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## Holden's Traumatic State Vs. The Sublimation Of The Real A Lacanian Discourse Analysis On Salinger's The Catcher In The Rye

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### Abstract

J.D. Salinger as a modern American novelist displays the issues of lack of identity, distress, and alienation as the trauma of modern man. He exposes the main character, suffering from the psychic failure, in a repeated and vain cycle of seeking the other as a lost part. The story of the novel, *The Catcher in The Rye*, leads to a journey of self-discovery, which recalls Lacan's "real" state. When Salinger's main character ignores the symbolic order for moments, the real state occurs to him, which accompanies pain in pleasure or Lacanian jouissance. The conflict between symbolic order as pre-defined conventional codes and real order as "being in itself", beyond the realm of appearance and images, results in character's nervous breakdown and trauma though the very state leads to experience of sublime form of real for moments. Salinger's main character feels a temporary state of satisfaction and stability through the sublimation of the real that makes him generate some novel perspectives to evolve the conventional standards. Although staying in each Lacan's orders of human psyche is not constant forever and the character's stability cannot be fixed, experience of the real state generates the moments for perception of sublimity.

**Key Words:** Trauma, Symbolic Order, Real Order, Jouissance, Sublimation, Desire.

### Introduction

J.D Salinger has received too much popularity and attention by many critics, for his most successful book, *Catcher in the Rye*, which was published in the year 1951. During the World War the II, and during the 1960's Salinger catches the critics attention through his writings against the direction of the society to show how it is corrupted, and how it leads to depression and alienation through removing true selfhood from the definition of identity (Hadjabi 2). Salinger's height of popularity rests primarily on one hero, Holden Caulfield, and one book, *The Catcher in the Rye*. However, if one travels deep down through Salinger's work, he would come to the truth behind the scene. His works embody characters whose psyche needs adjustment and alteration while they are considered as neurotic misfits (French 104).

This article scrutinizes the story *Catcher in the Rye* and the main character, Holden Caulfield, concerning the effects of the trauma made by the conflict between conventional social standards through symbolic order and the real through character's attempt and reaction towards self-discovery. Nervous breakdown and trauma of Holden as the main character according to Lacanian discourse deal with his deep experience of lack and alienation which lead him to a created world of fantasy and real beyond images and appearances; the experience of jouissance or a form of the real beside his psychic failure seems more challenging for Holden comparing other Salinger's characters, it is something that marks temporality more in case of his perception or transformation.

Death drive as one of the elements of the real order is completely obvious in case of Holden. This article examines the death drive as the constant desire in the subject to break through the pleasure principle toward the thing and a certain excess to jouissance. It is the path toward death. Holden's confrontation with the concept of eternity as a mere illusion exposes they will not last forever, and this is the experience of temporality and feeling death. Satisfaction for Holden equals death; and death is attainment for him. This is the death that drives him all in his daily life. Such experiences are seen in Salinger's character, Holden, which are going to be discussed in detail.

Lacan introduces two moments of alienation as inevitable events of each subject; first, through the person's recognition or, in fact, misrecognition of itself in the other during the mirror stage and, second, through the subject's concurrence with the symbolic and language (Homer 73). And this is exactly the sense of alienation in the main character which leads him to the traumatic state of separation. Separation is connected to desire and lack, and

symbolically describes the process through which the child differentiates itself from the mother as the other. Separation in main character of the novel occurs in the realm of desire and involves the character's experience and perception beyond the structure, language, and the Other (Homer 72). Since desire refers to something beyond basic human needs that cannot be satisfied, it is in unavoidable relation to lack; in other words, desire is the indicator of something that is lacking in the subject. Therefore, considering Lacan's definitions, the lack traced in the main character is related to the reality consisting symbols and the process of signification. As a matter of fact, reality is linked with the symbolic order or social reality. On the other hand, the real is the unknown that exists at the limit of this socio-symbolic space and is in endless tension with it. Salinger's character is in a constant tension and challenge with the real from which he experiences the perception that is pre-symbolic and cannot be symbolized at all. He recognizes that the real exists because he experiences it and it enters discourse as a sign, but the place from which it originates is beyond symbolization. Hence, the real, as Lacan declares, is beyond an object, works unconsciously, is repressed, and interferes symbolic reality in the form of need (Homer 82-3). That is why the real is associated with the concept of trauma. For Salinger's main character, Holden, however, a trauma is not necessarily something that occurs to him in reality, but a psychical event. Psychic trauma originates from the conflict between an external stimulus and the subject's inability to comprehend and control these excitations. This event then leaves a psychological mark in the character's unconscious that will reappear in later life. This trauma disturbs the process of symbolization in character and fixes him in an earlier phase of development. A memory, a romantic relationship, or an event in childhood is fixed in Salinger's character's mind causing him intense mental disturbance and suffering and no matter how he struggles to rationalize and express this memory or emotion, or even perception, it keeps returning and repeating the suffering. Lacan claims that trauma is "real" to the extent that it remains unsymbolizable and undetachable from the heart of the subject, as it can be seen in Holden's case.

The experience of trauma also exposes the real can never be totally taken into the social reality and this is one of the most challenging situation of the main character. It does not matter how much the character attempts to express his suffering through language or symbols, this is a kind of in vain attempt and there is always something which is unsaid. Lacan calls this state the real which is impossible to encounter with and is connected to the death drive and jouissance (Homer 84), and although it is not escapable but can lead to a state of sublimation and perception through raising the imaginary object to the dignity of the thing. In other words, sublimation allows the symbolic to move closer to the real by means of the imaginary. Considering the issue that not all of the real can be soluble in the visible (Wajcman 49), in sublimation process, "a thing that can be circumscribed, grasped and visible, takes the place of the Thing. But insofar as it is raised up to its dignity, it becomes uncircumscribable, ungraspable, and invisible" (Saint 15-20). This state may reveal through art or literary work but recalls emptiness in character's mind. This article attempts to deal with the psychic phase of the Real as well as death drive and its effect on main character's perception of the Real, which is referred as the Real emergence in an object. The experience of the jouissance of the character through sexuality or sense of death is viewed as a psychological perception of the Real and the jouissance.

### **Holden and Trauma of Death Drive**

*The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger portrays Holden Caulfield struggling to connect with the people around him and his fear of growing up due to his experience of lack and loss. For Lacan, becoming a subject and growth mean entering into language. It is a process of socialization (Johnson 3). Holden lacked this growing up because his mother was constantly focused on Allie and his illness. He mentioned her by saying "she hasn't felt too healthy since my brother Allie died" (Salinger 120). Even after he was gone, "in his eyes his mother was so preoccupied with Allie that she continued to neglect Holden, as presumably she did when Allie was dying" (Salinger 123). The identity of the character is defined through the utterance conveyed by him, not just what is said by the character (Putri 10). Correspondingly, the first thing he says in the book is, "the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all the David Copperfield kind of crap" (Salinger 3). First, Holden attempts to cope with the loss of his brother Allie, but continues to feel depressed and alone. As a result of Allie's death, it immediately affected Holden and his actions. This is where his anger began to develop. His immediate response was to lose his mental control despite the consequences he would face. According to Lacan's view, the character is always searching for his desires which at the end cannot be fulfilled because of the sense of lack that he always tries to overcome. Therefore, desire plays a very significant role in Holden's characteristics. He tries to find himself as a unified entity or one with its mother. These events make Holden observe himself in the mirror symbolically as an entity which is a fragmented self and creates a sense of loss and lack in him.

Throughout the novel Holden is always talking about being depressed and suicidal, but arguably he just does not want to grow up and become a "phony" (Helenius 19). His trauma shows itself standing against the rules and norms of symbolic order. Lacan asserts an inventory of trauma's each individual is supposed to encounter in his development and that constitute the fundament of consecutive complexes: the trauma of birth, the trauma of

weaning, the trauma of the fraternal intrusion and the oedipal trauma. Starting with weaning these traumas lead to a dialectic solution through an intervention of the symbolic. The several ruptures that the traumas install have to be symbolised by the subject. When this symbolisation fails psychopathologies of different kinds ensue (Bazan 6). Holden shies away from interactions from most people because of the complications of life. Salinger used symbols like the red hunting hat, The Museum of Natural History to show Holden's inner conflicts and fear of growing up, standing against identitarian system of society. These symbols showed that "Holden is less fortunate, for in a world where phonies vastly outnumber the pure of heart, there are only small moments of stasis...Everything else is a veritable flood tide pushing Holden toward change, toward adulthood, toward responsibility, toward abject phoniness, toward death" (Pinsker 121). Those moments of stasis being Holden's escape from reality can create his experience of the real order. First, the red hunting hat allowed Holden to separate himself from the world of phonies and hold onto his brothers lost childhood. Since Holden fears adulthood he puts the hat onto embrace childhood even though he doesn't like people to see him wearing it. His red "hunting hat really gave quite a lot of protection" (Salinger 233). The hat did not only protect him from the rain, but also from the phoniness of the world. Additionally, another reason that furthers Holden's fear of growing up is the way he view the museum. The museum makes him significantly happy compared to most things because it never changes.

The story, *Catcher in the Rye*, is the story of Holden attempting to connect with other people as paving symbolic order and failing to do so, as resisting to accept to be phony and conformist toward the conventional and nihilistic social norms, which causes him to dread maturity and cling to his idealized view of childhood that acts as the experience of jouissance and the real order for him. As he notes in Chapter 2, "I act quite young for my age sometimes. I was sixteen then, and I'm seventeen now, and sometimes I act like I'm about thirteen." (Salinger 5), Holden makes a similar performance during his encounter with Carl Luce, who comments on Holden's persistent immaturity and repeatedly asks him, "When are you going to grow up?" (Salinger 77) Throughout *The Catcher in the Rye*, then, Holden is an actor in search of a sympathetic audience.

Most of the book recounts Holden's quest or drive for connection, following him through dozens of encounters large and small, with cab drivers, nuns, tourists, pimps, former classmates, and many others. Because he has little sense of his effect on others and refuses to conform to societal norms, he fails in every attempt, and adopts a self-protective veneer of disgust with the world. Lacan writes that "every drive is virtually a death drive" because: every drive pursues its own extinction, every drive involves the subject in repetition, and every drive is an attempt to go beyond the pleasure principle, to the realm of excess jouissance where enjoyment is experienced as suffering. This is what the reader can find in Holden's repetition of attempting to communicate which is in vain. For Lacan, repetition, insofar as it is inscribed in dialectics of jouissance, is what goes against life, and is what Freud articulates as the death instinct (Vincent 51).

### Holden and Jouissance

In the seminar *The ethics of psychoanalysis*, the criticism of the notion of death drive is associated with the central role given to the notion of jouissance. Lacan places the notion of jouissance beyond the pleasure principle. In this text of Freud, he notes that the use of the pleasure principle is to keep us away from our jouissance. In this interpretation by Lacan of Freud's text, the opposition between jouissance and pleasure principle takes the place of the opposition between death drive and pleasure principle. The jouissance, as conceived by Lacan at that moment, is linked with the idea of drive satisfaction. But it is also a notion which he links to the idea of destruction, to the idea of hurting one's neighbor, on the basis of the text *Civilization and its discontents*, in which Freud criticizes the commandment "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" as impossible to keep (Freud 86). The frame of narration in this novel creates the space to examine Holden's affairs and affords from this point of view.

Throughout the novel, Holden seems to be excluded from and victimized by the world around him as he does not appear as a conformist. As he says to Mr. Spencer, he feels trapped on "the other side" of life, and he continually attempts to find his way in a world in which he feels he does not belong. Holden categorizes people in two groups: those who care about appearances and those who do not. Those who belong to the first category strike Holden as "hotshots" and "phonies," who privilege looks over personality. Holden feels surrounded by such people. He notes, for instance, that his mother works hard to cultivate her "terrific taste," and his aunt has a penchant for pomp in her charity work. He also encounters a number of other wealthy and good-looking people over the course of the book, including Stradlater, Carl Luce, and Mr. Antolini. For Holden, Stradlater exemplifies the hollowness of appearances. Holden explains that even though Stradlater always looks good on the outside, he is actually a "secret slob" whose stuff is dirty and in disarray:

You remember I said before that Ackley was a slob in his personal habits? Well, so was Stradlater, but in a different way. Stradlater was more of a secret slob. He always looked all right, Stradlater, but for instance, you should've seen the razor he shaved himself with. It was always rusty as hell and full of lather and hairs and crap. He never cleaned it or anything. He always looked good when he was finished fixing himself up, but he was a secret slob anyway, if you knew him the way I did. (Salinger 15)

By contrast, Holden sees himself as someone who privileges substance over style. He insists, for instance, that he does not care about his own appearance. At one point he exclaims, "I didn't give a damn how I looked" (Salinger 29). However, his self-consciousness about putting the flaps down on his hunting cap, for example, reveal that he, too, is secretly concerned with appearances.

The novel is told through the framing device of Holden's convalescence in what seems to be either a sanatorium or mental hospital, which creates suspense as to how he wound up there. After a brief present-time introduction, he switches to past-time flashback, beginning with his final days at Pencey Prep. The incident that incites the major events of the novel occurs when Stradlater goes out with Jane Gallagher and refuses to say whether he had sex with her. The idea that Stradlater and Jane might have had sex is more than Holden can take. He has felt affection for Jane for a long time, so Stradlater's date with her sparks envy. Holden also feels upset that his predatory roommate may have corrupted an important part of his past. Holden believes he knows both Jane and Stradlater extremely well, and the idea that Jane, who he sees as a paragon of virtue, might be attracted to Stradlater, who Holden sees as essentially corrupt, challenges his concept of the two characters. It suggests that he does not know anyone as well as he thinks, and his attempts at connection will inevitably fail.

Unable to do anything about the situation, Holden decides to leave the school that night and take the train to New York City. Most of the episodes that take place after Holden departs from Pencey, and up until he visits his sister, Phoebe, at home, involve Holden attempting either to make sexual connections with others or to find someone to explain sex to him, but Holden supposes the situation like this:

In my mind, I'm probably the biggest sex maniac you ever saw. Sometimes I can think of very crumby stuff I wouldn't mind doing if the opportunity came up. I can even see how it might be quite a lot of fun, in a crumby way, and if you were both sort of drunk and all, to get a girl and squirt water or something all over each other's face. The thing is, though, I don't like the idea. It stinks, if you analyze it. I think if you don't really like a girl, you shouldn't horse around with her at all, and if you do like her, then you're supposed to like her face, and if you like her face, you ought to be careful about doing crumby stuff to it, like squirting water all over it. It's really too bad that so much crumby stuff is a lot of fun sometimes... Sex is something I really don't understand too hot. You never know where the hell you are. I keep making up these sex rules for myself, and then I break them right away. Last year I made a rule that I was going to quit horsing around with girls that, deep down, gave me a pain in the ass. I broke it, though, the same week I made it--the same night, as a matter of fact. I spent the whole night necking with a terrible phony named Anne Louise Sherman. Sex is something I just don't understand. I swear to God I don't. (Salinger 34)

According to the seminar *The ethics of psychoanalysis*, Lacan's elaboration of the notion of jouissance is connected to that of drive. The jouissance is the satisfaction not of the needs but of the drive. It can be a sexual jouissance. It can be linked to the idea of evil, as jouissance of destruction. Hence it appears a proximity between the idea of jouissance and the idea of death drive, from which jouissance recovers some attributes. Lacan raises this double aspect of the jouissance, sexual and destructive, by focusing on Sade's writings. This double aspect of jouissance is what can be found too in the notion of entanglement between life drive and death drive. Leaving aside the death drive that he considers as a theoretical dead end in Freud, Lacan replaces the Freudian drive dualism with a monism. Each drive is both a life drive and a death drive, and jouissance, as drive satisfaction, may be both sexual jouissance and destruction jouissance (Vincent 55). This is what can be traced in Holden's affairs, manner, and despair. Holden believes sex should be an act of intimacy, and he is ashamed of his own ability to be sexually attracted to women he does not feel a true connection with. Yet he propositions nearly every woman he encounters, most of them much older than he is. He invites his classmate's mother to get a drink, calls a woman he believe is a stripper, dances with older female tourists staying at his hotel, arranges to have a prostitute sent to his room, and tries to convince a coat check clerk to go out with him. Holden's quest for sexual knowledge culminates in his drink with Carl Luce, who Holden thinks can illuminate the relation between the physical and spiritual aspects of sexuality. However, Carl is presented as possibly confused about his own sexuality, undermining his authority on heterosexual relationships. He becomes uncomfortable when Holden asks him about the role of intimacy in sex, suggesting Holden is not as alone in his confusion as he believes.

In the seminar *The ethics of psychoanalysis*, Lacan mentions the fundamental moral Law, the prohibition of incest. There is a fundamental desire that must not be satisfied. It concerns a sovereign good, the Mother, also named The Thing. This good is forbidden, and there is no other. It is a reverse foundation of the moral law. This Thing is both "strange to me, while being in the heart of me" (Lacan 87). According to this definition, beyond the pleasure principle means to Lacan the impossible reunion with the Thing, which is the sovereign good. The jouissance of The Thing is impossible. The Thing is the centerpiece of the process of reality-building within the Subject. It is in the field of the Thing that the discovery of the object, or the object of love, as a recovered object, can take place. That Thing, that analytical ethics deems inaccessible, has an aesthetical side which is vectored through sublimation. Lacan takes courteous love as an example, where the beloved is simultaneously idealized and de-humanized,

because of how unreal the depictions of her and her expectations were across that aesthetic movement (Vincent 56). This is what Holden looks for, a far-fetched love, even a dead one. And when it becomes inaccessible to him he retreats to the world of fantasy.

The climax of the story comes when Holden visits Phoebe, who becomes angry that Holden has been expelled from another school and confronts him about why he does not like anything. Holden says he likes his brother, Allie, but Phoebe points out that Allie is dead. Holden recalls a harrowing episode from an earlier prep school where a boy named James Castle, who was being bullied, leapt out of a window to his death. Holden identifies with James Castle, who had borrowed Holden's turtleneck and was wearing it when he died. This climax does not represent a turning point for Holden but rather illuminates for the reader just how deep Holden's need is to protect the castle of his own childhood from the depredations of the adult world as Lacan's symbolic order. He explains to Phoebe his fantasy of being the catcher in the rye, a figure who catches children who are about to plunge off an imaginary cliff to their deaths, or to adulthood. Phoebe corrects his misunderstanding of the words of the poem, calling his entire belief system into question and implying Holden is wrong about both childhood and adulthood. The falling action of the story depicts Holden continuing his attempt to delay adulthood until he cannot run any further, as Lacan claims staying in each order of human psyche is not constant forever. He goes to see Mr. Antolini, an adult who showed bravery and compassion after James Castle's death (Salinger 34). Mr. Antolini describes the misanthropic and maladjusted future Holden seems to be headed toward, furthering the impression that Holden is now in a limbo between his unrealistically idealized childhood and the unpleasant reality of adulthood. Incapable of accepting physical affection and terrified of the possibility that Mr. Antolini may be homosexual and a pedophile, Holden flees. He decides to run away from his life and his family for good, but his plan collapses when Phoebe insists on coming with him. At the end of his story, Holden calmly watches Phoebe riding a carousel, secure for the moment in her childhood innocence and not menaced by adulthood or the future. What Lacan describes as the death drive as a nostalgia for a lost harmony, a desire to return to the pre-oedipal fusion with the mother, and the desire of that lost part which leads to create fantasy and experience real order as moments of *jouissance* is completely traceable in Holden's mental complexes and social behavior. Lacan also associates the death drive with the suicidal tendency and depression, but it can even turn to have some moments of sublime and perception; the novel ends in the present tense, with Holden offering the hope that his experience was actually transformational and he may apply himself at his next school. However, his voice is so similar to the rest of the novel, we may question whether he has actually matured and gained insight into himself and others.

### **Holden and the Pain of Reality**

Commonly Lacan explains the real order made of the material universe and physical world on one hand, and represents it as the symbol of everything a person is not, on the other hand. Therefore all objects (*objet petit a*) function as symbols of lack. For Lacan our reality consists of symbols and the process of signification. Therefore, what we call reality is associated with the symbolic order or social reality. It is a kind of paradoxical concept which is different from reality. Holden's central goal is to resist the process of maturity itself. As his thoughts about the Museum of Natural History demonstrate, Holden fears change and is overwhelmed by complexity. He wants everything to be easily understandable and eternally fixed, like the statues of Eskimos and Indians in the museum. He is frightened because he feels guilty of the sins he criticizes in others, and because he cannot understand everything around him. But he refuses to acknowledge this fear, expressing it only in a few instances, for example, when he talks about sex and admits that "[s]ex is something I just don't understand. I swear to God I don't" (Salinger 35). In his paper *Ecrire*, Lacan says; "it starts with a particular truth a discourse, the effect of which is that reality is no longer the same for us as it was before" (120). Real happens accidentally and by "chance" and the subject's confrontation with real is always "missed" because you do not know when it could have happened, therefore Lacan always calls it as "impossible" to attain and understand (Librecht 157).

Instead of acknowledging that adulthood scares and mystifies him, Holden invents a fantasy that adulthood is a world of superficiality, phoniness, and hypocrisy, while childhood is a world of innocence, curiosity, and honesty. Nothing reveals his image of these two worlds better than his fantasy about the catcher in the rye: he imagines childhood as an idyllic field of rye in which children romp and play; adulthood, for the children of this world, is equivalent to death, a fatal fall over the edge of a cliff. His created understandings of childhood and adulthood allow Holden to cut himself off from the world by covering himself with a protective armor of cynicism. Fantasy is paradoxical at the same time; it provides an escape from reality, or it is a defense to social reality, meanwhile it frames the reality itself (Fink 153). As Lacan states in his seminar XX, fantasy acts like a veil which blurred the subject's vision of the real (95). Or it is also said that fantasy is created due to the "absence of a real object" (Homer 86). Real is settled in fantasy (Fink 95). It can be said that our unconscious desire is shown by fantasy. The subject creates the fantasy in order to escape from reality, to escape or avoid the traumas of the reality or society. In Lacanian theory, fantasy is not the object of desire or the desire for a specific object, rather it is the "setting" or "staging" for desire (Fink 87).

“Phoniness,” which is probably the most famous phrase from *The Catcher in the Rye*, is one of Holden’s favorite concepts. He uses it for describing the superficiality, hypocrisy, pretension, and shallowness that he encounters in the world around him during the symbolic order. In Chapter 22, just before he reveals his fantasy of the catcher in the rye, Holden explains that “adults are inevitably phonies, and, what’s worse, they can’t see their own phoniness” (Salinger 93). Phoniness, for Holden, stands as an emblem of everything that is wrong and against innocence in the world around him and provides an excuse for him to withdraw into his isolation. Though overgeneralized, Holden’s observations are not entirely inaccurate. He is very aware of superficial behavior in those around him. Throughout the novel he encounters many characters who do seem affected, pretentious, or superficial: Sally Hayes, Carl Luce, Maurice and Sunny, and even Mr. Spencer stand out as examples. Some characters, like Maurice and Sunny, are presented genuinely harmful.

To understand the issue of fantasy in case of Holden better, it must be said that when he comes to the point that he cannot reach his desire he feels dissatisfied, he feels pain or better to say he experiences *jouissance*, so the subject experiences the failure of his desires. Then it is through fantasy and “object petit a” that the subject keeps or saves itself or continue its life in the “impossible scenario” of creating fantasy and facing with failure again and again (Homer 95). The point to Lacan’s account here is that the temporality that is the truth of the human subject is the one shape of identity that is neither objectifying nor alienating. Unlike the imaginary identity which is created in Holden’s relation to mirror stage and unlike the symbolic systems which frames his cultural community, his identity as a temporal being as one who thus has been, and will have been thus in relation to a future, takes place in the real. As a result he is a temporal being. Consequently it is that temporality which makes possible both those imaginary process by which mirror images are transformed into ideals for imitation by the young ego and those symbolic processes by which the systems of language are shaped in the temporally relative utterance of speech which is directly in relation with symbolic order and socio-conventional norms. If human beings were not able to live the present as the combination of past and future, such complex processes would be impossible (Lee 80). Though Holden expends so much energy searching for phoniness in others as a normal criteria in social adulthood or symbolic order, he never directly observes his own phoniness. His deceptions are generally pointless and cruel and he notes that he is a compulsive liar. For example, on the train to New York, Holden perpetrates a mean-spirited and needless prank on Mrs. Morrow. He would like us to believe that he is a paradigm of virtue in a world of phoniness, but that simply is not the case. Although he would like to believe that the world is a simple place, and that virtue and innocence rest on one side of the fence while superficiality and phoniness rest on the other, Holden is his own counterevidence. The world is not as simple as he would like, and needs it to be; even he cannot adhere to the same black-and-white standards with which he judges other people. This is the key point Lacan asserts, that it is not possible for the subject to keep moving on a single distinct line constantly, the issue of temporality and experience of the *jouissance* in the realm of fantasy as real confirms the issue.

### **Holden and Sublimation of a Fantasy**

As Lacan firmly asserts the real by itself is established and complete, but human’s realisation of it is not stable but movable; subject’s understanding is the combination of language and heir self-experience which makes reality not the real. According to Lacan real is both beyond imaginary perception and symbolic description. So real exists from the first, before the imaginary and the symbolic (Regland-Sullivan 188). While real seems impossible to be explained, Lacan believes finding real objectively is impossible since real will change through subject’s personal viewpoint. On the contrary reality is the one’s subject interpretation. In his *Seminar II* Lacan speaks as though; this alienated life, this life in the Other is joined with death (233). In the imaginary order the subject understands his/her division from the Other, then wishes to one day back to the experience of union with the Other in the world of symbolic order which is a constructed reality, then when he faced with the real which is an experience out of the described and disciplined symbolic and experiences *jouissance* he finds out that life not only drives us to death but also life is death itself. Desire is always changing from one signifier to the other but *jouissance* is always fixed; and death which is inaccessible is related to *jouissance*. This state may be alterable from one desire to another and from one signifier to another, so its state of outcome can be different in case of sublimity.

Holden is always searching and looking for satisfaction of his desire, but when he thinks he is fulfilled he wants more or different and thinks that it is not enough or he is not satisfied completely. This something more that he is always looking for is *jouissance*. Thus, *jouissance* is assumed as something to be there and cannot reach it, but maybe the Other can attain that, as a result he thinks the Other is experiencing more enjoyment than him (Fink 35). Moreover Ragland-sullivan explains *jouissance* as the “essence or quality that gives one’s life its value” (88). That is why somewhere Lacan gives an example of *jouissance* as a religious or mystical ecstatic experience. As with most other things in his life, Holden has ambivalent feelings about religion. Religion entices him because he thinks it may offer a spiritual anchor in an otherwise confusing and depressing world. Holden yearns for such an anchor throughout the novel. He frequently imagines that a relationship with a young woman may cure his loneliness, but

female companionship never works out for him. As an alternative, Holden occasionally thinks about Jesus. Jesus appeals to Holden for a couple of reasons. First, Jesus is not a phony. He thinks:

...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. Take the Disciples, for instance. They annoy the hell out of me, if you want to know the truth. They were all right after Jesus was dead and all, but while He was alive, they were about as much use to Him as a hole in the head. All they did was keep letting Him down. I like almost anybody in the Bible better than the Disciples. (Salinger 54)

Holden asserts as much when he exclaims that Jesus "would've puked" (Salinger 46) had he witnessed the commercialization of Christmas. Second, Jesus privileges social outcasts. Holden makes note of this when he recalls the story of Jesus curing a lunatic's madness. Holden, who frequently calls himself a "madman," imagines that Jesus could also cure him. However, despite Holden's desire for spiritual grounding, organized religion repulses him. In Holden's view, rituals, theology, and dogma are imposed from outside and therefore turn people into phonies. So even though Holden respects Jesus as a spiritual figure, he rejects the religion founded on his name. As a matter of fact, the sublime appearance of Holden's *jouissance* can turn to be critical when it is observed from the socio-symbolic perspective. Holden's trauma stops him to experience and perceive the state of real as he wishes.

One of the biggest issues holding Holden back is his persistent inability to take action. Holden's inaction indicates a failure both to let go of past trauma and to move toward a more resilient future. With regard to the past, Holden cannot relinquish the memory of his dead brother. Holden's refusal to let go of Allie's memory finds an echo in Chapter 5, when he cannot bring himself to let go of a snowball he has made. Instead of throwing the snowball, he holds on to it and packs in more snow, making it hard and dense. The dense snowball may mirror Holden's tight knot of emotional anguish, and his inability to let the snowball go echoes his inability to make peace with his brother's death, with his trauma. The pain associated with Allie's passing interferes with Holden's ability to take action in other ways as well, to make any changes in his social appearance. Take, for example, the scene where Holden attempts to punch Stradlater with his right fist. Holden knows this fist is weak, because he injured it when he broke the windows in the garage after Allie died. Using this fist to throw a punch is therefore self-defeating and leads to Stradlater punching him.

As Hayward mentions in her thesis "Holden shows how much he struggles to follow the norms of society. This makes him appear as an outsider. The character is depicted as having strong resistant behavior, which makes him look troubled and rebellious. His problems to conform socially causes him to fail" (33). Just as it relates to the pain of his past and his trauma, Holden's inaction also relates to his fear of the future. Frequently in the book Holden describes the world of adults as being full of rules and conventions that make people into phonies. But his constant criticism of adults covers up a deeper resistance to growing up and accomplishing symbolic order. This resistance becomes clear in Holden's failed attempts at sexual connection. Even though he frequently thinks and talks about sex, all of Holden's encounters with women in the book are disastrous. Perhaps most telling is the scene with the prostitute Sunny. Holden cannot bring himself to have sex with her, just one of several failed sexual encounters he's experienced. In a narrow sense, this episode shows Holden's hang-ups about sexuality. More generally, it also shows how Holden's inability to act links to his broader resistance to growing up. His refusal to grow up endangers his future ability to become more resilient and take action despite the world's many shortcomings.

## Conclusion

Holden is struggling against social norms as symbolic order brings. In case of Holden the fantasy lets the character forget the reality and his difference to the others. He is an alienated character, cannot find himself in concord with social norms and the Symbolic Order, and thus creeps to his own fantasy. Though he may experience the insufficiency of the pleasure principles to fulfill his sense of lack, he does not insist on being in the alienated situation and tries to recover by creating a fantasy and following his quest for the other to satisfy his drive in his rebuilt world. Despite creating his fantasy to escape from the reality, the created fantasy is not always a proper way to bring him prosperity or the real perception. Some moments are the most illusive ones. It may give the character the *jouissance*, but it cannot satisfy his drive and the subject cannot reach the realm of the real by this escape.

The experience of *jouissance* and the real for Holden is temporal. By the time he understands his temporality as he perceives the real, he can see and feel everything as it is. In spite of experiencing the psychic phase of the real, he realizes the sublimation form of the real which helps him to feel or become more stable. It must be mentioned that Salinger's own personality which is manifested in his created character, Holden, reveals his desire toward the real and breaking the rules of symbolic order. As far as life does not satisfy Salinger's drive, he escapes to the invented world of his fantasy which is creating his work of art for him. As Lacan says, art is the sublime manifestation of real which is experienced by Salinger. Although Holden in Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* is in quest for the real, his behaviour is contradictory. As Lacan claims the only way that one subject can be fulfilled by, is the language, yet Salinger's character cannot overcome his mental turmoil; despite the fact that he quests for the real

he is still constrained by the very normal routines of life. Since it seems his desires are false desires and his created world is not a proper one.

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