will pretend that he is a deaf-mute

person where he will never listen to people's conversations. He may even marry a deaf-mute and have children where they will all live in a remote cabin. It is worthwhile mentioning that Holden's melancholy and disillusionment of what he has encountered makes him think of living in a remote cabin which would be a retreat to nature and hence an escape from the atrocities of the adult world.

When Holden comes out of his vision, he decides to go to Phoebe's school to deliver a note asking her to meet him at a nearby museum to say farewell to her. Holden gets so irritated on seeing obscene words written on some of the school walls at Phoebe's school. As he tries to erase the obscene words, Holden thinks of the impact of such words that would have upon the innocence of children. As Holden waits for Phoebe at the museum, he guides two small boys to the Egyptian mummies' collection. There, he is so enthralled by the peace and tranquility but again Holden's anger is agitated on seeing the obscene words written on one of the tombs. His anger is aroused because now he begins to realize that children cannot be protected forever as long as there are other rude people to corrupt them.

When Phoebe arrives with her suitcase asking Holden to take her out West with him, he refuses strongly and she begins to cry and returns his hunting cap to him (a sign that she does not trust or love him any more). He manages to persuade her for taking that day off school where he will take her to the zoo. After watching the animals, Phoebe rides on a carousel but before she takes the ride, she takes out his hunting cap from his pocket and asks him to wear it because it was started to rain. On realizing that Phoebe has forgiven him, Holden feels relaxed.

The last page of the novel is where Holden recounts his story from the mental hospital in California. He mentions that his brother D.B. comes to see him frequently and also tells the readers that everyone is inquiring where he would apply himself in the coming Fall. He admits he is still puzzled about his future as much as to his surprise of what has occurred to him. He also reveals that he misses all the people he has talked about even the ones who offended him. And this is another message that Salinger wanted to convey; a need to actualize and accept mankind through love and understanding.

II

It is a natural phenomenon that when adolescents grow up, some might face a mental struggle. Those with strong personalities can pass that phase successfully. But those with ordinary sensitive personalities might face a difficult time especially if there is no one to aid them and discuss their plight. Holden has speculations about this when he has the conversation with his history teacher, Mr. Spenser "I'm just going through a phase right now. Everybody goes through phases and all, don't they?" (10). McCauley states, " a large group of sociologists and other commentators on the twentieth century have observed that the sensitive person often feels isolated and alienated from the majority of people"(11). Ironically, teenagers feel the urge to connect emotionally and intellectually yet when an advice is given to them by their elders they rebel against it. It is as if they live or like to live in a world of their own creation where they like to construct their own rules in it. Hourihan views the heroes of youth as, "ordinary children who struggle to do the best they can in a difficult world, and usually try to avoid inflicting harm on others" (12).

During adolescence, one is apt to face certain decisions that should comply with society. It is when they disagree and feel helpless to fulfill their ambitions, needs or accomplish a change that they either become rebellious or alienated. Novels of Young Adult Literature view the adolescent protagonist as Alison Marshal states, "as agents of change, moral individuals with a profound concern for others. In trying to instigate change, these characters become, according to Hintz and Ostry, 'agents of hope, they come to embrace their ability to lead' "(13).

Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye* wants to live in a society that is free of shams and frauds. He is a confused troubled young man, his language is frequently profane that demonstrates his negative attitude toward his surroundings. His words are typical of boys of his own age and many may find his language offensive but that does not necessarily make him an immoral person. He is as June Edwards points out, "a teenager [in] search for self-worth and values"(14). Though many critics would disagree, but Holden Caulfield could even be considered as a didactic person. He dislikes hypocrisy, discrimination, sex without love and he has compassion to those who are rejected by others.

Hypocrisy is something that Holden completely rejects. He abhors his Pencey school's motto for making "splendid, clear-thinking young men" (p.4). He notices that his school graduate students are no better than any other graduates from other schools. He realizes that the students in his school and even the teachers hold a higher opinion to those who are wealthier than others. Holden refers to one occasion where his senior roommate donated an amount of money to the school and they named the wing of the new dorm after that boy, "he [the senior roommate] gave a pile of dough, and they named our wing after him"(p.22). He sees his school as a building (factory) that forms students who would mirror the public image of hypocrisy. He believes his school is full of models of "phonies". Hence, hypocrisy is one of the issues that troubles Holden's mind. He feels unable to connect the dots and hence achieves melancholy and alienation when "he realizes that offenses to dignity cannot really be expunged from the world"(15). Holden is repelled by the social climbers and protests against the shallowness and false values that preoccupy his world of living. He thus feels absolutely alone in the superficial world that he lives in.

The sexual undertones are widely dealt throughout the novel. It would be proper here to explore Holden's attitudes toward sexuality. One must never forget to mention that Holden and teenagers are considered to be confused human beings since they undergo certain psychological and hormone changes that come with being an adolescent. They like to brag about their sexual particularities and feel quite audacious in boasting of such matters in front of fellows of their age.

Though Holden goes out with a few ladies while wandering in New York, yet the fact must be mentioned here is that no sex occurs throughout the novel. He believes that sex without love is an improper act. That is why he criticizes the people across his hotel room window "you ought to be careful about doing crummy stuff... . It's really too bad that so much crummy stuff is a lot of fun [to some people]"(p.81). Holden admits that he is still a virgin despite some opportunities; when girls request he "stops", he complies and stops. He even admits, while narrating, that "if you want to know the truth, I'm a virgin. I really am" (p.120) which shows as Lorraine Rosenthal states that, "although he is worldly in some respects, he is actually quite innocent" (16). He has certain limits and never exceeds beyond the

boundaries of sexual morality. Holden feels despicable and weighed down at the sight of the prostitute who is about his age, so he sends her away before any physical relationship claiming he has just had an operation and is still feeling ill.

Earlier in the novel, we also notice how Holden's ferocity is agitated and heightened on knowing that his roommate Stradlater has taken Jane Gallapher on a date. Jane is a girl whom Holden upholds a high esteem for her due to her purity and innocence. He tells Stradlater she always kept her kings at the back row in the game of checkers, i.e., she never lets boys take advantage of her. However, he gets absolutely provoked when he knows the sexually adroit Stradlater is to date her, has a fight with him and decides to leave school. One can observe Holden's feeling of alienation and depression as he leaves the corridors of his school when he says, "it was quiet and depressing in the corridors. ... It made me too sad and lonesome"(p.66). This is the feeling of alienation during the adolescence phase; teenagers need to feel attached to someone and discuss their problems yet they think it is a shame to show it. So they just put the mask of pride and arrogance, but deep inside they are absolutely hurt and feel lonely.

Holden appears to hold femininity in high regard; his love to Jane Gallapher is quite platonic and he dislikes having intimate physical activity with a female. His loyalty to moral values makes him act as a protector to their virtues. Lorraine Rosenthal views the reason behind this is because of the "Madonna-Whore" complex that "has been engrained into his psyche. ' when men cannot combine sex and love in one relationship, they may split their love according to the Madonna-whore complex. As Freud wrote, where they love they cannot desire; where they desire they cannot love' "(17). Thus, this could give a clear perspective to Holden's psychological struggle, "sex is something I just don't understand"(p.82). It frightens Holden as it reminds him of his coming adulthood and the corrupt detrimental life that he may face and cope with at being an adult.

Holden's future is quite untrustworthy and oblique to him. Many times he feels quite depressed and wishes he were dead, " I was feeling...depressed and all. I almost wished I was dead"(p.118) which is a natural feeling for adolescents to feel that way due to their uncertainty of their future. That is why he wants to cling to the world of childhood. Adulthood means reality to him that constitutes artificialities. Deep inside he adheres to the realm of childhood and respects the innocence and purity in children as they have not been corrupted by "phoniness". Holden's devotion to his sister Phoebe and even to his dead brother Allie (who died before the temptations of adulthood) is so greatly noticed when reading then novel because of their young age. Holden acts as a shield and protector to Phoebe and does his best to be her savior.

Holden feels that he has a commitment to act as a guardian to childhood innocence. On seeing the obscene words "F---you" written on the school walls of his sister Phoebe, Holden begins desperately to erase the words to protect the youngsters from seeing it. Though Holden himself has used some unacceptable words throughout the novel, but he has never spoken of such words in front of other children. It is worthwhile mentioning here that his use of some profane language could be attributed to his disturbed mind and depression due to the superficialities and flaws that he sees around him or because teenagers (like Holden) think they are being underestimated. On one occasion, he says

"mothers are slightly insane"(p.72) which shows that he thinks mothers are bossy and underestimate the qualities of their children.

Maybe Holden does regard himself as a person of lower merits and of little importance in life. He regards himself as a "moron", "yellow" who feels quite indifferent to his surroundings. Lorraine Rosenthal points out to Huber and Ledbetter's assumption that Holden has an inferiority complex:

It seems that Holden Caulfield selectively attends to and retains

essentially the negative aspects of the world, and then depreciates

Others and his surroundings in order to compensate for deep-seated

feelings of inferiority... Toward the end of the novel, for example,

Caulfield has a psychic episode when he steps off a curb and feels he

will descend "down, down, down" and be lost forever. The downward

direction is indicative of his intense feelings of failure and inferiority (18)

Holden depreciates himself and thinks he is good-for-nothing, hence he wants to make a task for him (and he does it with heart-felt feelings) to protect and save the innocence in children.

On inquiring where and what happens to the ducks at the frozen lagoon in Central Park in winter time, Holden is skeptical of the innocence of children when they are grown-ups. Symbolically speaking, Holden associates the innocence and purity of children to the ducks. So on inquiring about the ducks, Holden has certain qualms about the preservation of the innocence of children when they grow up. Allison Rubin states, "because Holden aligns himself with and wishes to champion the virtues he associates with childhood, he is rebelling against what he perceives to be the force of corruption and evil in the world: adulthood"(19).

He wishes people around him remained unchanged and gets frustrated on discovering that they have altered. When he goes to the Museum of Natural History and guides two young boys to the exhibit of the Egyptian mummies; Holden feels the peace and tranquility there and wishes that people would remain as innocent as when they were children, i.e., have not been immersed in the corruption and falsity of adulthood. He says, "I was the only one in the tomb [at the museum] then. I sort of liked it. It was so nice and peaceful. ... You can't ever find a place that's nice and peaceful, because there isn't any"(p.264). Trowbridge states, "the mummies represent the kind of conquest over time and mutability that Holden has been in search of all along. ... To Holden they [the mummies] are symbolic of the peace and permanence that he so desperately wants"(20). Earlier in the novel where he has also gone to a museum, he says "the best thing, though in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody'd move... Nobody'd be different. The only thing that would be different would be *You*. ... You'd be just different, that's all" (p.157-8). So Holden is implicitly referring that childhood will eventually be lost as people grow up and become different.

Holden envisions himself somewhere in the West of the country where he pretends to be a deaf-mute working in a gas station, married to a deaf-mute girl and living in a cabin not so remote from the woods. This shows his desire to disengage himself from the real world and thus asserts his alienation. Clinton Trowbridge states that, "the hero's conflict is both internal and external and that it increases in intensity as his vision of inner and outer falsity becomes more and more overwhelming"(21). Earlier in the novel, Holden informs his date, Sally Hayes, that "I don't get hardly anything out of anything. I'm in bad shape. I'm in *lousy* shape"(p.171) and asks her to run away with him to other states where he would live in a cabin and chop their own wood. But when she refuses, Holden gets even more depressed and calls himself a "madman".

Thus, adolescents' behavior gets at odds sometimes and in this case Holden's mind could be working unconsciously to prevent himself from confronting life. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) states how our minds operate, "hidden from the workings of the conscious mind, the unconscious plays a large part in how we act, think, and feel. ... The unconscious, receives and stores our hidden desires, ambitions, fears, passions, and irrational thoughts"(22). The unconscious makes people at times behave in a peculiar way; Holden, for instance has a bad nervous habit "I do that quite a lot when I'm in a certain mood. I sort of let them burn [matches] down till I can't hold them any more, then I drop them in the ashtray. It's a nervous habit"(p.168). According to Freud, the unconscious acts like a storehouse for disguised truths and desires that want to be revealed to the conscious, " these desires inevitably make themselves known through our so-called mistakes of speech or actions [like in Holden's nervous habit of burning the matches]. Freud calls such mistakes [or habits] *parapraxes* or Freudian slips"(23).

After feeling totally; exhausted, depressed and fearing that he could die in the cold weather at Central Park where he has been to see the ducks, Holden sneaks into his parents' house to see his beloved sister. As was stated earlier, Holden has a huge empathy and compassion to his sister, Phoebe. Despite Phoebe's young age, she acts like she is more grown up than Holden that she even confronts him of not liking anything that was happening. She is smart enough to realize that he has been expelled from his school and gets so worried about him. Hubert Zapf states, "Phoebe's rejection of Holden's escapism is based on a strongly mature reality principle"(24). When Phoebe challenges Holden to name one thing he likes, he appears to be at a loss for an answer:

You don't like anything that's happening. ... You don't like

Schools. You don't like a million things.

I do! boy was she depressing me.

Because you don't, she said. Name one thing.

One thing? [he said]... The trouble was I couldn't concentrate too

hot. Sometimes it's hard to concentrate (p.220).

He manages to name her only a few; Holden's classmate, James Castle, who died for a principle; his affection and chatting to her; his dead brother Allie (who died before the temptations of adulthood) and he likes to be the catcher in the rye.

III

Revealing to his sister that he wants to be the catcher in the rye, a poem by Robert Burns that Holden has heard being sung by a young boy earlier in the novel, Holden desires to guard childhood innocence and purity against the adult corruption. When Phoebe corrects the wording of the poem, "it's ' if a body *meet* a body coming through the rye' "(p.224), Holden realizes this but insists that he still wants to be the catcher in the rye. Here Holden envisions himself on a field of rye where thousands of children are playing and his role is to save them from falling off the cliff. The children represent innocence and chastity and what lies below the cliff represents the impurity of life that many people have fallen. In other words, he needs to act as their protector and save them from the atrocities of the realm of adulthood. He wishes to preserve and save the virtue of childhood innocence that, as he thinks, gets lost as they grow up. It is worthwhile mentioning here that even his name could be symbolic of his requirement; to hold the children from falling, i.e., to hold back adulthood. Just before leaving Phoebe, Holden in fact wishes to be caught by his parents and be saved from his disillusionment "the catcher, in fact, wants to be caught, the savior saved"(25).

After leaving Phoebe, Holden goes to meet Mr. Antolini who is a former teacher in one of the schools that Holden has attended. It seems that whenever Holden is lonesome and on the verge of taking a new step, he turns to the help of someone older than him. The reason for this could be ascribed because his parents have not monitored him closely enough; and thus could not get the advice on how to depart the world of childhood and enter the realm of adulthood. Gerald Rosen states, " Holden sorely misses being able to turn to his parents in his time of trouble"(26). Holden admires Mr. Antolini for his kindness and courage because he was the only person who was willing to approach the dead body of a classmate, James Castle, who had thrown himself out of the window because he refused to be bullied by his classmates.

Mr. Antolini gives Holden a very wise and prudent advice concerning the future. In a way, Mr. Antolini acts like a psychiatrist to Holden because of his understanding concern and appropriate advice. He tells Holden that his present depressed state is a natural phenomenon. It is natural to feel the imperfectness of man and the world around him. He tells him almost all adolescents pass through that confusing phase," you're not the first person who was ever confused and frightened and even sickened by human behavior. You're by no means alone on that score, you'll be excited and *stimulated* to know. Many, many men have been just as troubled morally and spiritually as you are right now"(p.246). Furthermore, he informs Holden that education is the safest means to formulate his concepts and that he should apply himself to a school, " it'll [education] begin to give you an idea what size mind you have. ... You'll begin to know your true measurements and dress your mind accordingly"(p.247). But Mr. Antolini's advice might have had a different impact upon Holden had it not been for his caressing or patting Holden's head, an action that Holden interprets as homosexual advances upon him.

Holden is not an aggressive person but rather a sensitive defenseless being so instead of confronting Mr. Antolini, he simply leaves to wander in the streets. James Bryan sees Holden as a "victimized"

person and that "at this point Holden's neurosis verges on madness. Each time he crosses a street, he imagines he will 'disappear' and 'never get to the other side of the street'... [which is] a psychologically valid description of the boy's breakdown"(27). Holden seems to be sinking into a void each time he crosses the street. He manages to cross to the other side of the street only when he prays to his dead brother Allie in order to save him. Clinton Trowbridge says, "so terrible is Holden's depression, so complete his sense of alienation from the world of living, that in his disturbed imagination only the dead, idealized brother can save him from the nothingness"(28).

It should be worthwhile pointing out here Freud's tripartite model which divides the psyche into three parts: the id, ego, and superego. In Holden's case, the id has stored and contained Holden's fear of his brother's death and also his secret desire and wish to see his brother still alive. "The superego, which serves as a filtering agent to our fears and desires"(29), has served to make Holden suppress his feeling of fear of death in order to comply with society's pressures and face life. Since Holden is a sensitive person, the superego has operated on its own and created the sense of fear of death and alienation from Holden's surroundings. It is thus only when Holden prays to his dead brother Allie that Holden is able to cross to the other side. He then envisions himself living in a cabin, feigning deaf-muteness to escape the immersion of his disturbance and confusion.

Holden's final decision is to meet Phoebe to say farewell to her before he starts West, a gesture that reveals his allegiance and compassion toward her. His decision can be considered as a turning point. Somehow Holden reaches a kind of enlightenment when Phoebe arrives and requests to go West with him. He realizes that he has endangered the innocence that he most wanted to protect. He realizes that she is about to become another image of Holden and thus refuses to take her with him. He then abandons his plan of going West and instead tells her he is to go home with her. Holden's behavior with Phoebe affirms his genuineness of the catcher image. However, paradoxically speaking, "the catcher is caught by the person he most wants to catch. Of course, Holden is by no means completely saved, merely reclaimed from the death-like state of his world-weariness. He does, after all, suffer a nervous breakdown"(30).

Holden's enigma toward Phoebe's and other children's future occurs as she rides the carrousel in the zoo. Riding the carrousel means that Phoebe will not remain in her childhood state. She is apt to grow up into the world of adulthood. Before riding the carrousel, Phoebe returns and requests from Holden to put back his red hunting cap. The hat is an emblem of his self-protection and he feels totally secure in his surroundings while wearing it. The hat, he says, "really gave me quite a lot of protection, in a way" (p.275) despite getting soaked in the rain while watching Phoebe ride the carrousel. It is quite a normal psychological gesture or habit for adolescents to cling to something they like (in this case Holden's hat) to free them from any sense of anxiety, lonesomeness or depressive feelings. Likewise, young children too get attached to a doll or any other toy to feel a sense of security.

When Phoebe grabs the gold ring at the carrousel, Holden realizes that he may have reached a new perspective in life:

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 (p.273-74).

The gold ring and the circulation of the carrousel are suggestive to the existence and destiny of life. Some people could attain their goals, others would "fall off the horse" and fail to achieve their ambitions. The most crucial fact is that people ought to try and do their utmost efforts to accomplish their aims. Life must go on and Holden may have realized the reverse aspect of the catcher image when Clinton Trowbridge states, "rather than attempt the impossible (catch and hold something that by its very nature cannot be caught and held-childhood, innocence), man should meet man and form... an understanding with him" (31). People ought to understand that there are things in nature that cannot be prevented; birth, childhood, death, getting old and even storms, rain, etc.

The final chapter of the novel where Holden is recounting his story at the hospital views Holden a slightly more matured and in a way more positive person. He says that he misses everybody that he's been telling us about, even the elevator boy Maurice. One can feel that Holden may have become a healthier person by the end of the novel and that he might have a deeper concern toward communicating with others. His final perception will be explicable in that man and the world, inspite of all its imperfections, are to be loved and comprehended. He understands that adaptation in life is very important and that in life people are apt to face others who might not comply with one's own principles. However, he is still rather angry for why people keep inquiring where he would apply himself in the Fall. Thus, despite the optimistic vision, the open-ending makes the readers think that Holden may still need some more time to recover from his nervous breakdown.

Consequently, Holden's nervous breakdown has been the cause of his transition- the transformation process from boyhood to adulthood. His alteration in the maturation process has been very difficult, for he had to face depression, alienation and disillusionment. But despite all this Holden as Baer states, "has now [by the end of the novel] completed the transition away from innocence. He misses his innocence and everybody who was part of it"(32). The critic Ihab Hasan sees Holden's retreat into childhood, "has been replaced by a mystical acceptance for the love of mankind"(33).

Thus, despite the fact that life is preoccupied with shallowness and degeneration, Holden is to perceive how to adapt and harmonize himself in it through the need to understand mankind. He realizes that people should come to an understanding of how to behave and act accurately according to their various surroundings. One cannot evade all the fallible imperfections, but one can aim to correct them in a proper manner.

Had Holden recognized these messages earlier, he would never have undergone the alienation state. Thus, **The Catcher in the Rye** shows there is a bit of Holden in each one of us. Almost all teenagers can

relate to Holden's problem and to his criticism toward life's deficiencies. When reading the novel, teenagers can identify their own predicaments with that of Holden's and later can pay attention and focus on how to deal with the abundant constituents of life

Conclusion

The Catcher in the Rye has made a lot of adolescents and even adults identify themselves with Holden's disillusionment and alienation due to their own experiences during that phase. Many teenagers have identified their experiences of struggle and conflict with that of Holden's as they share the same plight. Holden represents almost all adolescents by embellishing their views and manners. Many of them, like Holden, find themselves alienated from a society which lacks compassion and understanding and is overloaded with pretense.

Holden has been caught in a state of betweenness; childhood and adulthood. He feels the two are incompatible. Holden clings himself to the safe haven of childhood out of fear of growing up, the maturing process, and the inevitable death. In addition to that, growing up indicates that Holden should assume responsibility in a world where he thinks only superficial and insignificant issues occur. Holden like many others seems to have difficulty fitting into a world that seems disintegrated and filled with defacement.

Often Holden acts as a passive warrior where he revolts against the degeneration and snares of adulthood yet his passivity makes him unable to take a real action against the defiled conditions of his society. He is caught in a whirl of disturbance; the disturbed transition in his life-from the state of childhood into adulthood. He thus faces anxiety and alienation and wants to detach himself from all the false values surrounding him.

Holden's therapy at the hospital after his nervous collapse makes him realize that life is at a constant change. It consists of limitless ambiguities and that it has no absolute boundaries. It is a mixture of the good and the bad. Hence, part of Holden's therapy is his realization that he cannot remove all the impurity, depravation and retrogression, but instead he must become part of the society that he rejects. His inference is that life's mystery can only be solved and perceived if one fathoms the mistakes of others through the love and understanding of mankind.

Notes

(1) Alison Marshal-Rubin, **Teenage Wasteland: The Painful Journeys And Tragic-Ambiguous Fates of Antiestablishment Heroes in Young Adult Literature** (M.A. Thesis, Southern Connecticut State University, May 2009), p.1

(2) Ibid, p.14

(3) Gerald F. McCauley and E.D. Hubbard, ed., **A Critical Commentary *The Catcher in the Rye***, (New York: American R.D.M. Corporation, 1963), p. 12

- (4) Erik H. Erikson, **Childhood and Society** 2nd ed, (New York: Norton, 1963), p.261
- (5) Pamela Sissi Carroll, " Today's Teens, Their Problems, and their Literature: Revising G. Robert Carlsen's ' Books and the Teenage Reader' Thirty Years Later", **English Journal** (March 1997): 25
- (6) June Edwards, "What's Moral about *The Catcher in the Rye*?", **The English Journal**, vol.72, no. 4 (April,1983):42
- (7) Helen Frangedis, "Dealing with the Controversial Elements in *The Catcher in the Rye*", **The English Journal**, vol.77, no.7 (Nov., 1988):74
- (8) Clinton Trowbridge, "The Symbolic Structure of *The Catcher in the Rye*", **The Sewanee Review**, vol.74, no.3 (Summer, 1966):685
- (9) Leonard Baer and Wilbert M. Gesler, "Reconsidering the Concept of Therapeutic Landscapes in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*", **Area**, vol.36, no.4 (Dec.2004): 408
- (10) J.D. Salinger, **The Catcher in the Rye** (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), p.21. All subsequent references to the text are taken from this edition.
- (11) Gerald F. McCauley and E.D. Hubbard,e.d., p.30
- (12) Margery Hourihan, **Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature** (New York: Routledge, 1997), p.215
- (13) Alison Marshal-Rubin, p.19-20
- (14) June Edwards, p.42
- (15) Stephen J. Whitfield, "Toward a Social History of *The Catcher in the Rye*", **The New England Quarterly**, vol.70, no.4, (Dec.1997):597
- (16) Lorraine Zago Rosenthal, **From Little Women to Gossip Girl: The Portrayal of Young Adults in Popular Fiction** (Thesis, Northern Kentucky, Spring 2010), p.31
- (17) Ibid, p.33
- (18) Ibid, p.36
- (19) Alison Marshal-Rubin, p.31
- (20) Clinton W. Trowbridge, "The Symbolic Structure of *The Catcher in the Rye*", **The Sewanee Review**, Vol.74, No.3, (Summer, 1966):690
- (21) Ibid, p.682
- (22) Charles E. Bressler, **Literary Criticism** (New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2007), p.143-44

(23) Ibid, p.145

(24) Hubert Zapf, "Logical Action in *The Catcher in the Rye*", **College Literature**, vol.12, no.3 (Fall 1985):269

(25) Clinton W. Trowbridge, "The Symbolic Structure of *The Catcher in the Rye*", **The Sewanee Review**, vol.74, no.3 (Summer 1966):688

(26) Gerald Rosen, "A Retrospective Look at *The Catcher in the Rye*", **American Quarterly**, vol.29, no.5 (Winter 1977):552

(27) James Bryan, "The Psychological Structure of *The Catcher in the Rye*", **PMLA**, vol.89, no.5 (Oct. 1974):1073

(28) Clinton Trowbridge, p.689

(29) Charles Bressler, p.146

(30) Clinton Trowbridge, p. 692

(31) Ibid, p.693

(32) Leonard D. Baer and Wilbert M. Gesler, p.410

(33) Gerald McCauley, p.32

Bibliography

- Baer, Leonard and Wilbert M. Gesler, "Reconsidering the Concept of Therapeutic Landscapes in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*", **Area**, vol.36, no.4 (Dec.2004)

- Bressler, Charles E. **Literary Criticism**. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2007

- Bryan, James ."The Psychological Structure of *The Catcher in the Rye*", **PMLA**, vol.89, no.5 (Oct. 1974)

- Carroll, Pamela Sissi " Today's Teens, Their Problems, and their Literature: Revising G. Robert Carlsen's ' Books and the Teenage Reader' Thirty Years Later", **English Journal**, (March 1997)

- Edwards, June. "What's Moral about *The Catcher in the Rye*?" , **The English Journal**, vol.72, no. 4 (April 1983)

- Erikson, Erik H. **Childhood and Society** 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 1963

- Frangedis, Helen. "Dealing with the Controversial Elements in *The Catcher in the Rye*", **The English Journal**, vol.77, no.7 (Nov. 1988)

- Hourihan, Margery. **Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature** .New York: Routledge, 1997

- McCauley, Gerald F. and E.D. Hubbard, ed. **A Critical Commentary *The Catcher in the Rye***. New York: American R.D.M. Corporation, 1963
- Rosen, Gerald. "A Retrospective Look at *The Catcher in the Rye*", **American Quarterly**, vol.29, no.5 (Winter 1977)
- Rosenthal, Lorraine Zago. **From Little Women to Gossip Girl: The Portrayal of Young Adults in Popular Fiction** (Thesis, Northern Kentucky, Spring 2010)
- Rubin, Alison Marshal. **Teenage Wasteland: The Painful Journeys And Tragic-Ambiguous Fates of Antiestablishment Heroes in Young Adult Literature** (M.A. Thesis, Southern Connecticut State University, May 2009)
- Salinger, J.D. **The Catcher in the Rye** (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1979)
- Trowbridge, Clinton W. "The Symbolic Structure of *The Catcher in the Rye*", **The Sewanee Review**, vol.74, no.3 (Summer 1966)
- Whitfield, Stephen J. "Toward a Social History of *The Catcher in the Rye*", **The New England Quarterly**, vol.70, no.4 (Dec.1997)
- Zapf, Hubert. "Logical Action in *The Catcher in the Rye*", **College Literature**, vol.12, no.3 (Fall 1985)

الخلاصة

الشعور بالعزلة هو شعور يمر به بعض الأشخاص وبالأخص شريحة المراهقين لأسباب عدة حيث يمر المراهقين في هذه الفترة بظروف نفسية خاصة وينتابهم شعور غريب بعدم استطاعتهم التأقلم مع واقعهم وبعدم امكانياتهم التعبير عن ما يكونونه من أفكار تجسّد مرحلتهم في واقعهم الذي يعيشونه وبذلك أما أن يصبحوا أشخاص متمردين أو يخلقون لأنفسهم أجواء بالعزلة.

يتطرق هذا البحث الى رواية **الحامي في حقل العلف** للكاتب جي دي سالنجر (1919-2010) حيث ينتقي الكاتب الشخصية الرئيسية، هولدن كولفيلد، ويبدأ بتحليلها من خلال معاناته النفسية وأوهامه في مجتمع لا يستطيع التأقلم فيه نتيجة عدة عوامل: الارتباط العائلي والعادات والتقاليد الاجتماعية وبذلك يحاول أن يعزل نفسه عن علاقاته مع الآخرين خوفاً من المستقبل. ونتيجة تلك العوامل يحاول هولدن كولفيلد العودة الى براءة الطفولة والتمسك بها وأن يحافظ على براءة تلك المرحلة بصورة عامة (أي الأطفال) لأنها مرحلة عفوية وخالية من شوائب ومشاكل الحياة.

يدرك هولدن أن عملية النمو من مرحلة المراهقة الى مرحلة النضوج وأنه عندما يصبح شخصاً "ناضجاً"، سيطلب ذلك منه تحمل المسؤولية في ظل مجتمع ملئ بالأفكار السطحية والسلبية التي لا تواكب أفكاره فلماذا قرر الانغلاق على نفسه نتيجة ضغوط المجتمع والتي أدت به الدخول الى مصحة نفسية.

وفي أثناء فترة علاجه في المصحة النفسية أدرك هولدن أن واقع الحياة ملئ بالمفارقات السلبية والإيجابية وليست سلبية فقط وأنه لا يستطيع أن يزيل جميع الشوائب بل عليه أن ينغمس في الحياة وأن يتعايش بكل ظروفها من خلال وصوله الى نقطة ادراك ووعي أن من خلال المحبة و التفاهم مع الآخرين يستطيع أن يواجه الحياة ويجتاز محنها.