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***Alienation in J. D Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1952)***

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master in Anglophone Language, Literature and  
Civilizations**

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I dedicate this work to God who is my chief guider. I dedicate it to my supervisor Mrs. BOUREGAA Meryem for her valuable guidance and support, i am forever grateful.

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## Introduction

Succeeding the Second World War, an unassailable feeling of estrangement has overshadowed the postwar man's life. People are no longer able to experience the joy of belonging to the society, they are unable to assemble a clear denotation of their lives and to construct their own, separate identities. Their post-traumatic states after the war, combined with the rising tensions on the international arena to rule the world have made their lives absurd and unreasonable. Therefore, American writers designate that postwar literature denotes an overwhelming sensitivity of Alienation, it reflects the dilemma, confusion, the loss of humanity and fragmentation of the individual. It focuses on sketching the psychological dimensions of the generation that have lived in postwar America.

The fifties in America are mainly famous for its great prosperity. Following the war, the economy has boomed providing its fruits to the majority of the population. But it has been a period of great quarrel, it has witnessed the paranoia and hysteria of the two Red Scares, and the witchhunt for communism among the innocent citizens have disturbed the life of stability and have intensified the dissension in the society. The 1950s is known for its different literary genres and themes, though they revolve around the same point which is voicing the hollowness and the depression caused by the war, and unhealed by adopting the culture of consumerism. Moreover, it is defined by its skeptical nature, that is to say, the questioning of the integrity and value of life, family, religion, and reality. The literature of this period highlights the outcomes of relying on the technological advancements in life and using it to destroy humanity. It is defined by the end of great narratives with its heroic characters. Hence, protagonists hold anti-heroic attributes, they are normal people with psychological troubles.

Among the most important narratives of the 1950s that obtain a great notability is Jerome David Salinger's masterpiece *the Catcher in the Rye* (1952). It is a remarkable work that

distinguishes itself as one of the first books to voice the thoughts and emotions of a malcontent teenager, though young adult literature is a common genre nowadays but at that time it has been considered an eccentric stance. This piece of writing captivates the readers due to the universality of the protagonist's problems and emotions, he is frustrated because of his alienation and being misunderstood, and yearns for spiritual validation. The novel raises controversy due to Salinger's harsh judgment of the society, he blames it for its ignorant attitude towards the troubled human existence. It deals with important subjects like psychological and mental issues, morality, loss of innocence, the credibility of religion, and search of oneself in an absurd reality. It is championed by critics for evoking the readers' feelings and engaging them in the story to sense the protagonist's troubles.

J. D Salinger is one of the most important American writers to have arisen after the Second World War, he initiated an extraneous and farcical vision about the world due to the loss of innocent lives he has witnessed during the war. These dicey incidents have sustained his beliefs that innocence is indeed, lost. It can be found only in the immature children who are not corrupted by the adult world. This belief is the base of *the Catcher in the Rye*'s anti-hero quest, he wants to protect the innocence of the children by preventing them from growing up. An idea which started in his mind, but soon obsessed him and controlled his life. He dissatisfaction about the phoniness of people and the society has exacerbated his estrangement issues and deepened his isolation.

Different, philosophers, critics and theorists have dealt with Alienation and have identified its major traits. The Prussian-born philosopher and revolutionary socialist Karl Marx offers a clear definition of Alienation in his book *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. He tackles the problem of social class division and its role in creating alienated workers. Also, he confers a detailed set of dire features that classify the labor as an estranged one. Likewise, the Francophone philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau explores in his book *Discourse on the*

*Sciences and Arts* on the figuration of the alienated individual because of the suffocating social standards that narrow his freedom. Another significant contributor to this study is the French philosopher and literary theorist Jean-Francois Lyotard who discusses in his book *the Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* the postmodern actuality which formed Alienated conditions. He ensures that this postwar context accompanied with the technological advancements and the rise of the affluent society have an immense contribution to the estranged states of the American individuals. Such writings help in examining *The Catcher in the Rye* protagonist's attitudes and estranged state.

This study examines the essence of Alienation as social, cultural, philosophical, psychological and mainly a literary entity. The questions to be asked in this work can be: What is meant by Alienation in such context of high technology and hyperreal horizon? How problematic is Alienation to the individual hero? What does it do to him? To what extent does estrangement help the individual hero to overcome the challenging actualities in order to reach a certain balance in his identity?

This thesis is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter provides a historical, social, cultural and literary background about the alienated individual of the 1950's. It treats the rise of the affluent society and its major role in creating estranged individuals. It sheds light on the role of the countercultural movement as a response to the conformist society. The second chapter analyses alienation from different theoretical views, it explores the philosophical, psychoanalytical and literary dimensions of estrangement. The last chapter represents the core of the study. It proffers a detailed analysis of the estranged hero in *The Catcher in the Rye*, based on a clear and exact description of his psychological turmoil. It emphasizes the fact that living within a consumer and materialistic context which is void of genuine human relations will eventually lead to the creation of an alienated protagonist,

whose aggressive and harsh criticism towards the corruption in the society have outcasted him.

To deal with such study, an eclectic approach is followed. It needs a fusion of literary, philosophical and psychoanalytical approaches to deal with Alienation as a cultural, philosophical, psychological and literary item. This analysis requires a deep understanding of the social context in America after WWII, as well as the economic resonance and the consumer culture of the 1950s that assist the reader in forming a correct vision about the social context used in J.D Salinger's novel. It relies on the Marxist theory and cultural criticism to define the American postmodern contextuality and the character's milieu. Philosophers and social critics of great importance to the study are Stanley W. Moore in his book *The Critique of Capitalist Democracy*, and Christopher Lash in *The Culture of Narcissism* who define the nature of the postmodern capitalist era that assure the chaotic state of the society, the deconstruction of the individual identity and the trade of psychological comfort with materialistic one. Philosophical theories of Hegel and Feuerbach are used to examine the essence of estrangement. And literary critics James Bryan in his book *The Psychological Structure of the Catcher in the Rye*, and Dromm Keith and Heath Salter in their book *The Catcher in the Rye and Philosophy* assist this work by explaining the psychic and mental status of the postmodern hero as a tormented individual, alienated from his own society.

This work treats the intriguing dimensions that the estranged heroes hold by taking J.D Salinger's protagonist as the archetypal figure who reflects the social, cultural and psychological entanglements through an aimless quest. It deals with these complications by conceptualizing the psychological wounds, mental turmoil, depression, and alienation that results from living in a state of post-traumatic war experience and experiencing the shortcomings of the conform society. Moreover, it tackles the hero's rebellious nature that

strengthens his contradictory position against various hypocrite institutions. This novel assists in transferring an honest image of the estranged anti-hero in the literature of the 1950s.



## **Chapter One: The Postmodern American Context of the 1950s**

This chapter is a theoretical examination concerned with providing a historical, social, cultural and literary background about the alienated American individual of the 1950s. The first section provides a historical overview of the American society of the 1950's. It highlights the major events that have changed the American way of life after the Second World War, like the economic boom and the technological advancements. It tackles the issue of alienation as a defining trait of the American character and traces the emergence of the affluent conformist society. The second section discusses the postmodern techniques, styles, and genres of the 1950s literature. Also, it manifests the spirit of rebellion that has rocked both society and culture; and the emergence of the countercultural movements. The third section is devoted to deal with the American-Jewish literature, highlighting its prominent figures, themes, and concerns. It introduces J.D Salinger as a postmodern Jewish-American author, with a glimpse on his masterpiece novel *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)

### **I. The Alienated-Affluent American Society of the 1950s:**

The American society of the 1950s is often seen as a period of prosperity, conformity, and peace; it denotes an affluent context of materialism and mobility. The end of the WWII has marked a fundamental shift in the shape of the American family, work and economy. The government has made considerable efforts to repay its people for their great exertions by providing jobs and opportunities to have a house and a family. It has honored the returning veterans by passing The G.I.Bill which offered them a financial aid to cover the cost of their living so they can attend college and have a degree. They have formed the base of a more educated, equal and ambitious society. While many of them gladly have reintegrated into society and enjoyed what they were offered, many others have endured psychological and

deep spiritual problems of alienation and loneliness, depression and withdrawal. They have felt the deep shame of the horrible things that happened during the war like killing, slaughtering, and a terrible sense of sacrifice. So they have performed different escapist behaviors and actions like drinking alcohol and taking drugs to block the horrific nightmares and flashbacks of the battlefield. The 1950s has been a controversial era of economic luxury and individual suffering.

During the 1950's, the American government has converted the military large scale production into civic industrial production to develop the economy, as a result, it has produced a level of material prosperity unrivaled in American history. Over the years, many innovations have taken place changing American's lives and resulting in the rise of a new society characterized by a drive of conformity in dress, architecture, and gender roles; and has developed a virtual obsession with consumption. Millions of citizens have moved from the cities to the comfort of new homes in the suburbs and have purchased new cars. They have replaced the radio with television sets to live the new cultural experience, and have developed a new fashion of consumption as historian Eric Foner claims: "this consumer culture demonstrated the superiority of the American way of life' (878). This new capitalist context of mass culture has dominated the country, it has sought to satisfy the majority of the population, television programs have shaped its content to attract the largest audience possible. Theaters have been active, museums have been crowded and books have sold very well.

Though it has been a placid time of luxury and accomplishment, the fact reveals much more quarrel. Life has become stagnate, social and gender roles are strictly rigid because the society was biased and male-dominated. While men have regular jobs and play important roles in the society; women have been expected to be docile and submissive housewives, who neither should test nor question their gender roles. Conformists at that time have lacked the

rich inner life to be truly independent and have substituted conformity for individualism, by trying to live like everyone is living without attempting to break away from the common and stereotypical American values.

The end of the war has laid the foundations for a bipolar world, where a new form of international tension has emerged between the capitalist United States and the communist Soviet Union. Both powers have found themselves competing for the spheres of influence which led to the Cold War, they have engaged in a race for supremacy, starting by spreading their ideologies in the newly independent countries, and forcing the rest of the world to choose between them. Competing to launch artificial satellites and human spaceflights, and to develop nuclear weapons and atomic bombs. In this Cold War era, anxiety and tensions have negated the surface tranquility of the 1950s society; the American people have developed a great deal of agitation about foreign governments that are different from their own, and have feared the spread of communism within the American society.

The Cold war has an important influence on every aspect of American society, political and cultural antagonism between the United states and the Soviet Union has created fear and paranoia. Americans have feared accusations that claimed they were communists, so to resist this, they have attempted to look as American as possible by participating in all the activities the government issued them to do it. They have built their own nuclear fall-out shelters in their basements in case of nuclear attacks. Children have been taught the duck and cover drills in schools; air raid sirens have been placed in towns warning of an enemy air attack. And broadcast stations have put a mark on the radio dial in case of an attack to issue instructions. As a result, Americans have correlated communism with oppression and terror, so they have championed their capitalist government. Above all, the average American has come to a final conclusion which is not to be different from others rather conform and never criticize the government.

This distress has transformed the minor group of American communists into a national obsession paving the way to the emergence of the Second Red Scare, in which Senator Joseph McCarthy has risen to national prominence by starting a test to uncover communists who are holding important positions in the government. People have been panicked and paranoid, fearing being suspected or accused of sympathising with communism as historian Steinbach asserts: "to be suspected of being a communist was worse than being a murderer or a rapist. Just being suspected meant one was a traitor" (11). Innocent people have been maligned, blacklisted and sometimes imprisoned, their civil rights have been violated. No one was safe because McCarthy has accused artists, musicians, writers and movie stars. Jews have made a large portion of the blacklisted group, partially because they have occupied high positions in the Film industry.

Joseph McCarthy has dominated the headlines over the next few years, he has destroyed lives and wrecked careers and fed the people's paranoia by launching a nationwide witchhunt to capture communists. The American historian David M. Kennedy argues that: "McCarthy is suppressing free speech and free actions by thrusting fear into the hearts of innocent people"(721). Therefore, such postmodern contextuality of the fifties sets the American individual into a traumatizing state, where his humanity, privacy, and safety are threatened. The paranoid climate is not confined to the actions of McCarthy only, the cultural and social scene has been one of challenged individuality, confused identity and lost spirituality. Hollywood has invested in spreading propaganda by producing anti-communist movies; TV programs have shaped its content to intensify the danger of communism and totalitarian governments like broadcasting plays and movies based on George Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*. And the CIA has funded magazines, news broadcasts, concerts, art exhibitions, that has portrayed the American freedom. This has created a rigid if unwritten caste system where everyone knew their place and doing anything that violated that system had a severe

consequence. It is a literary context which suggests authors to a certain political, cultural and individualistic commitment through their writings.

## **II. The American Literature of the 1950s:**

The American historian Barbara W. Tuchman argues that: "Books are the carriers of civilization. Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill" (Tuchman, 1980) literature mirrors history. Due to the technological and scientific advancements that have branded the second half of the twentieth century, the postmodern individual has turned into a passive consumer and a slave to the new discoveries. People have substituted the real world with its complexities and struggles with a virtual one, where they have the power to create a peaceful and harmonious environment. As a result, authors have regarded this new global phenomenon of technology as the new pillar to produce an innovative literature with new topics and themes that reflect this epoch. They have created a postmodern character who is deeply affected by the horrors and distress of the Second World War. He lives in a constant fear that another war is going to occur and destroy the human existence, and experiences uncertainty towards the technological future. Accordingly, the French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard argues that postmodernity is not a new thing rather a "rewriting of some of the features claimed by modernity, and first of all modernity's claim to ground its legitimacy on the project of liberating humanity as a whole through science and technology" (65). Therefore, postmodernism can be considered as an endurance to modernism by taking the scientific innovations as fundamental columns to free humankind from the painful past.

Postmodern writings tackle different subject matters and make use of different styles and techniques. It outlines some distinct features like the fragmentation of the texts and breaking it into a sequence of separate episodes and events to make the story as a " slabs of events and

circumstances" (Lyotard, 173) and to convey mistrust and uncertainty towards different events. An important element is that it acknowledges previous literary works through intertextuality, it can be a reference in terms of content or style; or an extended discussion of another literary work. Furthermore, the employment of magic realism which denotes the introduction of fantastic events into real narratives to create new realities and substitute existence. Postmodern writers often use satire and absurdity to express the meaninglessness of life. They tackle of alienation, skepticism, and disillusionment, which questions the individual's ability to communicate meaningfully. Irony and humor become the hallmarks of their style, they discuss World War II and the Cold War in a playful and humorous way.

They create works that enable the reader to provide his own connections and supply his personal unguided interpretations of events. Another point is that they reflect the paranoid anxieties of the modern man; their protagonists are struggling with paranoid anxieties and often suffer from the fear that somebody else is controlling their lives. They live in the conviction that society is conspiring against the individual. As theologian Anthony Thiselton states that the postmodern individual has lost his stability, confidence, and identity, and "breed deep uncertainty, insecurity, and anxiety... [T]he postmodern self-lives daily with fragmentation, indeterminacy, and intense distrust of all claims to ultimate truth or universal moral standards " (130-131).

The 1950s has eased the way for the emergence of new genres and themes displaying a variety of works to satisfy readers. Science Fiction genre has flourished, with the idea of space travel becoming a reality, readers and writers across the nation are fascinated with the possibility of discovering intelligent life on other planets. Isaac Asimov has written a collection of short stories entitled *I Robot* (1950) that portrays the theme of interaction between humans, robots, and morality. In *The Body Snatchers* (1955) Jack Finney has talked about space invasion and the idea of replacing humans with alien duplicates to destroy the

earth. And Philip K. Dick has reflected the climate of chances and opportunities that characterized the 1950s and has referred to it as a dystopia where anybody can be a leader regardless of his upbringing, in his masterpiece *Solar Lottery* (1955).

The Cold War events and McCarthyism have inflicted paranoia and terror in the American society, Americans have feared that their lives were threatened by communism and atomic explosions. This inspired them to embrace religion and pray to God to protect them from the evil in the world, it has become typical for families to attend the church every Sunday and become conservatives. As a result, writers have praised the importance of religion as a key element to survive and achieve a successful life. Some of the famous religious novels are *The Silver Chalice* (1955) by Thomas B. Costain, which is a historical fictional story that tracks the rise of Christianity's influence and domination in a heroic exciting style. Henry Morton Robinson in *The Cardinal* (1950) tells the story of a low-class American's rise to become a cardinal of the Catholic Church by sticking to his moral values and being a hard working selfless person.

The 1950s are the renaissance of Comic books, during this time, modern comic books have been first published and rapidly increased in popularity. It has introduced the superhero archetype creating many well-known characters including Superman, Batman, Captain America, and Wonder Woman. In addition to displaying themes of romance, evil vs. good, and superpowers. Also, the novels of manners, usually with a philosophical message that the only way people will live a happy life is to preserve their morals, create a positive optimistic environment and interact with honored, beloved people. William Wharton's *Birdy* (1950) is the best of this literary genre, it is about the appreciation of friendship and family, dreaming and surviving the war.

Despite the fact that some people have been enjoying the prosperous life of the fifties, others have been disappointed and dissatisfied with the life of conformity that they are living. Many novels and books have reflected a sense of rebellion, confusion, and alienation; dystopian books have refused the goal of the empowerment books, accusing both society and people of being shallow and empty. Ray Bradbury in his novel *Fahrenheit 451*(1955) writes about the fear inflicted on people by the government, and how television reduces knowledge to destroy interest in reading. In *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) Ayn Rand depicts the dystopian United States, she stresses the role of capitalism in developing the new philosophy of objectifying people.

The years after the World War II have witnessed a great development of American drama. Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams are considered to be the best dramatists of the twentieth century. After the war, playwrights have started to show an alienated individual character who has a problem of belonging and struggles with loneliness. In his works, Arthur Miller has concentrated on the many difficult decisions that the individual has to make in his life in both a social and political contexts. He has been accused of being a communist, but instead of feeling intimidated, he has written his famous play *The Crucible*(1953) as an allegory retelling a real life story of the horrors and paranoia people experienced during the witchhunt for communism during The Red Scare; it is regarded as a masterpiece in the canon of American Drama. Tennessee Williams has emphasized on showing the sudden changes in the American society in the 1940s and 1950s, and using erotic and sexual characters and themes. One of his best-known works is '*A Streetcar Named Desire*' (1947) which highlights the escapist behaviors the character develop and her retreat to fantasy to protect herself from the cruel life.



### III. The Advent of the Countercultural Movements:

During the 1950s, individuality has not been valued and people gladly have confirmed and enjoyed the luxuries of the economic prosperity. But others have been anxious and doubtful, they have expressed a sudden need not to conform, and wanted to break free from the ideas that confined the society. This has led to an identity crisis and developed anti-society sentiments. This tension has eased the emergence of countercultural movements that call for standing against everything that is conventional in the society. These movements have exposed agony, hatred, revolt and apocalyptic visions of individuality; also they have encouraged a divergent way of thinking from the mainstream and change the status quo.

The most notable movement in literature has been the one of The Beats or The Beat Generation. They are a group of bohemian anti-intellectuals and writers who have formed an artistic movement that challenged and criticized the dominant culture. They have attacked the middle-class prejudice, exposed how success and happiness are defined by capitalism, promoted sexual liberation, mysticism, drug use to alter conscious, environmental awareness and other themes deemed 'radical' by mainstream society. They have been driven by their own alienation, anxiety, and despair to rebel against the boredom of the ordinary conform and pursue the extraordinary.

The Beat writers, notably Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, have fashioned a literature that is more bold, straightforward, and expressive than anything that has been produced before; displaying themes like identity, estrangement, adventure and the rejection of the mainstream. Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*(1957) is a thinly veiled autobiographical novel of escape in a quest for self-knowledge, freedom, and experience; it marks the creation of American bohemian lifestyle. And in his poem *Howl* (1956), Allen Ginsberg presents an influential piece of writing that portrays a capitalist nuclear-armed America as a beast

attacking and devouring its youngsters. Therefore, this movement according to the critic Andrew J. Dunar has presented " a literature with stories that focused on people struggling to find identity, if not a place, amid the turmoil of mid-century American society" (Dunar, 261).

Also, sociologists have noticed that while people are enjoying the material wealth and life in the suburbs, others are suffering loneliness that comes from living in a corporate society. In his book *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), David Riesman has discussed how people are oriented towards their society with very little consideration of their individuality, stressing the uneasiness that accompanied the loss of individualism; and criticizing citizens for becoming too conformists. Philip Wylie in his book *Generation of Vipers* (1942) has presented the most venomous attack ever thrown on the American way of living; he has blamed homosexuality for ruining the youth and voiced his resentment towards women for not revolting against the rigid gender roles. Also, he has directed his anger on the whole society. And in *The Affluent Society* (1958), John Kenneth Galbraith has protested against the growth of the economy, and how the government advertises useless products to encourage the addiction of consumerism instead of creating a balance between the rich and the poor.

Artists and musicians have reacted in the same way as did writers, selling themselves against the dominant themes and mentality of the decade; and produced a rebellious art against convention to represent American freedom. As a painter, Jack Pollock is a pioneer of the artistic movement 'Abstract Expressionism'. He has parted ways with the traditional forms and became a bold innovator as " abandoning the easel and began working from above on mural-size canvases spread on the floor. Splashing and pouring paint from buckets ..." (Dunar, 259). He has displayed his work and gives viewers access to the emergence of his art through organizing live sessions with an audience, and considers his art as truth they need to see it rather than an agreed-upon reality they need to share.

Rock'n'Roll music has been a refreshing wave for young people. Though it has contained sexual connotations and vulgar language, it has been politically charged and directed. Bold lyrics have called for the hypocrisy within the government and have caused outrage among listeners. Elders have disapproved of this genre of music and blamed it for juvenile delinquency, but young people have felt alive and experienced a sense of belonging to something new and different; because it somehow has broken the boredom of conformity. By the 1950s, the cultural change has affected the film business. Undercovered detective, spies and *femme fatale*-plotted stories, have portrayed the evil spirit of a dangerous world torn by the war. At the time, people have begun to realize that their inner torment and spiritual problems are caused not by the evil Nazism rather by a controlling government and conformist elders. Hollywood has portrayed these problems perfectly in movies like *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), and *The Bad Seed* (1956). Those movies are designed to show people that the youth want to be free from the stereotypical perfect life they are forced to live.

#### **IV. Jewish-American Literature:**

The fifties in America have promoted a very massive advancement of minor literature, and many ethnic groups have voiced their existence through literary works. This led to the establishment of Ethnic Studies programs in universities to give the minor literature a valuable place in the literary stage. The Jewish-American literature speaks about the dreams and aspirations of the immigrant Jewish people, passionately seeking a homeland of their own. It portrays the hardship of immigrant life, the stable yet alienated middle-class existence that followed, and finally the unique challenges of cultural acceptance. Robert Alter, a professor of Literature at the university of California at Berkeley argues that Jewish-American literature is a body of : " works of serious Jewish content, informed by Jewish tradition, and distinctively American in methodology, orientation and mode of expression"(268).

The first Jewish novels written in America have been written by immigrants. Those Jews who have migrated before 1881 were very few, have arrived in the 17th century from Spain and Portugal and in the nineteenth century from Germany and have rapidly assimilated into the American culture. However, it has been not until the Russian violent demolishing of the Eastern European Jews in the 1880s, which have driven them to flee to America in enormous numbers, and the process of making a home in a new country became a central concern of American Jewish prose. These millions of Jews speak in The Yiddish language, as a result, the first American Jewish writers have written in that language. They have composed memoirs and petitions, their writings have flourished to include other genres like drama, poetry, and fiction. The subject of the immigrant is an immensely rich one, it includes both the native optimism of American life and a pessimism regarding the status of the immigrants in the American society ( My Jewish Learning).

Many of the immigrants have settled in the packed apartments of New York City of Manhattan's Lower East Side in New York. The Lower East Side was a place unto itself, its pushcart businessmen, its dirty apartments, and its blend of old-country religion and new-world permit typical of a place both recognizable and shockingly new. There are many literary works which recount the experience of the Jewish immigrants. There is the famous poet Morris Rosenfeld, in his poetry collection "*Di gloke*" (The Bell) in 1888 and "*Di blumenkette*" (The Chain of Flowers) in 1890. He has mirrored the Jewish radicalism of his day, which is a response to the misery of living in immigrant neighbourhood, the abuse of the Jewish workers, and the desperation of the Jewish masses.

Anzia Yeziarska is the best-known author of this generation of Jewish writers, she is a product of these circumstances, and her work reflects her experience to a large part of American readers who are not familiar with life in the apartments of the Lower East Side. Yeziarska's short stories, collected in the volume *Hungry Hearts* (1920) is a depiction of the

grim circumstances of the Jewish ghettos. Abraham Cahan's outstanding novel *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), tackles the issue of the social-historical process of Jewish immigrants becoming Americans and their pursuit of the American Dream. The Post-WWII era has contributed to the spread of Jewish writers' immersion into the American literary discussion. The melting-pot ideal, in which immigrants and writers have changed themselves into deracinated Americans, has been replaced by the salad bowl, in which immigrants maintain their identity while simultaneously forming part of the rich embroidered artwork of American life. The changing ideal is reflected in the American literature, which has embraced a diversity of approach and subject matter as never before, opening its ways to those it has previously excluded.

Postwar Jewish writers are regularly considering their own immigrant or second-generation immigrant parents, casting a scathing eye on the small hypocrisies and smothering agreement of the previous generation. Philip Roth's most popular novel, *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), is an intentional reveling in sexual chaos by giving an account of the struggle between fathers and sons and their ideologies due to the modern revolution in terms of religion and freedom. The Holocaust has always been a prevailing power in American Jewish identity, especially because Americans have condemned the actions of Hitler during the Holocaust and opened their country to the Jews. American-Jewish author Meyer Levin has hoped that: "the coming generation of American-Jewish writers.....will be young writers who will be involved with the revival of Jewish studies" (Furman, 38) authors like Allegra Goodman and Tova Reich fulfill his hopeful expectation.

The 1950s has seen Jews and many other Americans surging into the middle class, leaving the squalid tenements of the urban ghettos behind and fleeing for the suburbs. Jews have been living the serene comfortable American life, and the emerging writers of the postwar era

like Grace Paley and Allen Ginsberg are dedicated to embracing, and rebelling against that newfound prosperity. In so doing, they have made Jewish characters, Jewish themes, and Jewish history a vital part of the American story. Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, and Philip Roth are the icons of Jewish American fiction. They write about Jews living in America, who experience the ill effects of estrangement. A fiction that can reflect life's vulnerabilities and absurdities, it has expansive interest to contemporary readers, who applaud the attempt of ordinary people to determine their destiny. In addition to such themes, Malamud has been well aware of the social problems of his day like rootlessness, infidelity, abuse, divorce...etc. Nevertheless, he has believed in love and sacrifice as a source of redemption and solace. Malamud's characters are both archetypal Jews and suffering humans, his awareness of the Jewish pain and struggle is best portrayed in *The Fixer*(1966), a novel of extreme anti-Semitism in Tzarist Russia, which for many critics evokes the Holocaust.

Roth is the great writer of second-generation American Jewry. His characters are mostly the children of those Jews who have worked hard to enter the middle class and intend on letting their children remember it, his novella *Goodbye, Columbus* (1958) is the best example. Roth also writes about Jews who are financially comfortable yet culturally afloat. Because of their solace and comfort, they are able to be critical of both their Jewish and American worlds. So as opposed to feeling more at home in America, they feel significantly more alienated and caught in between the universalism of American culture and the particularism of Jewish culture. Bellow is arguably the most adored Jewish American writer. Although he has disliked being called a Jewish writer, Jewish life and identity denote major themes in his work. The principal characters in Bellow's fiction have a sense of alienation or otherness but concurrently they have a brave potential, and many times they stand in contrast to the negative forces of society. Bellow's work also demonstrates a great appreciation of America and an interest in the uniqueness and dynamic quality of the American experience.

Nevertheless, figures like the Holocaust survivor Artur Sammler in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1969) and the schlemiel Moses Herzog in *Herzog* (1964) explore their existences in dialogues with their Jewish identities.

#### **V. Jerome David Salinger and *The Catcher in the Rye*:**

Born on January 1, 1919, in New York, Jerome David Salinger is a literary icon despite his slim body of work and reclusive lifestyle. From an early age, he has developed his own radical style of writing and believes that his work is an ordain by God to enlighten the readers. Although he has an aura of superiority around him and lives in a very expensive apartment, Salinger appears to be struggling in life like his friends. His rebellious spirit got him expelled from many prestigious prep schools because he wants: " to get information on his own terms not follow what teachers have to offer, and stay detached" (Shields and Salerno, 233). Wealth doesn't mean anything to him, and he is not impressed with the life he is living. His father has thought he needs discipline and structure so he has sent him to a military academy where he has composed himself and has begun to write at night with a flashlight under the covers, producing his first short story *The Young Folks* in 1940.

His goal is to publish his stories in *The New Yorker* because it is a very prestigious magazine, but it has been a very hard task and many of his stories have been rejected. His career as a writer has started to flourish when he has published *A Slight Rebellion of Maddison* (1941) but then, like so many young American men around this time, World War II interrupted his life. He has served in the war and felt patriotic and honored to be a part of a great cause which is liberating the world from evil. His role has been very important because he has been assigned to interview enemy prisoners and civilians. Salinger has been exposed to different foreign languages and cultures, and that have contributed to both his intellectual and

spiritual growth. At the same time, he has published four short stories in *Story Magazine* and *The Saturday Evening Post*.

During the Liberation Day in Paris in August 1944, Salinger has met Ernest Hemingway who is the most famous writer of the 20th century. He has presented him with a few manuscripts and asked for his guidance and review about the writings, in which he has received pleasant and encouraging feedback. Eventually, the war has continued and he has resumed his job, but the probability of being shot or killed haunted him every minute of every day. In a letter, he expressed his great fear stating that: "i dig my foxholes down to a cowardly depth. Am scared stiff constantly and can't remember ever having been a civilian" (Shields and Salerno, 116). In the Belgium-German border, he has walked into a horrific concentration camp, he has been caught off guard because nothing prepared him for this kind of laceration of humanity; naked dead bodies were stocked up or scattered everywhere and any evidence of life has vanished.

As a result of the horrors he has witnessed in the war, and due to the immense stress, he has suffered a nervous breakdown. He has mourned the loss of innocence and the damage it caused to the world. Shortly after being released from the war, he has written a short story narrated by Holden Caulfield entitled *I'm Crazy* (1945). Salinger comes back from the war aware that the devastated and shelchoked tone is his tone, and despite his traumatic experience, he has tried to reintegrate in the society and live his life.

But the war experience haunted his writing, he has made no attempts to hide his personal disappointment with the American army and voiced his discontent through his fictitious characters. Author Dominic Smith declares that Salinger manages to unfold: " the bourgeois malaise and spiritual hunger of post-war America as opposed to the spirit of prosperity and return to suburban quietude that often characterizes fiction of this period" (Smith, 639).



Salinger's fiction thrives with certain themes, attitudes, and styles that are recurrent and manifested through different aspects of his writings. His protagonist is a misfit hero who is in conflict with himself and unable to communicate. His journey is a quest to look profoundly in himself to understand and discover his true self, and to navigate his place in the world. The Salingerian heroes are characters with honest feelings searching for meaning and enlightenment in a fraudulent world. They suffer from alienation and retreat from the materialistic grating and phony adult world, performing escapist behaviors like madness, suicide, and introversion.

Salinger's style and writing techniques include the use of italicized words for emphasis, nonliterary language and inappropriate words which are often considered to be a vital reason to ban the book. Symbolism is applied in the characters' names, the titles of the stories and different objects and events found in the writings. As for the themes, Brother's Keeper is a very effective one that Salinger uses in his writings. In the majority of his stories, he uses the sibling personage as a role model, an embodiment of innocence and a voice of reason. Also, he is very discreet in using religion as a theme. Though he personally has questioned the existence of God, in his stories there is always a religious element. Throughout *Franny and Zooey* (1961), Franny carries the Bible with her and prays all the time to overcome her midlife crisis. In *The Catcher in the Rye* (1952), Holden seems uncaring to the other characters but when it comes to meeting nuns in a restaurant, he shows his respect and pays for their food. Another point is that Salinger incorporates the theme of war and death, in every story one of his characters is either has participated in the war and deeply affected by it, or he is dead and serves as a source of guidance, morality, and religion to the other characters.

Salinger has published *The Catcher in the Rye* (1952), it is a coming-of-age novel narrated by Holden Caulfield, a clever and sensitive seventeen years old who experiences the phoniness of the adult world in a three days trip to New York city. His tale starts from a

mental institution where he is currently getting help after suffering a mental breakdown. He recounts the days following his depart from Pencey Prep, a private school. After a fight with his roommate, Stradlater, Holden leaves school two days ahead of schedule to explore New York before returning home, interacting with former teachers, nuns, prostitutes, an old girlfriend, and his young sister along the way. He feels distant in his relationships with others and really baffled about the uncertainty of his destiny.

Holden Caulfield clings to the innocence of the youth and realizes that growing up indicates that he ought to be responsible in a world where he thinks most effective, superficial, and insignificant troubles occur. Holden, like many others seems to be struggling to fit into a world filled with defacement and phoniness. He is caught inside the disturbed transition of his existence from the state of adolescence into maturity. Hence, he faces tension and alienation and desires to detach himself from all the fake values. The title, *The Catcher in the Rye* is inspired by Robert Burns's song titled, "Comin' Thro' the Rye," which is a sexually themed song about having sex in the fields of rye. In the novel, Holden wants to be a protector of innocence, by catching children who play in a field of rye from falling off the cliff of innocence into adulthood.

The English writer George Orwell says: " writing a book is a horrible exhausting struggle one would never undertake such a thing if one is not driven by some demon"(Maxwell, 54) and the war was Salinger's demon. He has transmitted his fear and frustration through Holden. The novel is so personal, so revealing, it is like stripping the layers from his soul. Although it has been met with faithful devotion as well as radical censorship, it is considered to be the great subversive anti-establishment book of all time. The publication of the novel in 1951 has been sort of a revolution and an extraordinary phenomenon because millions of people have bought that book. It has sold 60 millions copies which are a precedent, and it continues to sell

till today. Salinger has become a figure of brilliance and wisdom because the novel makes the reader feel that he is a part of a larger world and that larger world is unreliable.

Since the publication of the novel, teenagers have since considered the book a favorite classic piece of adolescent literature due to the relatability of Holden's struggles to their own lives. British author Aidan Chambers writes that: "Holden was seen as such a relatable character to adolescents at the time and is still viewed that way in modern society today and would be categorized in the Young Adult genre" (Chambers 270). Salinger has been a very specific and careful writer, who wanted his writing to be perfect. He has refused to turn his work into a movie because with a cinematic interpretation the movie makers will narrow the meaning of the work and limit the imagination of the viewers. But for him, the beauty of his work is how much he left out for the readers to question and wonder about.

Although the novel is considered to be a masterpiece, Salinger has not been prepared for this instant fame, he has thought that he is born with the right of anonymity and wanted to be normal. He has refused to do interviews and believed that the readers shouldn't know anything personal about the author, they should know him through his work and that's all he is going to give them. He has considered his inclusion as the best solution and left New York. He has been protecting himself because his morals were very pure and he wanted peace and quiet to do his work. But he has stopped publishing his work and disappeared. A very common rumor implies that he has built a bunker outside his house in the woods, where he spends a lot of time writing in total isolation without being disturbed. By being out of the picture, he is in the picture; and that was an intentional paradox on his part because by having no intention to publish his work, readers will always wait and anticipate the end of his isolation, and this gives a stillness to his legacy.

The fifties in America is a paradoxical decade. The technological and social revolutions that took place after the Second World War has provided conformity, material prosperity and luxury. This is paralleled with paranoia, skepticism, loss of individuality and alienation. Such circumstances have influenced authors to produce a rich body of literature with new genres such as science fiction and detective novels; and new themes like paranoia and alienation. The postmodern character questions his entire existence and individuality. He is traumatized and deeply affected by the horrors of the war and the distress of the Red Scare. His vision of the future is pessimistic because everything is questionable and uncertain.

## **Chapter Two: Alienation: A Theoretical Study**

This chapter is a theoretical chapter that treats the problem of estrangement as a social, philosophical and literary phenomenon which may exist in the postmodern milieu. It includes four sections, the first section provides theoretical views about the essence of alienation, emphasizing how it becomes a serious affair that has pervaded in the American society after WWII and especially during the 1950s. The second section deals with alienation from an existentialist point of view. The third section gives a psychoanalytical discussion of alienation, it portrays how the rise of the conformist society of the 1950s affected the American individual and alienated him. The fourth section demonstrates alienation as a thematic entity in the American literature of the 1950s.

### **I. A View to Alienation**

A growing sense of aloofness, alienation and rootlessness pervades in people's lives making it futile and empty which results in the loss of identity. When a man feels aimless and abhors his life, his employment, or the company of his friends, it could be that he experiences a thriving sense of estrangement from the world around him. So, alienation is a feeling of not belonging, it is the state of being withdrawn dissociated or isolated from one's surroundings, events, and activities through indifference, disaffection or loss of affection. It is an alteration of the individual's understanding of the things that he thought he understood. He suffers the loss of connections previously dear to him, as well as the substantial advantages that those connections formerly provided; as professor of Human Development Kenneth Keniston states: " most usages of alienation share the assumption that some relationship or connection that one existed that is natural, desirable or good has been lost "(452). To lose this connection is to feel even more powerless and helpless in executing the plans that he has made for his

own life. The aforementioned estrangement that happens subsequently of man's distancing from things in his life is the route problem related with alienation.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau has been one of the pioneer figures to discuss alienation from a philosophical perspective. In his book '*Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*' (1762) he argues that the culture is shifting the focus from intellectuality to uniformity through promoting social virtues, arts and sciences stating that: "All minds seem to have been cast in the same mold: constant politeness demands, propriety commands; constantly one follows custom, never one's own genius. One no longer dares to appear what one is...One will thus never really know with whom one is dealing." (Rousseau et al. 6). Accordingly, the individual has begun to lose the uniqueness of his identity and the ability to form sincere friendships by hiding his true self and feel bounded and pressured to meet the expectations of a conservative over proper society. In Rousseau's view, rather than depending on science and social patterns as experimental determinants of life purposes, the individual should make his own unmistakable thoughts and values to determine his path.

He argues that the only way a man can overcome alienation is to be himself at all times, and be certain of his values which later will motivate him to follow his plans with vigor and industriousness: "Just saying that one [holds] these values is not sufficient...Hypocrisy or flagrant self-description may well be symptoms of alienation. Firmly in possession of oneself, one does not hide one's values but puts them forward unambiguously for all to see." (Schmitt, 20) yet, he ought to be careful because if he is very sure of himself and his values, it may lead him to be a hypocrite because he thinks of himself as a flawless person who could do no wrong, and this also may lead to alienation. Therefore he ought to assess his actions all the times to avoid getting misinterpreted by people.

The German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach in his book *The Essence of Christianity* (1955) has discussed alienation from a religious perspective. He claims that religion is the main cause of alienation stating that: "Religion is the disuniting of man from himself; he sets God before him as the antithesis of himself. God is not what man is a man is not what God is."(49) Unsurprisingly an atheist, Feuerbach has questioned the existence of God, he believes that man has alienated himself and his essence by abstracting God as an infinite, flawless, omniscient creature, and degrading himself to a finite, imperfect and insensible character. Eventually, man will experience alienation all his life because he will never be able to live up to the impossible standards of God, thus he will feel inferior and inadequate. Furthermore, he argues that all the descriptions of God are nothing but an object of mundane thinking.

Karl Marx concurs that religion is:" the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the spirit of a spiritless situation" (Marx, 64) it provides people with a sense of solace, comfort and stability. It only numbs the pain and spiritual wounds for a small period of time but never can put an end to it. But Feuerbach disagrees claiming that if God is as holy and unique as people think, and if religion is the base of a greater well-being, they would not suffer a spiritual loss and estrangement.

Due to the industrial revolution and the economic boom after WW II, the United States has been regarded as one of the strongest economic power in the world. This revolutionary breakthrough in the production of goods, which encouraged the material lifestyle, and led many to believe initially that capitalism is an unstoppable economic force, and a system that holds endless opportunities of happy and self-fulfilled lives. America has become a country full of people driven by the all too familiar notion of the "American Dream" and the desire to become a self-made success. The corporate firms have been driven by unrestricted profit-seeking behavior, focusing on increasing their wealth. Hence, this led to an uneven

distribution of wealth between the rich and the poor, and the contemporary job market is made up largely of corporate workers devoid of personal expression and freedom. For author Stanley Moore in his book *The Critique of Capitalist Democracy* (1957) states the term alienation: "refer to the characteristics of individual consciousness and social structure typical in societies whose members are controlled by, instead of controlling, the consequences of their collective activity" (125), so the American capitalist society has created alienated workers who attribute their happiness to their level of wealth, and manipulate their time and health for the sake of material comfort.

Capitalism revolves around exploitation of the individual. It is not in capitalistic interest to encourage the psychological and physical development of the self when distributing labor to those who are capable of executing the simplest and mind numbing of tasks. This draws attention to a very complicated yet important issue, the issue of alienation. In *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Karl Marx emphasizes the idea that the Industrial Revolution has created workers who are alienated from their own humanity because they are treated as machines rather than human beings. Furthermore, they are alienated from one another because there is no social relationship required in the production of an item. Also, they are alienated from the product they are producing, because it will sell on the market with no relationship to the human who has produced it, and from the act of work itself because there is no satisfaction or meeting of desire involved (Churchich, 68-69). Consequently: "the worker is alienated from his own activity, which is also alienation from his body, cognition and affects. He is alienated from himself " (Marx, 186).

In regard with capitalism, the philosopher George Hegel believes that a product is initially conceived in the mind. At that point, the worker would create the product, pervading his unique mark of being into it, and at last he would estrange himself by foregoing that product,



he clarifies that : "The reason I can alienate my property is that it is mine only insofar as I put my will into it, thus alienation proper is an expression of my will, of my will no longer to regard the thing as mine" (Hegel, 47). For Hegel, the main path for one to not be an estranged producer is to confine all things to oneself, and not hand them over to a master, he argues that the act of producing an item is an embodiment of alienation, since the product must end in exchange, and exchange is to forego one's being, to be used and controlled by another. Also, he has resumed Rousseau's line of thinking, claiming that the individual:"lives in a world shaped by his work and his knowledge, but it is the world in which man feels alien, a world whose laws prevent basic need satisfaction" (Hegel, 26). He will always feel the struggle between satisfying his own needs and those that are required by the society, and that eventually will result in the feeling of detachment and estrangement.

## **II. An Existentialist Discussion of Alienation:**

For existentialist thinkers, individuals are placed in the world without choosing to be there, then they are obliged to come to terms with inevitable events like sickness and death, and accept the reality that the most important questions in life have no answers. And since it is a human instinct to search for meaning and order, they become frustrated when they realize that their reality is meaningless, above all, the awareness of these facts change their perception of life and make it absurd. Moreover, there is a phase in human life where the individual feels self-conscious about who he is, he starts to question his existence and identify himself as a separate entity from the others. As time passes, he realizes that the world exists outside him and the feeling of loss, not belonging and estrangement is a universal human condition, he can not escape it. Besides, a meaningless and absurd reality can provide nothing for the individual except alienating him.

In his book *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (1957), Jean-Paul Sartre states that: "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself" (12). Hence a person has a complete freedom and ability to make a choice in his life to rise above the absurd condition of humanity and to conceive himself and thrust into existence. Thus, Existentialism promotes a kind of freedom that is unbound by neither laws and ethnic rules nor God. After the WWII, the American society has echoed the reverberations of existential attitudes like guilt, nausea, restlessness, lack of intimacy and estrangement. This despair has been articulated by existentialist philosophers who agree that the hollowness that man feels in the depth of his soul is existentialist by nature. They conform to the theory that life as a whole become futile, and one's comprehension of life can never be soothing.

For Jean-Paul Sartre, alienation occurs when the individual refuses to take advantage of the responsibility and freedom provided for him. He argues that because God does not exist, human beings are free to create the meaning and value of their lives. Such freedom, however, is initially experienced as a tremendous burden when they realize that they have no one but themselves to rely on. He emphasizes that: "the existentialist...thinks it very distressing that God does not exist, because all possibility of finding values in a heaven of ideas disappears along with Him; there can no longer be an a priori Good since there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it."(Sartre, 40-41).

Only humans, then, can be praised or blamed for their successes and failures in life and whatever meaning they do or do not achieve. They possess total freedom, and responsibility for their actions, so they can not blame anyone for the consequences. Yet Sartre views this control as a curse stating that: "Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does" (Sartre, 32). Alienation occurs when humans refuse to accept responsibility for this freedom. They are shut out of history, they no longer

have a sense of having roots in a meaningful past nor do they see themselves moving toward a meaningful future.

The individual's recognition of the role of the spirit in discovering his identity and role in the society is one of the most important issues discussed in Hegel's philosophy. He suggests that if one is self-conscious and able to recognize his true self, he will eventually be satisfied with the things he produces. Alienation, according to Hegel, is the process by which the human self is doubled into two selves, one of them is externalized and separated from the other one, it goes into a stage of self-exploration and discovery, thus alienate itself ; while the other one is aware of this alienation and seek in a variety of ways to overcome it by mastering the other self and bring it back in some way. In his book *Marxism and Human Nature*, professor Sean Sayers adds that: " This self is a historical and social creation. It develops through a process of alienation and its overcoming, self-estrangement, and self-recognition, a 'fall' into division and reconciliation" (2).

Hegel maintains that alienation is a crucial stage in the individuals lives that they must pass it so they can accept themselves. The social community is an important aspect of human lives, it contributes to their personal growth and the development of their spirits, so it is not a negative thing for individuals to feel alienated in a stage of their lives. For alienation “can be overcome and individuality developed and realized only through participation in a social world: by fulfilling my station and duties” (Sayers, 2011 p.4), therefore an estranged personage is the one who cuts all types of ties with the social figure of the surrounding milieu.

### **III. A Psychoanalytic Discussion of Alienation:**

The 1950's in America have witnessed the rise of a capitalist affluent society which requires people to conform. While the majority of the Americans have conformed, others have

championed the ideals of individual freedom. Individualism is the moral and social outlook that stresses human freedom and the importance of individual independence. It opposes any kind of external force like religion and tradition to interfere with an individual's choices or limit his actions. In his famous poem *O! Me! O Life!* Walt Whitman states: "The question, O me! so sad, recurring—What good amid these, O me, O life? Answer. That you are here—that life exists and identity, That the powerful play, goes on, and you may contribute a verse."(Whitman, 250), he praises the two notions that shape America as a modern country: individualism and democracy; he celebrates the power of the individual and how America is composed of a group of rugged individuals who contribute to its success together under democracy.

People who possess individual freedom are encouraged by others and praised for their authenticity, originality, and bravery for their self-reliance attitudes; but in different circumstances, they may face disapproval for their egoistic, weird and disobedient behaviors. Although this new trend of increasing individualism has seemed like a positive thing to oppose conformity and the boredom that comes with it, it has always been laden with negative associations. In *The Culture of Narcissism*, social critic Christopher Lasch's asserts that individualism is nothing but: "The pursuit of self-interest, formerly identified with the rational pursuit of gain and accumulation of wealth, has become a search for pleasure and psychic survival"(66). So individualism is equated to amorality and selfishness, or the idea that such behavior is somehow justifiable. Since individualists are defined as people who believe that they have no duties towards others, and strive only for self-fulfillment; they are likely to experience alienation. Their determination to be self-reliant and refusal to seek assistance when needed results in isolation, depression and spiritual malaise.

In failing to obtain an identity as a human being, the alienated individual becomes isolated from not only other people but from humanity in general. First of all, he feels different from

and inferior to people around him because he associates perfection to everything except himself. Furthermore, him feeling unloved, unwanted and inferior, he develops an unconventional way of thinking and a different perspective in viewing life considering it futile and empty. The feeling of difference may affect the individual physically, thus he criticizes his body and may see himself as ugly and awkward. Eventually, these negative perceptions of himself serve the feeling of alienation. This trap of estrangement is described by psychologist James Bugental as: "the experience of being imprisoned in glass, seeing the world in which others move but forever blocked from joining them, pantomiming communication but never really speaking with another person" (311).

The negative feeling of difference from others and the desire to be like them motivates the individual to seek redefinition and confirmation of himself. He constantly monitors his own behavior and feelings, avoids acting spontaneously and compare his actions with the idealistic image he has painted for others. But the worst part is that he is likely to never reach help because he will never admit to others or even to himself the tormenting feeling of ugliness, inferiority, the unworthiness of love and affection, and isolation that live with him. The alienated person is dissatisfied with life, as the critic Christopher Lasch concurs he has a: "pervasive feelings of emptiness and depression." (81). He has a great feeling of anxiety, his life is void, vague and meaningless. He suffers from fatigue and weariness, nervous tension and frequent headaches because he executes both physical and mental efforts to reach the illusory goal of perfection he has established for himself.

In his book *On the Meaning of Alienation* (1959), professor of Social Studies Melvin Seeman identifies the meaning of alienation with different alternative meanings. To start with, powerlessness is when the individual experiences a feeling of a lack of control over important aspects of his life; he feels unable to satisfy his ego-esteem needs and achieve self-realisation. He adds that it is: "the expectancy or probability held by the individual that his own behavior

cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes, or reinforcements he seeks"(23). Moreover, he believes that powerlessness is closely tied to meaninglessness because where the former refers to the inability to control the outcomes of the individual's action, the later is the inability to predict the outcomes. So, meaninglessness is:"the view that one lives in an intelligible world might be a prerequisite to expectancies for control; and the unintelligibility of complex affairs is presumably conducive to the development of high expectancies for external control (that is, high powerlessness)"(26) the more powerless the individual feels, the more meaningless the world around him becomes; and this thrusts the individual into insanity.

The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan has developed the concept of The Mirror Stage to highlight the issue of self-discovery, it is based on the idea that human infants from the age of six months when seeing their reflection in the mirror are able to recognize themselves as separate beings from their mothers. He believes that this simple procedure assists the production of the mental representation of the "I", which is a perception of selfhood as an external object (Lacan, 1973). The Mirror Stage constructs the ego which is entirely dependent on an Other, this Other shapes the desires and aims of the individual and establishes his personality. The individual's language, knowledge, and perception of life are pre-established and structured by the parents, the society and religion; he has no choice except to conform and assimilate to what he already has been given. So the instinctual pressures of revolting and disobeying against the norms are unacceptable and this will lead to alienation. As Lacan concurs in his Seminar III:

“... In the beginning, the subject is closer to the form of the other than to the emergence of his own tendency.... The desiring human subject is constructed around a center which is the other insofar as he gives the subject his unity, and the first encounter with the object is with the object as object of the other's desire”  
(Lacan, 39).

Frantz Fanon has been deeply influenced by Karl Marx's theory of alienation, as specified by journalist David Caute in his book *Frantz Fanon* (1970) he writes: "Just as the later Marx roots alienation firmly in the division of labor and in class struggle, the later Fanon locates it equally firmly in the imperialist division of the world into poor countries and rich, exploiters and exploited, rulers and ruled."(32) but he has been interested in the exposition of alienation from a psychological perspective. In his famous book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Fanon explains how colonialism and racism have humiliated the colored people and destroyed their traditions, culture, and dignity. He uses alienation as a basic theme, considering it as a result of various forms of racism and cultural dispossession that eventually will prevent the establishment of an independent and authentic identity. In addition, he defines it as the distance placed between the individual and his values, products and culture; which leads to the loss of self-understanding.

Author Derek Hook in his book *Critical Psychology* (2004) clarifies Fanon's view on alienation as that : "One can then be estranged, from one's 'humanness', from one's own body and sense of self, from a sense even of belonging to one's people, all on the basis of race"(95). For him alienation is the separation of the individual from his individuality, his existence, and most importantly from himself, as exemplified in his own experience to learn the real french instead of creole french to avoid being berated, the same case goes with all the colonized African people as: " being Sinegalese is a part of the essential self of a native of Senegale, and to run away from this is to manifest alienation" (Gabbidon et al, 313)

#### **IV. The Estranged Hero in American Literature:**

The immense scientific innovation has promised the individual a brighter future, a comfortable living, and a peaceful existence, but when the reality sets in, he has realized that

these promises are dark and deceptive. The leaders of the world have used science and technology to develop weapons, to declare wars, and to kill innocent people. Furthermore, a man's happiness and meaning of life are equated with the level of material comfort, instead of feeling free, the modern man appears to be enslaved by his great dependence on scientific equipment in his daily life. They enervate their worthiness and drain their ingenuity. Thus a person is no longer the ruler, rather, he is the one ruled over him. As a result, he is placed in a constant state of doubt, he questions his morals, religion, God, existence, and life. Life for him is in an endless cycle of change, nothing is stable.

Every day new ideas, theories, and inventions appear, hence he finds himself in an interminable condition of conforming and adjusting. As literary theorist Ihab Hassan says: "History in the West seems to be consumed before it is made. The modern age belongs already to the past, the contemporary period yields to the immediate present, and the present in America fades in pursuit of an uncreated future" (4) thus, the modern man is estranged because nothing is certain, values are shattered, the old ways of thinking are dying, and his former beliefs are irrelevant and questionable, as journalist Paul Galloway argues:

The world ceases to be familiar when even the worst reasons fail to be of any help in explaining or ordering it. All of the old explanations--ethical and scientific--have failed where many modern thinkers are concerned, bringing them face to face with an alien universe in which orthodox "systems" can offer at best only a superficial reassurance'(5)

Within the bounds of the twentieth century, the confusing and tragic events of the Second World War, and its expansive resonations has tested individuals to reexamine their support for the value frameworks of their lifestyles. This reassessment has included a surveillance of courageous figures thought to embody the estimations of the state. The attempt to spread hero worship that has emerged around figures like Hitler and Stalin, who has embodied qualities



that are in contrast to all notions of the hero; has led to a serious suspicion towards the definition of the hero. As the historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. notes in his essay, *The Decline of Heroes*: "The Second World War was the climax of an epoch of living dangerously . . . it is no surprise that it precipitated a universal revulsion against greatness."(41) thus, the events of the Second World War have confused people and led to a serious perplexity towards the traits of heroism. And this has served the emergence of anti-heroic sentiments, and the anti-hero protagonist in postwar literature.

In his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1948), literary critic Joseph Campbell proposes that: "the democratic ideal of the self-determining individual, the invention of the power-driven machine, and the development of the scientific method of research, have so transformed human life that the long-inherited, timeless universe of symbols has collapsed"(11) his statement is a clear evidence that any kind of idealistic figures have crumbled, and that includes the decline of the heroic figure in postwar American fiction and the inception of the anti-hero. The postmodern anti-hero views life as absurd and meaningless, he is estranged from life and society, he rejects the culture with its trends, and though he may show indifference to his surroundings, he is affected by it. Literary theorist Ihab Hassan states: "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"(12).

Most characters come with imperfections, dysfunctional behavior and issues, but with an anti-hero, these problems are more recognizable and troublesome, and they sometimes get in the way of forming intimate connections. He can be obnoxious, miserable, funny, or enchanting, but he is profoundly defective. He can indicate little or no remorse for bad behaviors. He is not a role model, either unattractive in character and appearance, or his good physical traits is a wellspring of inconvenience and disdain for him. He is basically a selfish

and bad person who occasionally is good, as critic Leslie Fiedler in her book *In Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960) adds: "modern anti-hero with his petty subsistence level anxieties, his frequent physical imperfections, his embroilment in the grotesque messiness of day-to-day living" (19). A story with an anti-hero may depict how a person cannot easily escape from the past, or how uncertain he is from the future. He can be motivated by self-interest and self-preservation. Although, he can sometimes volunteer to help children, or weaker characters, he can embody unattractive traits and behaviors, such as sexist and racist attitudes, and fierce responses when wronged.

In his book *On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Fiction* (1956), writer Alfred Kazin reveals that the majority of the twentieth century American literature: "rests upon a tradition of enmity to the established order, more significantly a profound alienation from it"(31). The Post-World War II American literature has demonstrated its suspicion of, and antagonism toward the newly established order. The theme of alienation is objectified in characters' emotional conflict as well as in their detestation of social establishments, which are not only oppressive in nature but also ethically ambiguous. Such experiences result from characters having to deal with a reality that belies their true identity.

An estranged hero is a character who is devoid of conventional heroic attributes. Often loaded with paradoxical traits and qualities, an alienated hero resembles real people more than any other type of fictional characters do, because he thinks of society's values as suffocating bounds so he neglects them. He possesses a delicate self-esteem, he can be a rebel in search of freedom or justice, and he often occupies a thin line between being good and bad. But most of the time he is a threat to himself than others. As literary critic Edmund Fuller presents the postmodern hero as: "inadequate, aimless, meaningless, isolated...his uniqueness as person is

denied or suppressed. He inhabits a hostile universe which is the creation of irrational and possibly malignant forces"(8).

To demonstrate the theme of alienation, writers create estranged characters who lives is constant despair and suffers an identity crisis. When they believe that they do not have any identity except the one that is imposed on them by the society, the tragedy of alienation becomes inescapable. In Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), The invisibility of the main character is evoked by society's prejudice, or in the narrator's words a: "matter of the construction of" people's inner "eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality" (7) and by the character's lack of self-awareness. It takes him almost twenty years to realize that he cannot expect other people to treat him as who he really is if he himself is clueless about his true identity.

Many contemporary American writers, from different ethnic groups, have recognized the need to celebrate their ethnic and cultural roots. They have taken responsibility to reclaim their sense of history and identity by voicing the unspoken issues lingering in their closed off communities. Broadly speaking, their characters are alienated from their culture and struggle with an identity crisis. In *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1976), Maxine Hong Kingston portrays a group of characters who emigrated from China to the United States. In their attempts to assimilate into the mainstream of American society, they have rendered their relationships with their own culture doubtful. They feel alienated from the American culture and refer to the non-Chinese neighbors as 'ghosts'.

Perhaps the most extreme form of alienation is best exemplified by the character Meursault in Albert Camus's *The Stranger* (1942), he is presented as an isolated person who interacts with people in an abnormal way. His alienation is self-prescribed because he has chosen to

distance himself from his family and friends, from experiencing human emotions and logic. Throughout the novel, Meursault is struggling to overcome an existentialist crisis. He is awkward, lost, and restless because he is not content in his life. He makes bad decisions and accepts the responsibility of the outcomes, he wastes his life trying to find answers and meanings. There is no difference between life and death, for him, they are the same: absurd and meaningless. He is unable to express neither his emotions nor perform any attempt to externalize his inner turmoil. Even when he learns the news of his mother's death: " Mother deceased. Funeral tomorrow. Faithfully yours' That doesn't mean anything. Maybe it was yesterday" (Camus 1) his tone is very natural and this is a very pronounced and clear evidence of his alienation.

In Kurt Vonnegut's American novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), Billy the protagonist skips to an imaginary outer space to forget about his difficult being. He is totally drifted from society because of his unfortunate WWII experience and traumatized life. He finds that science is the appropriate alternative for his schizophrenic psyche. Billy has witnessed massacres, deaths, bombings, and destructions at a very young age, which have left him emotionless, aimless and estranged. He travels back and forth through time, a situation which prevents him from connecting with anyone, hence his alienation is deep, as critic Coleman concurs: "Billy... does not feel the connections among his experiences; rather he feels disconnections and disorder absolutely" (688).

Estrangement is a philosophical, sentimental phenomenon which redefines human existence in a modern world of nuclear weaponry, technological boom and scientific machinery. This psychological trait extends social dilemma for certain individuality, it deposits humanity into a confusing state of being frequently represented in literature to portray characters of trampled psyche and destabilized identity. Regardless of whether

alienation results from characters' estrangement from their actual selves, or from their cultural legacy, or from society, as a theme it has been effectively used by many contemporary American writers to study the relationship between an individual's true and false identities, between assimilation and cultural heritage, and between the individual and society. For some characters, the feeling of estrangement is brief, they are able to overcome it with time, by working on their psychological stability or getting aid from other people around them. For others, tragedy becomes unavoidable when they fail to accommodate their identity with their identity intended to be, they can not balance between their true self and what the society expects them to be.

### **Chapter Three: Alienation in *the Catcher in the Rye* (1952)**

The third chapter in this work is analytical. It offers a precise and detailed analysis of *The Catcher in the Rye* events focusing on the protagonist's struggle in a postmodern capitalist context. It also covers the feeling of estrangement that has thrived in every aspect of the American society during the 1950s. This chapter highlights Salinger's purpose behind writing this masterpiece that is, portraying the outcomes that conformity and technological advancements abomination may have on individuals. It examines Holden Caulfield's personal grapples with identity besides his social struggles with the American institutions. This last chapter sheds light on the anxiety, insecurity, and estrangement that have surfaced in the society, which later has persuaded the protagonist to start a journey of questioning himself, and the society he lives in.

#### **I. A Contextual Analysis of Alienation in Salinger's *the Catcher in the Rye*:**

*The Catcher in the Rye*, Salinger's artful culmination, recounts the story of the young seventeen-years-old boy, named Holden Caulfield. His story is told from the viewpoint of a personal diary he has composed while staying in a healing center to cure his mental breakdown. Set in the 1950's America, the story gives the reader a distinctive viewpoint of the society at that time. Holden is living and experiencing the social differences and inequality in his society, he describes and condemns a few key qualities of the 1950's culture. Professor of literature Margot A. Henriksen explains that the novel is a portrayal of the loss of innocence that characterizes the American society after WWII: "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. Through his trouble adolescent protagonist, Holden Caulfield, Salinger illustrated the depressing insecurity that ate away at many of the young in Postwar America" (83). And author Mark Hamilton adds: "The *Catcher in the Rye* caught the

insecurities of those born in the atomic age” (45). These insecurities and fears have pushed the individuals to question themselves and search for their identities, but eventually, this quest has expanded to become a general questioning of society, an enlargement that can be clearly manifested through Holden’s experience.

Holden has a perplexed vision about the world, as editors Dromm and Salter states: “At any stage in life, reading Holden’s story can remind us that the world’s confusion. Much of our world doesn’t make sense, even though most people move through it and never bother to question it like Holden. To disregard the world’s confusion requires sometimes being a phony” (xiv). Holden uses his splendid talent of perception as an attempt to find the true intentions of the "phony" people, a word he uses to criticize the culture of consumption that characterizes his society, according to literary critics Carol and Richard Ohmanns (1976) it is: "definitely his strongest and most ethically weighted" (28) term of expressing hostility towards individuals who present themselves as products to be consumed or traded. They hide their true nature by pretending and faking their personalities. His definition of the phony coordinates not only with individuals but with any kind of institution that symbolizes authority and inflicts discipline and structure, like the school, the family, the society, and religion.

Holden's story starts by him being expelled from school due to his poor scholarly performance. Hence, he talks about the corruption of the administration, he calls his previous schools Pencey Prep and Elkton Hills as phony, cruel and full of hypocrites. They are demonstratives of a corrupt capitalist system delineated by prestigious parents and deceitful administrators who join together to regale the innocent boys to embrace their lifestyle and mentality and to enforce the idea of a class-based society. So Holden wants to separate himself from this adult belief that advocates elitist education, as Professor of Media Arts Robert L. Hilliard, states : "Parents who have traditionally had the position and the power to

change schools are those of the middle and upper classes, educated and affluent, who have the time and the resources to participate in the process of education...educators who protect the status quo sooner or later become indifferent and even antagonistic to the needs of the child" (14-15) Parents with their money and influence fund the schools and leave the hard work of raising and caring for their children for the school to do it, and this is what a capitalist lifestyle promotes: money is the solution for everything, it can even replace human relations and emotional affection.

Holden is an example of the youth who rebels against the academic institution because the latter is tied to the capitalist government, and promotes conformity to the system. Holden challenges the society he has been born in, and in a very ironic tone, he repeatedly questions the integrity of the school, the teachers and the lessons he has been taught, he thinks of the educational environment as repressive and suffocating, as professor of literature Joseph Claro notes: "Because of his 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 criticizes Pencey Prep mainly because it is full of rich kids as himself, and it enforces elitist mentality: "... Pencey 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), the richer the kids, the more superficial they become, and this contradicts with his anti-conformity personality: "From the outset, then, the molding by Pencey Prep contrasts dramatically with the nonconformity of Holden" (Claro, 6) that's why he perform badly in all his school activities and gets suspended from several ones.

In the story, Holden meets several characters that hold a special place in his life, but unfortunately, they disappoint him when they try to promote the academic brainwashing. Before he leaves to New York, he goes to say goodbye to his teacher Mr. Spencer, who is



according to Holden a wise adult who stick to his opinion even if he is wrong. He tells Holden that life is a game, and he should play by the rules to win it. While Holden never voices his thoughts, he disagrees stating: "Game, my ass. Some game. If you get on the side where all the hotshots are, then it's a game, all right—I'll admit that. But if you get on the other side, where there aren't any hotshots, then what's a game about it? Nothing. No game." (Salinger, 81) it can be said that he deeply relates to the ones on the other side of the game, the ones who are born in a good social condition, and at the same time, he discloses his antagonism towards the importance of social status.

Another character is his other former teacher Mr. Antolini, who Holden calls: "the best teacher I ever had" (Salinger, 174), he trusts him and considers him a role model who he has no fear in expressing and disclosing his fears and opinions about the world. Holden trusts him completely and enjoys his class and never fails it though he fails in most of his other courses and hates school. So choosing a teacher to confide his secrets and voice his troubles is according to literary critic Peter Seng is ironic stating : "Holden's interview with Antolini is also the high point of irony in *The Catcher in the Rye*: the proffered offer of salvation comes from a teacher whom Holden enormously admires" (207). But this admiration soon falls when Holden after deciding to spend the night at his teacher's house wakes up in the middle of the night to find him stroking his hair, he translates this action as a sexual advance mainly because first he lives in a materialist society where no action is genuine, there is always a selfish motive and everything require a payback as professor of literature Leerom Medovoi (1997) clarifies: "compounding his fear of 'flits' is Holden's sudden anxiety that Antolini's generosity and advice were not genuine after all but calculated as an exchange for sexual favors" (277).

And second through his reaction, it is apparent that Holden has been a victim of sexual abuse before: "Boy, I was shaking like a madman. I was sweating, too. When something

perverty 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) that's why he hates the idea of growing up and being an adult because adults are deceitful, phony and trustless. As a result, Mr Antolini has fallen from a symbol of admiration and trust to be another disappointment and embodiment of the failure of the educational system as literary critic Peter Seng concurs: "The irony built into this denouement is clear: the saving advice that Antolini has given Holden has been rendered useless because the idol who gave it has fallen. Antolini is a shabby adult like all the others" (208). And he justifies his departure from his former school Elkton Hills because it is loaded with phonies, like the headmaster:

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. 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... I can't stand that stuff. (Salinger, 19)

Mr. Haas is a hypocrite and phony because he judges people according to their appearance and lifestyle, and trades his sincerity with appearance. So instead of representing the school in a good way, and give a good example to the boys, he does the complete opposite and reinforce Holden's views about the failure of the academic institution.

In the novel, there are several expressed realities that show the social status of Holden's family in the society. His father is a wealthy lawyer "My father's quite wealthy, though. I don't know how much he makes--he's never discussed that stuff with me--but I imagine quite a lot. He's a corporation lawyer. Those boys really haul it in" (Salinger, 107) he has influential associates and attends social events all the time. Holden when talking about his father, he describes him as a cold man and very strict about education, planning Holden's academic life without asking him what he wants: "My father wants me to go to Yale, or maybe Princeton,

but I swear, I wouldn't go to one of those Ivy League colleges, if I was dying, for God's sake” (Salinger, 85). His brother is a successful scriptwriter in Hollywood, and when he comes to visit, they all go to the cinema and read books. And they all live in a high-class apartment in upper Manhattan. Hence Holden cannot separate his identity neither from his social upbringing, nor from his parents, because they are the first immediate source of information and influence that any child can base his identity on, as scholar Theodore Roszak confirms: “will be born to the faith—to the dress, the diet, the ritual, the beliefs, the authorities. The children will not choose. They will inherit” (157).

Holden's relationship with his parents is barely existent, there's no phone calls and no visits, they seem to be superficial people who care only about their appearance and position in the society, that is why at the very beginning of the novel he states that: " 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), he shares a boring relationship with them, and he always tries to create an identity separate from theirs but he fails. In the center of the story he returns to his home because he experiences a familial void, he has an urgent need to see his sister but he is terrified of meeting his parents because they do not know yet that he is expelled from school. When he gets home, he finds out that they are attending a charity event, leaving his young sister with a nanny, a typical rich parents behavior. Nonetheless, he checks the clock every now and then, and this indicates that even with their absence, they are still controlling him As author Jack Salzman clarifies:

Holden's anxiety, then, is a specifically contemporary kind. Those adults who should serve as moral tutors and nurturers are neither wholly absent nor fully present...Yet, however shadowy these adult figures may be, they are as controlling of Holden as is the impersonal, elusive authority which, he knows, ultimately determines the values of his home (89)

In the story, Holden deals with characters of similar calamity, they suffer from the consequences of the unfairness of social classes. He remembers his roommate at his former school Elkton Hills named Dick Slagle, who has very cheap suitcases and has used to put them under the bed instead of the rack so nobody could see them next to Holden's, an act that depresses Holden. Hence, he shows his disdain about the financial difference that frames his and his friend's awareness. His attention encourages him to find a way to put an end to this distinction, though it is a hard task to end an economic difference, for him, his acknowledgment is a starting point:

But it was a funny thing. 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. But here's what he did. The day after I put mine under my bed, he took them out and put them back on the rack. The reason he did it, it took me a while to find out, was because he wanted people to think my bags were his. He really did. He was a very funny guy, that way. He was always saying snotty things about them, my suitcases, for instance. He kept saying they were too new and bourgeois (Salinger, 129-130)

Holden is aware of the social clash that may exist in such a capitalist society, hence after this experience, and although they share a mutual understanding, both of them realize that this situation is impossible to be overcome. Dick keeps referring to Holden belongings as "bourgeois", he starts using it in an ironical and funny way, but then it becomes a manifestation of his own resentment towards the class difference between them. As literary critics, Richard and Carol Ohmann brilliantly observe: "shame over his suitcases is one thing. But worse are the contradictory feelings: he hates the class injustice ... yet at the same time, he longs to be on the right side of the barrier, to benefit from class antagonism by having

others think he owns the Mark Cross suitcases" (31). Both of them tried to deny this difference, but they have failed and accepted their social status, this decision affects Holden:

The thing is, it's really hard to be roommates with people if your suitcases are much better than theirs.... You think they don't give a damn whose suitcases are better, but they do. They really do. It's one of the reasons why I roomed with a stupid bastard like Stradlater. At least his suitcases were as good as mine (Salinger, 130).

Holden's situation requires him to live a certain lifestyle and interacts with people of the same social status as him, regardless of his personal preferences. This also clarifies the idea that he is crestfallen at witnessing other people denied from enjoying the prerogatives that he has.

Holden correlates every type of institution with hypocrisy and phoniness, like the family institution, the educational institution and finally the religious one. Religion like family and education is created by adults, and from Holden's previous experience with both, it can be concluded that he distrust religion because it places for him a set of rules and standards that he must follow in his life, without questioning its legitimacy. Hence as an act of rebellion, he has chosen the non-conformist path and has associated himself with atheism: "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), he doesn't hate religion itself, rather the ways it tries to control his life and standardize it. Because with so many rules and do's and don't's, it suppresses the individuality and personal freedom of a person.

However, through his tale it can be noticed that Holden doesn't entirely despise religion, he just hates when people use it as a mean to justify a certain behavior or an action. To illustrate, when an old former student of Pency Prep named Ossenburger came to visit the school, he makes a speech at the chapel and gives the students advice and spiritual guidance, but

according to Holden, he is too phony. Because he donates money to the school and the later names a dormitory wing after him. So his donation is not an honorable act, rather a phony one because it has been met with an exchange. Ossenburger talks about Jesus all the time and expresses how religion is his source of both solace and success, as Ohmann argues: "claims legitimacy for his money, his Cadillac, his business ethics, his eminence and class privilege, by enlisting religion on his side" (29). In addition, he targets his distrust towards the preachers and monks who are all "stupid bastards" (Salinger, 50) and phonies because "they all have these Holy Joe voices when they start giving their sermons. God, I hate that. I don't see why the hell they can't talk in their natural voice. They sound so phony when they talk" (Salinger, 100), he neither like nor believe them because they are actors for the benefit of controlling and suppressing the individuality and freedom of expression of people in the name of God.

However, he is in a state of confusion about the role of religion in people's life, when he gives the last remaining of his money as a donation to the two nuns in New York, this shows that he believe in their true cause of helping poor people, and in religion itself, because the two nuns are sincere only because they have not asked if he is a Catholic or not, they didn't try to force some kind of personal agenda on him, only have thanked him for the money and left as scholar Louis Filler states: "This is the question Holden asks of everyone. Its force is rhetorical. Holden wants a guarantee of the purity of human motive"(95). He is suspicious about the adults who control the religious institution, and this is another addition to his psychological turmoil.

The protagonist improvises certain free choices in the story to show personal potential, he decides to spend a short time in New York alone, a city that is known as a major symbol of consumer culture: "In New York, boy, money really talks – I'm not kidding" (Salinger, 84) his decision to go there is purposeless and aimless, he is just feeling a kind of void that encourages him to move as he states in the beginning of his narration: "I don't even know

what I was running for--I guess I just felt like it" (Salinger, 5). Upon his arrival there, Holden reserves a room in a cheap hotel, then heads to the Lavender Room, a high class club where he spends the night entertaining three tourist women, who he finds them annoying and incapable of making a real conversation, rather they are waiting for some celebrity to come, and then they are going to attend the first show at Radio City Music Hall, simply they are an example of the shallow adult consumers of the entertainment industry.

In addition, he notices another character named Ernie, who plays the piano in the restaurant not because he loves to, rather satisfy an audience : "morons" who "always clap for the wrong things" (Salinger, 101) he exchanges his talent and art for money, because he is poor and needs to make a living, an act which both frustrates and arises Holden's sympathy: "In a funny way, though, I felt sort of sorry for him when he was finished. I don't even think he knows anymore when he's playing right or not. It isn't all his fault. I partly blame all those dopes that clap their heads off – they'd foul up anybody if you gave them a chance" (Salinger, 102). That is to say, Holden is aware that he is living in a consumer society that turns everything into a commodity, even art. But at the same time, he displays sympathy towards those he calls phony, he tries to justify their behavior by putting the blame on the demands and requirements of the capitalist society.

Holden's adversarial outlook towards divergence between the rich and the poor is clearly exemplified when he meets the two nuns, who their suitcases are cheap and old-looking, he uncovers his antagonism towards the results of the unequal distribution of wealth in his society stating: "I hate it when somebody has cheap suitcases. It sounds terrible to say it, but I can even get to hate somebody, just looking at them, if they have cheap suitcases with them" (Salinger, 129) this encounter has also given him an insight on many issues like the sense of integrity and dedication of people towards their works because he has been very impressed and touched by their efforts to gather donations.

Whereas in the case of women from his social class, he criticizes them for being hypocrites like his friend Sally Hayes' mother. She is constantly aware of her dress and appearance while performing her charitable duties: "And old Sally Hayes's mother. Jesus Christ. The only way she could go around with a basket collecting dough would be if everybody kissed her ass for her when they made a contribution" (Salinger, 136). She likes to brag about her efforts and if she gets disregarded "She'd get bored. She'd hand in her basket and then go someplace swanky for lunch" (Salinger, 136). This is what frustrates Holden and shows his sympathetic attitude toward the disadvantaged individuals like the nuns: "That's what I liked about those nuns. You could tell, for one thing, that they never went anywhere swanky for lunch. It made me so damn sad when I thought about it...." (Salinger, 136), as Ohmann asserts: "at the root of Holden's sadness are lives confined by poverty, the loss of human connectedness, the power of feelings distorted by class to overcome natural bonds of affinity and friendship" (32).

After this eventful tale, Holden realizes that only a small group of people are still pure and safe from the manipulation of the consumer society of the adult world, like the nuns, his young siblings Allie and Phoebe, his friend Jane Gallagher and others who: "share an innocence of commodification, whether financial, symbolic, or sexual. Immaturity represents a preoccupied willingness to interact with people honestly, and for reasons other than market imperatives" (Medovoi, 278). And this is one of the reasons why he wants to be a catcher in the rye, so he can save those who are innocent and uncorrupted from falling off the crazy cliff to the harsh reality of commodity and consumerism. He fears that they are going to exchange their authenticity as human beings with a severe competition with others in attempting to satisfy the unfulfilled thirst to own and to mirror the authoritative adults' requirements. This idea can be illustrated in the case of his brother D.B, who sacrificed his talent as a good writer by prostituting himself and writing scripts in Hollywood. In contrast to Allie's writings on the



baseball glove and Phoebe's stories which are pure and faultless : "In Holden's imagination, Allie and Phoebe occupy an innocent, non-consumer paradise uncorrupted by those 'phonies' who allow the movies, advertising, and corporate values to define and commodify their identities" (Robinson, 73).

In short, his tale has been very educating about life and culture of the capitalist society, and his questioning of the integrity of the social conventions and his own identity have given the reader a very illuminating image about the corruption and the unfairness of the post-WWII American system. It sheds the light on the confusing state of the youth who are searching for authenticity and integrity, and their attempts to separate themselves from their parents. Holden is seeking for an honest human connection, he envisions one that can still stand without the labels and crutches like society class and money. He directs his resentment his own wealth: "Goddam money. It always ends up making you blue as hell" (Salinger, 135) because it stands as an obstacle in the way of forming effortless, natural and refreshing relationships. Nevertheless, towards the end, he realizes that being with those people and situations is inescapable, because it is a predetermined fate, and this contributes strongly to his depression.

## **II. Holden's Estrangement from Society**

Holden spends most of the novel venturing around New York, seeking for human connection and an approach to escape his emotions. Nonetheless, he never genuinely discovers it because of his need to estrange himself for self-protection thus nobody can leave or hurt him like his sibling who through his death left a terrible void. He rationalizes, calling people phonies as an approach to push them away and a reason to convince himself that he is better being alone. Subsequently, Holden is truly isolated without anybody he can genuinely

associate with other than his sister, who comprehends Holden's dread of abandonment because she, also confronted her sibling's passing with Holden.

Throughout the story, the plot itself is exceptionally straightforward. What truly makes the book a masterpiece, is the way Salinger has disclosed to Holden's story: he is a young person in a struggle. He has been under stress for a while and does not know how to manage such feelings and unusual events. The way he conveys himself, the vocabulary decisions which is considered to be very hostile for that time, in fact, have turned him from an ordinary character to a very interesting one. The first manifestation of Holden's alienation in the novel is when he is on top of Thompson Hill watching the football game rather than being with his friends in the field: "Anyway, it was the Saturday of the football game... I was standing the way the hellfire up on top of Thomsen Hill. ... .. You could see the entire field from that point and you could see the two groups bashing each other everywhere. ... You could hear them all hollering..." (Salinger, 2)

For him, everybody is superficial and phony, he at times acts as being phony too but he justifies his behavior by claiming that when he is embedded in such society and interact with phony people oblige him to act like them. Holden is estranged from everything and everyone around him, he has no clue about what to do, where to go and who to interact with. He is deeply affected by the hypocrisy and the fraud of the world: " According to the Freudian theory, the alienated individual who lives in a mass society will inevitably feel lost and frustrated" (Churchich, 277). Holden's unsuccessful attempts at being heard and comprehended have led him to suffer a severe depression, which places him in a mental institution.

Holden's obsession with protecting innocence is a part of his identity crisis. He is trapped in a state between being a child and an adult, though physically he looks mature

enough with his tall figure and gray hair, emotionally he is immature and susceptible to anxiety. He expresses his frustration about this confusing situation stating: " It's really ironical because I'm six foot two and a half and I have gray hair... And yet I still act sometimes like I was only about twelve" (Salinger, 9) he cannot commit to neither childhood nor adulthood. When he tries to act as an adult he fails miserably, he smokes a lot and drinks alcohol to shows that he is a grown up, but simultaneously he keeps commenting on how bad those habits are and that it will cause him an early death. Upon his stay in the hotel, he tries to lose his virginity by having sex with a prostitute, but he refuses to do anything with her except talking. He realizes that though she appears to be young, he can't save her and protect her innocence because she has already fallen from the cliff. He is bound to an emotional and moral code, which states that he can not have casual sex with anyone unless there is love involved. So he maintains his own virtue and grants her a sense of respect and value by appreciating her mind instead of using her body.

All through the novel, Holden avoids contact with people labeling them as "phonies", and using it as an excuse to avoid getting close to them. He feels rejected from and exploited by his general surroundings, and like all teenagers feels alienated. When he chooses to leave Pencey early, his last insult to his fellow students demonstrates that Holden trusts himself to be superior, honorable, and even more refined from them, as professor of American studies Martin Halliwell comments: "He [Holden] quickly establishes himself as an outcast, swift to ridicule the phoniness of the adult world and the hypocrisy that he detects hidden in their empty promise to value individuality... " (66) yet these beliefs push him away and encourage him to be isolated.

As he exhibits at the Museum of Natural History, Holden likes the world to be quiet and frozen, predictable and constant. But in reality this is not the case, so he refuses to make physical and emotional connections like anyone of his age because these actions represent

adulthood with all its struggle, change, and complexity. "The first thing I did when I got off at Penn Station, I went into this phone booth. I felt like giving somebody a buzz...but as soon as I was inside, I couldn't think of anybody to call up" (Salinger, 53) this quote shows that Holden wants to call somebody, however, he thinks of different reasons why he shouldn't, this is nothing but a sign of him distancing himself. For him both life and people are unpredictable, they constrain him to evaluate his self-worth and self-confidence. Since his brother Allie's death, Holden for some unknown reason is unable to deal with this complexity, so he chooses to be alone and fears to be close to anyone. Despite the fact that people around him make attempts to be close to him, he refuses to let his guard down and chooses to surrender himself with a skeptical defensive layer. But he keeps looking for new connections and retreating to himself when he achieves it.

Holden's depression, a sign of his estrangement issue, is a main element in the novel. The majority of his story portrays his search for companionship as he moves from one meaningless experience to the next. However, while both his manners and action shows his loneliness, Holden repeatedly evades from trying to understand why he is acting the way he does. Since Holden relies on upon his isolation to safeguard his separation from the world and to keep up a level of self-insurance, he frequently surrenders his own particular endeavors to end his alienation. For instance, when he meets his former friend Carl Luce and repeatedly tries to make him talk about his sexual experiences like he used to do when they were in school, but Carl refuses and changes the subject several times because he is more mature now, he tells Holden to grow up or seek some psychological help and leaves. Similarly, his date with Sally Hayes is dreadful because of Holden's inconsiderate manners, he classifies her as a classic phony which makes her burst into tears and leaves him. His calls to Jane Gallagher are prematurely ended for the same reason: to secure his valuable and delicate feeling of independence. He is capable of making these relationships work, but his fear of being

attached to them solidifies his belief that he is better being alone. So, his estrangement is used to secure himself.

As the novel advances, it can be noticed that Holden wears a red hunting hat to promote his uniqueness, he uses his isolation as evidence that he is superior to every other person around him and accordingly above communicating with them, according to philosopher Erich Fromm: "the alienated individual can experience himself as a unique individual entity with its particularity and uniqueness only if he breaks away from the influences of the society" (Sahu, 22). While the fact is communicating with other people confuses him so his sense of superiority is a mean of self-protection. The hat is also an indication of his independence and separation from the world. It demonstrates that he is unique and different from his surroundings. Yet he is self-conscious about the hat like he always specifies the time when he is wearing it and hide it when he is around people he knows. It manifests the main conflict of the book: his need for both distance and friendship. When his friend Ackley comment on the hat as a deer shooting hat, Holden gets mad stating: "Like hell it is." I took it off and looked at it. I sort of closed one eye, like I was taking aim at it. "This is a people shooting hat," I said. "I shoot people in this hat." (Salinger, 19) this quote shows that Holden won't shoot people while wearing the hat, it is just a mean to express his dissatisfaction towards them.

*The Catcher in the Rye* as critic Erika Doss states: "depicted the alienation of an entire generation" (338), his alienation and identity crisis is caused by his attempt to delay adulting, his refusal to grow up is mainly caused by correlating phonines with adulthood, and that is the main reason behind his anxiety and estrangement. He never communicates his own feelings straightforwardly, nor does he endeavor to find the reason of his inconveniences. Holden needs human contact, care, and love, however, his defensive attitude prevents him from achieving these connections. He is trapped in a cycle of a self-destructive behavior, his fear of making human connections leads to his estrangement, which depresses him and places him in

very uncomfortable and terrible experiences. When Holden says his famous statement "Don't ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody." (Salinger, 214) This is a manifestation of his self-protective attitude. Because two important people in his life are gone, his young brother Allie is dead and his older brother D.B has left to live in California. So, with this statement, he implies that once you draw near to someone and rely on them for providing emotional support, you can deeply miss them because they are able to leave you anytime. Hence they are unreliable.

Estrangement is both the headspring of Holden's strength and issues. For instance, his depression pushes him into his date with Sally Hayes, yet his need to be alone makes him push her away. Thus, he aches for the important relation he once had with Jane Gallagher, however, he is excessively panicked, making it impossible to reach her. He relies on his distance, however it wrecks him, as sociologist Lewis Feuer declares that: "Alienation is used to convey the emotional tone which accompanies any behavior in which the person is compelled to act self-destructively" (I xiii). When he thinks about the future, he says that he wants to have a job, but one where nobody knows him so he doesn't have to talk to anyone. For him both life and people are unpredictable, they constrain him to evaluate his self-worth and self-confidence. Despite the fact that people around him make attempts to be close to him, he refuses to let his guard down and chooses to surround himself with a skeptical defensive armor. But he keeps looking for new connections and retreating to himself when he achieves it.

Holden wants to save the children from losing their innocence, mainly due to Allie's death which has contributed greatly to Holden's crisis, it has encouraged him to believe that he can preserve innocence. He adopts a self-destructive behavior to try to cope with this crisis: " 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" (Salinger, 39). This passage shows that Holden doesn't care about breaking his

own fist, rather he wishes he could break down the whole garage, which belongs to his family, that is to say, he is going to destroy his parents' shelter, the one that has failed to protect his brother. Hence he tries to keep Allie's memory alive by talking to him whenever he feels depressed: "Boy, I felt miserable. I felt so depressed, you can't imagine. What I did, I started talking, sort of out loud, to Allie. I do that sometimes when I get very depressed" (Salinger, 98) and by talking to him he is challenging death as if saying that though he can't see his brother, he is going to keep acting as he is still alive. Holden correlates all his problems and troubles to Allie's death because according to him death means adulthood, an actual determinant of childhood. Growing up and maturing means death for all children, that sparks his desire to protect his and other children's childhood at all costs.

So Phoebe is his redemption, she is his second chance to protect innocence, she is alive and growing up each day so her chance of losing her innocence is inevitable. When he looks at Phoebe he remembers Allie because they both have red hair, for him she is: "emblem of unattainable childhood beauty" (Bryan, 1066) he wishes that she will remain the same, and express this idea several times in the story, especially when he visits the museum, a place where everything is frozen and never change:

I kept thinking about old Phoebe going to that museum on Saturdays the way I used to. I thought how she'd see the same stuff I used to see, and how she'd be different every time she saw it... 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, 122)

he wants to protect her no matter what as literary critic Harold Bloom clarifies that Phoebe manifests a: "time of innocence which he [Holden] would like to recapture or perpetuate" (32).

The "protector of children" (Bloom, 185) is Phoebe's word equivalent in Greek, her existence in Holden's life is an embodiment of innocence. But what is confusing is that although she is only ten years old, she performs some behaviours and actions that are adult like, and utters wise words that are beyond her age, she gives him her Christmas money when he needs it, she scolds him for his bad choices in life and takes the blame when their mother enters her bedroom and smells cigarettes. At this point Holden comes to the realization that their roles are reversed, while he is attempting to resist growing up and wanting to shield her from the adult world, she indeed wants to grow up, it is human nature whether he likes it or not, as author Raychel Haugrud Reiff comments on this roles reversal: "Now, instead of saving the world by protecting the children, Holden wants to reject the world and shut himself off from evil by becoming a 'deaf-mute' in the West. It is Phoebe who rescues him from this total withdrawal" (7).

Holden's sensitivity has provoked his natural instinct to shield children's innocence from the delinquency of the adult world. As a way to do that, he visualizes himself in a field of rye where thousands of children are playing there, while he is standing on a cliff to catch any child if he falls from it. The children are pure and untouched by the corruption of the adult world, and Holden as a lifeguard, saves them by preserving their innocence, that is to say, he will prevent them from growing up and adulting. His inspiration to be the catcher in the rye is based on a poem by Robert Burns, so even though Phoebe corrects him that : "it's' if a body meet a body coming through the rye' "(Salinger, 224) not the catcher in the rye, Holden cling to this dreamlike profession and to shelter children's virtue from the obscenity of the adulthood, as psychoanalyst Anthony Storr claims that individuals:" often have daydreams which are removed from reality, which reflect their isolation and alienation"(51). What sparks interest in his tale, is him asking the taxi drivers about where do the ducks go in the winter



when the lagoon is frozen, unfortunately, no one seems to care about the ducks. So, he concludes that the Ducks are like the children, no one seems to care about them except him.

At the end of the novel, Holden realizes that he can not save the children from growing up, rather he has to let them be, he can not be the catcher under the cliff, he takes Phoebe to ride the carousel and says:

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

It is here that he believes that he has to let her grow up, he can not forcefully prevent her progress instead of trapping her in her childhood. He accepts this reality together with accepting Allie's death and his own maturity, this moment is a chance for him according to literary critics Keith Dromm and Heather Salter: "to empty [his mind] of any false hopes of the inauthentic" and innovate his "quest for what is real, genuine, valuable, and beautiful" (51)

All these events and mental disturbance have tired him. Towards the end, Holden feels vulnerable and so strained by overthinking and worrying about all the children, his life, Phoebe, his parents and the future. All this leads to him to suffer a nervous breakdown, as author Clinton W. Towbridge comments: "the catcher, in fact, wants to be caught, the savior saved"(25). His illness has facilitated his transition from childhood to adulthood, though he still fires critical remarks towards society, he shows a more adapting and acceptable attitude. He realizes that he can not change the world and people in it, but he can be more acceptable, he has to compromise his way in life. The only indication about his future is that he is going

to start in a new school in the fall, but he leaves the readers with an open-ending, wondering about what is going to happen next, a question without an answer till today.

In his book *Celebrity*, professor Chris Rojek states: "Holden Caulfield, the protagonist in *The Catcher in the Rye* is the classic fictional anti-hero of postwar literature"(160), Holden lacks the heroic qualities like bravery, proactive decisiveness, and a clear straight goal to be achieved at the end of his story. Holden often expresses his desire to be a hero and act like one, but when a certain situation occurs and requires him to take an immediate decision, he retreats and avoids any kind of interaction. Throughout his story, Holden thinks bigger than himself and demonstrates his inclination to be courageous and noble, but his passivity prevents him from fulfilling his heroic dreams. Nevertheless, these negative attributes haven't prevented him from possessing good ones. He is kind-hearted, generous and sensitive, he is highly empathetic and shows compassion to the poor, the sick, the needy and the innocent people he encounters during his journey. He worries about his parents, his ex-girlfriend Jane, and most importantly he carries the burden of worrying about all the children.

Holden is a postmodern anti-hero who estranges himself from the world around him to escape to illusions and face non-realizable dreams. His innocence coupled with his angst have nourished his illusive dream to be the catcher in the rye and to protect innocence, which is, in fact, a naive and childish thing to be done. He is placed in this hopeless situation because of the American capitalist society at that time. *The Catcher in the Rye (1951)* can be considered an honest account of the capitalist society of the postwar America. Through Salinger's novel, the reader can understand the traumatized states of people who have lived in that period. He depicts their alienation and frustration towards their absurd reality.

## Conclusion

The American context of the 1950s is one of the paradoxical traits that are intended to provide the American subject with a considerable material well-being, in return for smashing his individuality and obliging him to conform. After the economic boom and the technological development that have characterized the United States after the Second World War, the affluent society has emerged requiring people to conform and adopt the culture of consumerism. While the majority have integrated willingly, others have been skeptical about the governmental institutions' actions and have voiced their mistrust towards it by not conforming. This period is a Cold War time which has placed the American citizens in a state of paranoia about their society, and mistrust and uncertainty about their future.

This study stresses the repercussions that the postmodern American individual may face within a society which does not care about the value of human connections. It tackles his existentialist crisis, depression, and alienation. These sordid endeavors and frightful experiences are best recorded in the American fiction. In a literature which delineates the historical, social and cultural atmosphere of the fifties. It reflects the troubled psyche of the individuals and describes their state of being treated as requisite objects in a governmental ruinous scheme to win a cold war not only to defeat the enemy but to destroy humanity in general. The American author J.D Salinger discusses the postwar realities based on his own experiences. He provides an enlightening depiction about the psychological outcomes of living in a postwar, capitalist and affluent society, by divulging the viewpoint of the ordinary people, in particular, the ones who have gone with the flow.

Salinger's work *The Catcher in the Rye* is an expressive depiction of serious matters of the fifties. He suggests that the society is administrated by unfair rules conducted by corrupt and hypocrite people in the protagonist's terms. His work relies immensely on sarcastic comments

and harsh condemnation of the society. The author's inventiveness is an intelligible sign of his convictions about the uncertainty of the present and the future. He provides the reader and the character with new challenging status that lead them to question the important elements of life like family, religion and most importantly their identities.

In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Salinger succeeds in capturing the required perception about the struggles in postwar America. His novel recounts the protagonist's pursuit of human relations and genuine integrity of people within a universal calamity. As a sensitive adolescent hero, Holden Caulfield manifest the spiritual bankrupt generation in a time of technological advancements and global instability. He undergoes hard experiences that intensify his belief that the world is a phony place, one which he has no desire to be a part of it. Hence, he isolates himself and uses his estrangement as a self-protection to shield his innocence. After the novel's publication, it has become a part of young adult literature. Youth all around the world have considered Holden as their hero because he voices their angst and frustration against a society that wants to enforce them to follow their parents' footprints. He embodies the struggle of an entire youth generation because he is able to connect with them on a deep spiritual level.

*The Catcher in the Rye's* protagonist considers himself the only sane person in a world full walking dead. Though he may show a hard and careless exterior, he fires insults and swears the whole time, but deep down he is a very fragile character who is unable to overcome his brother's death, his depression, and his identity crisis. He reacts to his inability to adjust to the society standards by searching for innocence and beauty reflected in people's souls. He challenges the adult world and appoints himself as the protector of innocence by attempting to prevent children from growing up. He wants to be a catcher in a field of rye full of children, to shelter them from falling from a dangerous cliff into the hell of adulthood.

Alienation is a really vague concept which embraces different aspects to define a certain individualistic character as a challenged, troubled, and confused entity that might be outcast from the entire world. Holden is an alienated individual, he despises the world around him and finds difficulty relying on and confiding his troubles to anyone. So he estranges himself, he keeps his distance and avoids getting close to anyone. Holden has been lonely, depressed and confused. He has understood alienation, lived it, then tried in different ways to overcome it simply to have a good life. For him, children are the only innocent people, so he wants to shield their innocence. Though he suffers a nervous breakdown to come to this realization at the end of his story, he believes that he neither can protect them and prevent them from growing up nor can he withhold his own maturity. So, alienation is an inevitable state of being that is dictated by a certain paranoid socio-historical situation, it disappoints humans and distances them from different realities.

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## ABSTRACT

This work studies the essence of Alienation in a postwar context of high technological development and extreme social mobility of the 1950s in the American community, to show that estranged heroes are typical to narratives of such period. They are individuals of a troubled psyche, traumatized individuality, and estranged existence. This study takes J.D Salinger's masterpiece *The Catcher in the Rye* (1952) as a central literary body that elucidates the work's purpose. Salinger utilizes a very simple yet eventful plot to deliver a sincere depiction of society and its contribution in the people's developmental estrangement. In his novel *the Catcher in the Rye* he tells the story of a depressed teenager, Holden Caulfield, who suffers from psychological troubles and illusions because he cannot fit in a phony society. So he alienates himself from society and people around him, and clings to his innocent traits to shield himself from entering the adult world with its complexity and problems. Salinger presents this character to portray the unsatisfied portion of people, who hold anti-establishment sentiments towards their general surrounding. They are so overwhelmed by how materialistic life has become after the war, so they crave the pure human relations and search for themselves in an absurd reality.

## Résumé

Cette étude examine l'essence de l'aliénation à la fois comme un problème psychologique et social dans un contexte de développement technologique élevé et d'une mobilité extrême dans les années 1950 dans la société américaine en prenant le chef-d'œuvre de J.D Salinger *L'Attrape-cœurs* (*The Catcher in the Rye* 1952) (Traduit par Jean-Baptiste Rossi) en tant que corps littéraire central. Qui élucide le but du travail. Il souligne un point important selon lequel les héros éloignés sont typiques des récits à une telle période, ils sont des individus d'une psyché troublée, d'une individualité traumatisée et d'une existence éloignée. Salinger utilise un complot très simple mais mouvementé pour offrir une représentation sincère de la société et sa contribution à l'aliénation croissante des gens. Dans son roman *L'Attrape-cœurs* (*The Catcher in the Rye* 1952) qui raconte l'histoire d'un adolescent déprimé, Holden Caulfield, qui souffre de troubles psychologiques et d'illusions parce qu'il ne peut pas entrer dans une société fautive. Il s'aliène ainsi de la société et des personnes qui l'entourent, et s'accroche à ses traits innocents pour se protéger d'entrer dans le monde adulte avec sa complexité et ses problèmes. Salinger présente ce personnage pour représenter la partie insatisfaite des personnes, qui ont des sentiments anti-établis envers leurs environnements généraux. Ils sont tellement débordés de la manière dont la vie matérialiste est devenue après la guerre, ils craignent les rapports humains purs et les cherchent dans une réalité absurde.



## ملخص

ان هذه الدراسة تفحص ماهية الانعزالية باعتبارها قضية نفسية و اجتماعية في فترة ما بعد الحرب و التي تميزت بالتطور التكنولوجي العالي, الرفاهية و الثراء في خمسينيات المجتمع الامريكي من خلال اخذ رواية ج. د. سالينجر الحارس في حقل الشوفان (*The Catcher in the Rye* 1952) (تمت ترجمة العنوان من طرف الاديب الاردني غالب هلسا) كعمل ادبي مركزي يوضح الغرض من هذه الدراسة. ان هذا العمل يسلط الضوء على نقطة مهمة و هي ان الابطال الانعزاليين هم ابطال نمودجيون لروايات هذه الفترة, فهم يعانون من نفسية مضطربة و فردية مصدومة و كيان منعزل . يستخدم سالينجر قصة بسيطة و غنية بالاحداث ليقدم صورة صادقة عن المجتمع و مساهمته في اغتراب الناس المتزايد . رواية الحارس في حقل الشوفان تحكي قصة المراهق المتشاءم هولدن كولفيلد الذي يعاني من مشاكل نفسية و اوهام لانه لا يمكنه ان ينتمي الى مجتمع زائف لذلك يعزل نفسه عن المجتمع و الناس من حوله و يتشبث بسماته البريئة لحماية نفسه من دخول عالم البالغين بتعقيداته و مشاكله . سالينجر يعرض هذه الشخصية ليصف الفئة المنزعجة من الناس . اللذين يكونون مشاعر معادية و رافضة لوضعهم السياسي و الاجتماعي, فهم يشعرون بالقهر تجاه الحياة التي اصبحت مادية بعد الحرب لذلك يتوقون الى العلاقات الانسانية النقية و يبحثون عن انفسهم في واقع سخيف .