I. Herman Melville and J. D Salinger in Literary Tradition

Herman Melville (1819-1891), an American author, was born in New York City in established merchant family as the third child of eight from the father Allan and mother Marria Gansevoort Melville. Melville is one of the greatest American Romantic novelists who had highly rewarding personal association with Nathanial Hawthorne. Melville married Elizabeth Shaw on August 4, 1847 and they had four children. Melville enjoyed a childhood amid the comforts and security of a relatively well do family. The bankruptcy and death of his father in 1832 deprived him of a routine career and alienated him forever from a conventional optimistic view of life. Thus, despite of his hard times at his young age to uplift his family crisis he went through the globe of experience working as a bank clerk, farmhand, businessman, school teacher, engineer, cabin boy and finally as a sailor in different ships.

Melville experienced multiple traumatic and subsequent disappointing experiences and had no formal education. His careful and receptive reading of Shakespeare, Sir Thomas Browne, Carlyle and friendly association with Hawthorne, were instrumental in carrying him beyond romance to the sounding of his own inner depth.

Melville's works are unified by themes and techniques that allow readers to trace the remarkable development of his literary skills during the brief period. All Melville's major themes spring from his lifelong concern with the question of authority. Individual liberty is one recurrent theme that derives from Melville's interest in authority. Writing at a time when slavery was the most discussed political issue in the United States, Melville examined the struggle for personal liberty from a variety of viewpoints, acknowledging the necessity of liberty to human development while warning against its abuse. Melville's

young protagonists strain against the limitations imposed by authoritarian rule, usually represented by tyrannical ship captains. They also dream of escaping the moralistic restrictions of societal codes. Ironically, their positions as common seamen make Melville's protagonists both rootless wanderers of the open seas and victims of the most repressive working conditions in nineteenth centuries.

The extent to which an individual should subordinate personal desires in order to be civilly obedient is another theme that evolves from Melville's consideration of authority. Melville's novels demonstrate his sensitive to the social ills of his time and his commitment of protesting injustice.

Divine authority is another important theme for Melville. After being visited by Melville in Liverpool in 1856, Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote that Melville "can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other" (Magill 7). Melville could not ignore the reality of evil in the world nor could be easily accept the authority of paternalistic God; thus, he imagined a character such as Ahab (in *Moby-Dick*), who tries to strike at the mystery of omniscience in the form of white whale, but he showed how such unbending pride leads to destruction. Like his weary pilgrims in *Carel*, Melville unsuccessfully pursued a divine authority that he could accept wholeheartedly.

Use of parody is also another most prominent theme of Melville. In theme and style these sorts of novels mock the allegorical elements, especially Christian, and the cheerful pastoral romances of the then time. For that he ambiguously handles the elements of Christian allegory in order to invert and challenge conventional meanings.

In short, in his earlier works, Melville freely used informative passages taken from other sea narratives of scientific works, exposition that he interjected to increase his narratives' credibility and to respond to his readers' desire for information about the exotic lands and people he was describing. In later works, Melville's writing is more allusive, reflecting his voracious reading in theology, history, philosophy and literature.

Melville carried out one of the most impressive performances in the history of American literature. He began his long narratives with *Typee* (1846) and ended with *Pierre or the Ambiguities* (1852). Between those two works appeared *Omoo* (1847), *Mardi* (1849), *Redburn* (1849), *White-Jacket* (1850), and *Moby-Dick* (1851).

Melville's first novel *Typee* offers a flowing romantic atmosphere of timeless days, pointless endeavor, and mindless existence so Charles Robert Anderson says, "*Typee* is a slightly, well written, entertaining book" (16). In the novel, there is none of the agonizing speculation on life, humanity, philosophy, or the cosmos, which readers later came to expect of Melville. With only slight exaggeration and minimal research, Melville created the picture of a world beyond the ken of his readers but which would never die in his memories.

The second novel *Omoo* is based on Melville's own experiences in the South Pacific. This episodic novel tells of the narrator's participation in a mutiny on a whale ship and his subsequent wanderings in Tahiti with the former doctor of the ship. Without romanticizing or moralizing, the narrator describes the various stages he goes through in his rejection of civilization, his embrace of the primitive society he finds on the island, and his final decision to return to the world he came from. Throughout the novel,

Melville voices his concerns about the destruction of Polynesian culture by colonist and missionaries.

The third novel *Mardi* is an astounding work of Melville. Ostensibly a tale about a voyage in the Pacific that goes horribly wrong, *Mardi* shows Melville spreading his literary wings. There are episodes dealing with war, law, and academia, as well as running gags aplenty that demonstrate a brilliant sense of humor that is seldom ascribed to Melville. For fans of extravagant philosophical fiction, Mardi presents a party of loquacious travelers conducting lively discussions on subjects like astronomy, ethics, religion and prophecy. James E. Miller calls *Mardi* "an abortive allegory, most interesting as a kind of exercise in preparation for writing *Moby-Dick*" (36).

Melville's fourth novel, *Redburn*, according to Brain Sunders "represents Melville's own childhood and youth" (335). A fictionalized account of Melville's voyage to Liverpool in 1839, the novel parallels Melville's own life in its replication of not only incidents aboard ship and in port, but also of emotional experiences involving the financial ruin and early death of the fathers of the author and his title character.

Melville's fifth novel *White-Jacket* is both a sea adventure and a powerful social critique of biblical theme. For the latter, Kris Lackey says, "The biblical theme driving White-Jacket is that the man-of-war world operates on a set of principles repugnant to any Christian who sincerely accepts the commands of Jesus in Sermon on the Mount" (248). Based on Melville's own experiences, the novel also explores the fascinating and often harrowing world of a naval fighting ship, the *Neversink*. The ship becomes for Melville a microcosm of America itself; its hierarchy, social divisions, and cruel practices suggest larger injustices, including slavery.

In Melville's sixth novel *Moby-Dick*, there is evidence that Melville intended it to be little more than a factual account of the whale fisheries in the South Pacific detailed with firsthand tales of adventures on a whaler. When completed two years after its beginning, it was a puzzling, intricately devised literary work in which a white whale is the central character. Around this central figure, Melville weaves symbolism, speculation, philosophy, and allegory on life, God, man and the human condition. William S. Gleim says, "The white whale is the symbol of fate" (2). In short, Melville had created an epic romance that stood at the brink of becoming mythology.

In Melville's seventh and last novel *Pierre,* he is interested in the idea of exploring human psychology, especially repressed sexual urges and in seeing how good can turn into evil in unpredictable ways. In this novel he deals with immensely controversial issues such as incest and moral relativism and this idea is played out on many different levels of the novel. Melville develops the theme of the ambiguous nature of good and evil through his novel Pierre. His novel also deals with the Gothic elements like horror, fear, murder, suicide, and death. Pierre believes that conventional Christianity does not offer a high enough standard of conduct, and he sets for himself the goal of true Christ – like behavior. When Pierre and Isabel, in a pivotal chapter, are escaping to New York, he finds by chance a "philosophical lecture" on "Chronometrical and Homological." The author of this discourse on time argues that the perfection of the chronometer makes it an imperfect timepiece for ordinary purpose and people ("Christ was a chronometer"). A horologe, which is adjustable to local standards, is more practical. Pierre aspires to follow chronometric time but, despite his high moral principals, ends in destroying those around him as well as himself. Melville develops the

theme of the ambiguous nature of good and evil through Pierre, but also through the story of Isabel's childhood, and through Pierre's relationship with his manipulative mother.

Thus, Herman Melville is a canonical writer of nineteenth century America who deals with diverse issues like political, personal, social and economic aspects of the then society. The focus in this research, however, lies on the issues of capitalism used by the writer in his novel *Moby-Dick*.

Another prominent writer of American literature is J. D. Salinger who is interpreted as an experimental writer of the postwar period. J. D. Salinger first gained attention by publishing short stories in the late thirties and forties in magazines like *Story*, Colliers, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. In the late forties and early fifties, most of Salinger’s short stories found their way into the *New Yorker*. It wasn’t until 1951 that he published his only novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*; this was followed by the publication of *Nine Stories* in 1953. In the mid-fifties and early sixties, Salinger continued to publish his stories in the *New Yorker*. “Franny” and “Zooey” were collected and published as a book in 1961, followed by “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters” and “Seymour: An Introduction,” two short stories which were published as a book in 1963. Salinger’s final publication, “Hapworth 16, 1924” was published in the *New Yorker* in 1965. With the publication of only twenty-one short stories, and one full-length novel, Salinger still managed to arouse so much controversy as Salinger and his infamous protagonists. Much of this is due to the face that he published during an era that in retrospect was intellectually, emotionally and even literarily conservative. The controversy that Salinger raised among critics becomes obvious when one looks at the essays of Warren French and George Steiner. French in his essay “The Age of Salinger” claims, “certainly, no

writer has won a remotely similar place in American affections during the 60s; nor did any single writer largely monopolize readers during an earlier decade" (24).

Not only did Salinger have such an effect on the public and popular critics of his time, he also had a great influence on the literary canon of postwar America. On one hand, other writers were fascinated with Salinger's works because they could identify with the heroes, and, on the other, most remained very puzzled and perplexed while interpreting what Salinger said and how well he said it. Contrary to French's mostly positive point of view, George Steiner, in his 1959 essay "The Salinger Industry" questions the literary value of Salinger's works. He claims that "the primary reason for the critical attention Salinger received was really the result of too many critical opportunities because American literary criticism had become a vast machine in constant need of raw material" (362).

While Steiner's dismissive attitude towards Salinger's critics and his outright dismissal of the proliferation of Salinger criticism as "trivial" is a bit cynical, Steiner's term "Salinger Industry" reveals the desire of scholars to give Salinger a prominent place in the postwar American literary canon. It is important to note that more than sixty years after the publication of Salinger's first short story "Young Folks" in 1940 in *Story* magazine, hundreds of articles, reviews, books, and to date some forty-four dissertations have analyzed Salinger's literary contributions. Salinger continued to be popular among readers as well as critics—as he is today—and one reason for this might be that his personal inscrutability[1] has created a lot of intrigue. However, I maintain that the genius of Salinger lies in the fact that he supplied critics with many puzzles that are difficult to solve. One of the most perplexing puzzles in Salinger's fiction, one for which no critic

has yet to provide a satisfactory answer, relates to why Seymour Glass, one of the three main protagonists in Salinger's literary works, committed suicide. Social critics believe that Seymour committed suicide because of the social restrictions that were imposed on him. They therefore see his suicide as an act of desperation. On the other hand, religious critics believe that Seymour had achieved everything in life he wanted to achieve spiritually and eventually would lose his spirituality if he continued to live in society. Therefore, they maintain that he had no choice but to commit suicide. But in this study I want to stress that Salinger's works defy the application of traditional critical approaches in order to find a satisfactory answer for the demise of his protagonists.

When analyzed, the vast amount of Salinger criticism illustrates that critics fall into either a religious or a social camp. Critics that belong to the religious camp, such as Ebenhard Alsen (Hinduism), Eugene Antonio Dale (Taoism), Sanford and Bernice Goldstein (Zen), and George Panickas (Christianity), have pointed out the religious pluralism in the works of Salinger and present him as a writer who is on a religious quest for the meaning of life, albeit somewhat off track. Moreover, these critics consider Holden Caulfield restored at the end of their stories, which is recognition of Salinger's fiction as an act of celebration where his protagonists attempt to cure themselves.
On the other hand, critics such as Paul Levine, Warren French, and James Lundquist regard Salinger as a sociological writer. These critics claim that the main themes in his fiction are "man versus society" and "individuality versus conformity." These critics note that Salinger represents the quest for alternative structures, theories, and systems of society in order to replace the standard—populist—one, which have led to the alienation, despair, and disbelief that haunt his characters. The social critics label Salinger's

protagonists as "freaks" or "rebels" and consider Holden destroyed because he could not bear the social pressure and its attendant expectations imposed on them. Levine, French and Lindquist represent a group of critics who purport that Salinger's characters exist in a sociological void. They use as their primary support the fact that these characters are not rounded fictional creations but can be seen as relatively flat, considering their status in contemporary literature. Simply put, they never quite get their environment, their friends and foes, their politics, or their sexual lives all in place. This is why the main dilemma each of these characters faces is how to search for alternative structures that would help them cope with society without losing their place in it. In his book *Quests Surd and Absurd: Essays in American Literature*, James E. Miller states, "The problems of a sensitive and prospective adolescent moving painfully to maturity can never be solved by reconstructing society politically or economically" (112).

In *Franny and Zooey*, for instance, Salinger represents his belief through Buddy Glass, who says that "an artist's only concern is to shoot for some kind of perfection, and on his own terms, not on anyone else's" (199). Kurian echoes this sentiment in her belief that the quest of moral perfection in Salinger's fiction in fact countermands a conservative society on the verge of veering into one full of sex, violence, and cynicism, which Salinger feared would come to color much contemporary fiction. She maintains that Salinger saw this as, simply put, a cop out. Instead he was determined to give society a moral compass point away from man's future potential for amorality as a sophisticated stand against society. She believes that Salinger saw the only possible end point of such a move as ultimate rejection of love and spirituality as our lack of an appropriate respect for them is overwhelmed by human progress in the material realm, which ultimately does

not depend on a morally progressive world view. Kurian, therefore, wants us to regard Salinger's fiction as supporting an evolving world view, one which may at first have to be compounded of rationalistic and mystical elements. Naturally, the rationalistic is needed because of the need to appeal to reason, while the mystical (which Salinger saw as more important) affirms the ascendancy of romantic individualism as a path toward morality, one which incorporates one's social concerns and obligations without allowing them to overwhelm one's life. As quoted in Howard Harper's *Desperate Faith: A Study of Bellow, Salinger, Mailer, Baldwin and Updike*, Kurian believes that "Salinger does not deny the reality of the spiritual dimension of human life," but "he does question whether it should take precedence over our responsibilities to other people" (194). This question to Kurian is central to a complete comprehension of Salinger's works. Moreover, a strong reading of his work would admit his response to it, which has been to adopt a stand that integrates the values of both action and contemplation.

II. Economic Reality and Capitalism of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century America

In 1798 the United States Congress passed legislation making identity theft a federal offense. According to the United States Department of Justice, identity theft is a crime that is predominantly committed for economic gain. It is characterized by fraudulent activity whereby the perpetrator collects another's personal data such as one's social security number, banking account number, or credit card number in order to secure loans, credit lines, and other means of profit at the victim's expense. Everyone accepts this definition without question and with good reason. The consequences of identity theft are stark realities, and each of us is in jeopardy of becoming the next victim.

One hears or reads about identity theft daily. The term "identity theft" has been incorporated into the cultural landscape. However, the term is a misnomer. "Identity theft" is not an accurate term for the crime that it describes, but it does pack a stinging rhetorical punch and it reveals a set of values. It implies much more than the definitions provided by the Department of Justice or the Federal Trade Commission suggest. One can discern the implications of the term "identity theft" in the Citi Bank commercials in which identity thieves "speak through the mouths of their victims" (6). The criminals are identified by the products or services they have purchased, and the victim is largely identified by the observable possessions in his or her environment. Indeed, the primary means through which the audience identifies the identity thief as a biker, a geek, or a redneck is through the description of purchases made with stolen funds. The Citi Bank advertisements efface age, gender, and ethnicity (class is another story) by drawing attention to such distinctions and then dismissing them as superfluous in the face of one's true identity – one's credit standing.

The Citi Bank ad campaign consists of thirty-second television commercials that are variations on the same idea. The effectiveness of the ads lies in the contrast between the victim's and the perpetrator's demographic disparity. Young white female of questionable intelligence and suspect moral integrity steals the identity of middle-aged blue-collar weight-lifting black male. Computer-hacking, female-robot-building, white male college student steals the identity of young salon-and-spa-going black female. Physical distinctions such as weight, size, skin color, and gender are initially emphasized and contrasted with seemingly mismatched voices to create a comical effect. On the surface the ads seem harmless and humorous, but further inspection reveals some troubling elements. Making it clear that anyone can be a victim of identity theft, the ads establish common ground for the audience. However, the audience's common ground is not based on any intrinsic value that each audience member shares equally. Also, any inner-directed mode of identification such as one's faith, belief system, or morality is not even acknowledged. Instead, identity is reduced to one's credit standing; it is represented by one's possessions, and it has no reality outside of the society. One's possessions or the services one purchases indicate one's social status. We shall see that the functioning of products as status symbols – as signs of one's identity – is a focal point of the novels at hand. We see it in the "fine ladies and gentlemen" who "regale themselves" with perfume in *Moby- Dick* (1851). We see it in Holden Caulfield's "bourgeois" possessions in *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). One does not lose one's actual identity when one is a victim of identity theft. Nevertheless, the consequences of identity theft are experienced as stark realities and the use of that term reveals America's profound materialism and commercialism.

Citi Bank's ad campaign is a direct reflection of the construction of social reality where corporate capitalism is concerned, "television is very often the messenger of choice." Indeed, television is not merely a messenger; it – and other media – acts as the face and voice of capitalism. The media are essential tools through which corporate capitalism conducts a growing multi-billion dollar campaign to reduce people to mere consumers. In the conception of identity signified by "identity theft's" emergence in American culture, the "final frontier" is the human mind and as gods of capitalism corporations are at the helm – surveying and charting the landscape, conducting cerebral colonization. Corporate capitalism regards human rights, "men's minds," and the "great globe itself" as commercial fare (Melville 435). Rights and liberties have historically been gained through conflict and maintained by consensus. Consensus, competition, and conflict determine the management of global resources. Corporations target the human mind in order to build and maintain consensus. As dominant social institutions, corporations have the means to target the widest audience via sophisticated technology, and their messages are sculpted by teams of extremely bright, creative, and talented people. As a result, the individual constantly faces the threat of manipulation and must develop a sharp skepticism and suspicion, which can in turn lead to alienation.

The individual's struggle to forge an identity and a sense of fulfillment that is not defined by the marketplace is a dominant theme in much nineteenth- and twentieth century American literature. The following pages examine the impact that immense and complex economic processes have on the individual. As white men, Ishmael and Holden Caulfield, represent a demographic group that, historically, has had greater access to economic opportunities than other groups. Nevertheless, despite the fact that Ishmael and

Holden are arguably in positions of relative economic privilege, they each experience the anxiety and alienation that individuals often face in the modern world. They embody hope in the face of existential dread – dread that is exacerbated by capitalism's reduction of the human individual to potential profit.

How did we arrive at a point in history in which the individual is increasingly alienated by economic forces? The answer to that question requires an examination of the economic processes that began in earnest during the nineteenth century and just prior to the Civil War. The seed that eventually germinated into the Industrial Revolution was planted in 1712 when Thomas Newcomen developed a steam engine to pump water out of English coal mines. The Newcomen steam engine increased productivity significantly. The emphasis created by this and other technologies on more "product" per man hour, which continues to this day, ultimately gave rise to the modern corporation. One way of tracing the development of industrialism to the modern capitalist corporation is to focus on the problems that each addresses. Industrialism solved the problem of making more products efficiently, but in turn created a new problem. How does one unload a surplus of products? One focuses on the consumer. One shifts one's attention from production to consumption or, rather, one begins producing consumers. The necessities of an increasingly capitalist society at the end of the 19th century gave rise to a new industry – advertising. The relationship between advertising and the marketplace has developed over time by making the long transition from print advertisements that initially highlighted function to electronic advertisements that primarily tell audiences stories about who we are supposed to be, where we have come from, and where we are going.

The stories that advertising tells always serve the interests of the company that is advertising – not the interests of the audience.

The transition from capitalist industrialism to the modern corporation was remarkably swift. According to Walter Fuller Taylor, "[I]ndustrialism developed in America not just in and of itself, but as the tool and instrument of Capitalism" (16). Furthermore, industrialism developed under a capitalist system "that was committed to a politico-economic scheme of free enterprise, competition, and *laissez-faire*" (16). In addition, it developed in an expansive nation "whose rapid growth enormously stimulated production," and it matured in a nation that practiced a "tradition of minimized government" (17). Industrialism developed in a nation that emphasized the free market and therefore "preclude[d] any state control" of production in the "general interest" or public trust (18). The result "was an uncontrolled capitalistic industrialism, a gigantic, unpruned socio-economic growth that sprawled over the national life at random, and shed off indiscriminately both healthful and poisonous fruits" (24).

A number of factors coincided to facilitate the transition from capitalist industrialism to the form of capitalism in place today. Certainly, technological innovations played a significant role. The development of electrical telegraphy in the mid-nineteenth century, including the completion of the first sustainable transcontinental telegraph line established in 1866, facilitated information exchange and gave a shot of adrenaline to commerce. The completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869 significantly decreased the travel time from coast to coast, and the enhanced ability to transport goods and materials created new markets, which in turn stoked the furnace of other industries such as steel, textiles, and coal. The Gilded Age is associated with self

made business-men such as Andrew Carnegie, J.P. Morgan, and John D. Rockefeller. Today's corporation, in contrast to those in the Gilded Age, is largely "faceless," or more accurately it is represented via the media, by such figures as Ronald McDonald and the Geico Gecko. Certainly, a handful of CEOs have become household names, but the modern corporation is largely peopled by the "organization man," a person who stifles personal interests or attitudes by conforming to the precepts of the organization in which he or she is employed. Essentially, the organization man relinquishes or neglects all interests other than those that concern the organization to which he or she belongs. In the Gilded Age "the 'faceless' corporation and the 'organization man' had not yet arrived as public perceptions," but they soon followed (Trachtenberg 5).

Modern corporations were not fully actualized until after the conclusion of the Civil War, when the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified on July 9, 1868. Initially, corporations were associations or groups of people who were granted, under government regulation, temporary charters to conduct projects that were in the public's interests. For example, most of the projects were aimed toward improving the lives of the community by developing infrastructure such as roadways or bridges. The charter was granted so that the association or corporation could perform a specific function. They could not buy or sell other businesses, and the individuals associated with the corporation were held liable for the actions taken under its charter. The Fourteenth Amendment was designed to grant recently freed slaves the same rights to "life, liberty, [and] property" that all U.S. citizens share; and furthermore, it declared that those rights should not be denied "without due process of law." Corporate lawyers took advantage of the Fourteenth Amendment to claim that a corporation was a "person," and in 1886 "the Supreme Court ruled in *Santa*

Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad that a private corporation is a Alan natural person under the U.S. Constitution . . . and is thereby entitled to the protections of the Bill of Rights, including the right to free speech." Corporations share all of the rights of any U.S. citizen. Corporations can buy and sell property. They can buy and sell other corporations. They can engage in litigation. Unlike the average U.S. citizen, however, many of today's corporations have larger economies than some nations. More important than the fact that corporations share the same rights as a U.S. citizen is that a corporation does not have a conscience. The slippery reality of a corporation is that it has "no soul to save and no body to incarcerate." Corporations took advantage of the turmoil created by the Civil War to gain "control over key state legislative bodies," which permitted them "to virtually rewrite the laws governing their own creation" (Korten 54). The courts continually decided in favor of corporate interests and "steadily chipped away" at any regulations on corporate power until, "step-by-step, the court system put in place new precedents that made the protection of corporations and corporate property a centerpiece of constitutional law" (58-9). The advantages for corporations are readily apparent. The shareholder's primary interest is profit. In order to maximize profit, a corporation's shareholders need to stifle their consciences. They need to limit liability. As shareholders, protected by the façade of a corporation, represented by an iconic brand, they can not be held solely responsible for any questionable or potentially illegal actions that are committed in the pursuit of quarterly gains.

The internal organization of a corporation is like the U.S. government's system of checks and balances, only inverted. The U.S. government's duties and responsibilities are distributed among the legislative, judicial, and executive branches while the news

media or press monitors government activity. The internal organization of the U.S. government is designed as a self-regulatory system to prevent abuses of power and sustain a vital democracy. Corporations, by contrast, are designed to maximize power and ignore abuses. To distance themselves from responsibility, they devise and employ what economists refer to as “externalities.” An externality is a tactic or policy that corporations use to slough off accountability into the laps of third parties – typically taxpayers. An externality is simply the twenty-first-century equivalent of “passing the buck,” shirking responsibility, or letting another party absorb the costs created by one’s actions. In addition, the relationship between the internal organization of the U.S. government and that of the corporation is complicated by the fact that the vast majority of media outlets – television stations, cable stations, studios, distributors, and publishing companies – are owned by a relatively small number of corporations. Therefore, journalists face difficult decisions daily. They must try to behave ethically and inform the public without running the risk of losing their livelihood – a difficult task for a journalist who has a story that questions the reputation or activities of his or her parent company.

The inevitable result of economic development since the Civil War is a profound tension between private interests and the public trust – between capitalism and democracy. The idea of democracy received a severe blow when corporations gained the rights of U.S. citizens because they could then claim the right to “influence government in their own interests,” which in turn, “pits the individual citizen against the vast financial and communications resources of the corporation and mocks the constitutional intent that all citizens have an equal voice in the political debates surrounding important issues” (Korten 59). “[A]ny account . . . of the influence of corporate life on thought and

expression . . . must include subtle shifts in the meaning of prevalent ideas, ideas regarding the identity of the individual, the relation between public and private realms, and the character of the nation" (Trachtenberg 5).

Not only has corporate life "colonized the spaces of [American] culture" via electronic media and physical spaces such as the school and the street, but its primary target for colonization is the minds of people. That is the reason for which in 1997 alone over 175 billion dollars were spent on advertising. Examples of the tension between private and public interests are abundant. The current philosophy praises the market as the ultimate and best determinant of outcomes. That line of reasoning suggests that we should privatize everything. Should we privatize fire departments? Is competition so effective and valuable that it will improve the functioning of fire fighters? Fire departments began as private companies in America and their private status compromised public safety. A public trust developed as a result. People recognized that their best interests would be better served through a system that could provide assistance to citizens whose lives and property were threatened by fire.

We face several complex issues in the years ahead – issues directly linked to the tension between private and public interests, such as fossil fuels, clean air, clean water, and biotechnology. What began as industrialism – an emphasis on thrift, on yielding more from less, has mutated into a form of capitalism in which "anything that is alive except a full birth human being" can be patented. On one side of the tension between private and public interests are those who espouse the virtues of the free market. This group argues that we would all be better off if everything were owned. Our problems would be solved if every body of water was owned, because an individual (more likely a

corporation) would have a vested interest in its maintenance. On the other side of the tension between private and public interests are those who argue that the free market has its limitations. They argue that "the problem is not business or the market per se but a badly corrupted global economic system" that is quickly moving "beyond human control" (87). According to this group, the corporation's influence on the market is deepening people's dependence on socially and environmentally destructive technologies that sacrifice our physical, social, environmental, and mental health. They argue that every living thing on Earth already has a vested interest in the maintenance of the environment.

In many ways, the tension between private and public interests is manifested in the novels by Melville and Salinger at hand via the central figures' experiences of isolation or solidarity. Isolation fosters exploitative selfishness and greed. Solidarity fosters egalitarianism. One of the most profound symbols of this tension between isolation and solidarity is the "elongated Siamese ligature" of the monkey-rope that binds Ishmael to Queequeg in the operations of whaling (349). Unlike works of nonfiction such as Jared Diamond's Guns, Germs, and Steel: the Fates of Human Societies, which explores mammoth historical and geographical processes, the novel is intrinsically or at least traditionally limited in scope, though *Moby- Dick* may be an exception. Whereas *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Moby- Dick* employs variable narration. Ishmael initially provides readers with a first-person perspective, but through the course of the novel Ishmael's narration shifts into third person limited and third-person omniscient. Despite *Moby- Dick*'s unique features and its encyclopedic subject matter, it is largely character-driven. Indeed, novels are typically character-driven. They tend to focus on individual

human experience trait does not preclude the novel's ability to capture the macrocosmic and microcosmic perspectives. *Moby- Dick* and *The Catcher in the Rye* provide readers with intimate access to the subjective experiences of their central characters and also provide a portrait of the world that those characters inhabit. Subsequent chapters will present evidence of the hulking presence of capitalism in these novels and the detrimental impact of capitalism on their characters. Whether by taking to sea, wandering the streets of New York City, or setting out to accomplish the impossible by literally consuming an automobile Ishmael, Holden, and Herman are figures who are struggling to conquer the encroaching commodification of their lives and make an existence the value of which can not be calculated, measured, or quantified.

III. Capitalism and Alienation in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* and J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*

The title of the first chapter in Herman Melville's seminal novel *Moby- Dick* is highly suggestive of the impalpable experience that awaits its readers. Indeed, "Loomings" is the first of many thematic seeds that Melville plants throughout the novel. Ishmael immediately speaks of going to sea by citing an economic motivation: ". . . having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world" (3). Furthermore, Ishmael explains his decision to go to sea by pointing to his "purse" and suggests that "a purse is but a rag unless you have something in it" (5). Indeed, one of the more prominent and arguably neglected themes that one encounters in *Moby- Dick* is the influence of the marketplace on human relations. Scholars have discussed the representation of industrialization in the novel, but few elucidate the dark imagery and tone that Melville employs in order to criticize the detrimental characteristics of nineteenth-century American capitalism.

Moby- Dick presents a world in which capitalist industrialism reduces human relationships to economic transactions and human existence to economic value; that is to say, the anxieties in *Moby- Dick* are intensified by the fact that one's worth is predominantly determined by the marketplace. *Moby- Dick* exposes the exploitation of human labor and raises concerns about the exploitation of natural resources. Finally, *Moby- Dick* explores the alienation, dehumanization, and commodification of human beings as a result of the marketplace's exploitative processes.

Despite its brevity "Loomings" transports readers into a maelstrom of themes ranging from suicide to class conflict, to slavery, to religion, and finally to free will. However, all of this is done in the rather affable tone that is characteristic of Ishmael. It is this type of sensibility displayed by Ishmael that recurs throughout the development of the novel. Ishmael is a liminal character who drifts through the physical world like an apparition. As a result, he struggles with life's material realities such as filling one's purse with artificial and arbitrary representations of value. One may liken Ishmael to an apparition, for he refers to Greek mythology by suggesting that Narcissus "who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all" (5). Ishmael concludes a deliberation on the mysteries of water with this reference to Narcissus. Narcissus could not literally take hold of his reflection, but in another sense of "grasp," he could not comprehend the reflection of his embodied self. In his pursuit of ontological knowledge, he perishes. According to Ishmael, the fluid, fluctuating, ever-flowing water mirrors our own "ungraspable," fluctuating, phantom-like selves. Indeed, one could argue that Ishmael is in the throes of existential angst and his suffering, frustration, and confusion are exacerbated by the shaving down and classification of everything into percentages. He is in a perpetual identity crisis. Ishmael is "tormented with an everlasting itch for things remote" (8). He is continually seduced and tempted by the unknown. After pointedly admitting his deficient skill in spotting whales from atop the mast-head Ishmael characterizes himself as a young man:

> [Once] lulled into such an opium-like listlessness of vacant, unconscious

> reverie is this absent-minded youth by the blending cadence of waves with thoughts, that at last he loses his identity; takes the mystic ocean at his feet for the visible image of that deep, blue, bottomless soul, pervading mankind and nature; and every strange, half-seen, gliding, beautiful thing that eludes him; every dimly-discovered, uprising fin of some undiscernible form, seems to him the embodiment of those elusive thoughts that only people the soul by continually flitting through it. In this enchanted mood, thy spirit ebbs away to whence it came; becomes diffused through time and space. (172-73)

Ishmael struggles to reconcile his identification with an ethereal self with the reality of his embodied self. Though his spirit is inclined to become "diffused through time and space," he cannot deny that it is "glued inside of its fleshy tabernacle, and cannot freely move about in it, nor even move out of it, without running great risk of perishing" (170). "Methinks we have hugely mistaken this matter of Life and Death" ponders Ishmael. "Methinks that what they call my shadow here on earth is my true substance . . . . Methinks my body is but the lees of my better being" (42). Additionally, Ishmael suggests that "no man can ever feel his own identity aright except his eyes be closed; as if darkness were indeed the proper element of our essences, though light be more congenial to our clayey part" (60). Unlike the landsmen who divert their gaze from the "ungraspable phantom of life" and who are "pent up in lath and plaster – tied to counters, nailed to benches, [and] clinched to desks" (4). Ishmael rejects the false security of the ports and avoids the "pistol and ball" (suicide or homicide) by casting himself upon the sea (3). Furthermore, Ishmael must survive by operating within the social constraints of

the marketplace, as is evident when he negotiates his "lay" with Bildad and Peleg prior to shipping with the Pequod. Bildad and Peleg are "part owners" of the Pequod (80). They supply the ship with all necessary provisions and oversee the recruitment of a crew, but they don't sail with the ship. The Pequod is their investment and they give Ishmael the three hundredth lay, which means that the lives and labor of two hundred and ninety nine people are considered more valuable than his (87).

Ishmael introduces himself to readers and begins his story at a point in his life that has characterized by what Andrew Delbanco terms "divestiture." "[Ishmael] has eliminated almost all his inherited conceptions – religious, social, political, even linguistic – from the categories of the sacred and the prudent and has moved them into the category of the arbitrary. Everything becomes unmoored, vulnerable, dispensable" (26). Ishmael is a character who is in the process of peeling away layers of values and assumptions. His burgeoning friendship with Queequeg serves as a catalyst for his process of divestiture. "I felt a melting in me" declares Ishmael, "No more my splintered heart and maddened hand were turned against the wolfish world. [Queequeg] had redeemed it" (57). Bereft of "civilized hypocrisies and bland deceits" (57), Ishmael's "sudden flame of friendship" with Queequeg "would have seemed far too premature, a thing to be much distrusted" with the average "countryman," but with Queequeg "those old rules would not apply" (58).

Despite Ishmael's arguably melancholic or cynical perspective, his listlessness, his initial air of superiority, and his seemingly judgmental nature, he redeems himself through what Delbanco calls his "capacity for humor at his own expense." He is "amused by his own absurdities" (27). Indeed, according to Ishmael "a good laugh is a mighty

good thing, and rather too scarce a good thing; the more's the pity. So, if any one man, in his own proper person, afford stuff for a good joke to anybody, let him not be backward, but let him cheerfully allow himself to spend and be spent in that way" (33). In fact, Ishmael admits that he "would be social" with a "horror" if permitted, for it is best "to be on friendly terms with all the inmates of the place one lodges in" (8).

Further evidence of Ishmael's ironic and cynical yet affable character is abundant, but one final observation will serve as a capstone. Ishmael reflects upon labor aboard a whaling ship and one's subjection to another's will by saying, "I have the satisfaction of knowing that it is all right; that everybody else is one way or other served in much the same way – either in a physical or metaphysical point of view, that is; and so the universal thump is passed round, and all hands should rub each other's shoulder-blades, and be content" (6). If everyone is busy exchanging thumps, then how can they free their hands for a shoulder rub? Ishmael's qualifying inclusion of the term "should" demonstrates the disproportionately greater frequency of exchanged "thumps" to "rubs." According to Ishmael's assessment, one must cope with the dominance of self-interest and competition in life. They are the standard mode of operation and one must do one's best to function within their framework. Ishmael's reflection is relevant because it captures the full range of potential human relationships from egalitarianism and cooperation to exploitative selfishness and competition.

Moby- Dick examines the ways in which the marketplace directs human relationships toward the latter. While describing his reasons for going to sea Ishmael explains:

> . . . they make a point of paying me for my trouble, whereas they never pay passengers a single penny that I ever heard of. On the contrary, passengers themselves must pay. And there is all the difference in the world between paying and being paid. The act of paying is perhaps the most uncomfortable infliction that the two orchard thieves entailed upon us. But *being paid*, - what will compare with it? The urbane activity with which a man receives money is really marvellous, considering that we so earnestly believe money to be the root of all earthly ills, and that on no account can a monied man enter heaven. Ah! how cheerfully we consign ourselves to perdition! (6-7)

This passage sets the tone for the representation of commercial exchange in the remaining one hundred and thirty four chapters. It reminds readers of the temporal aspect of life, and it elucidates the absurdity involved in the over-arching preoccupation with the acquisition of money that becomes useless to the individual once deceased. It illuminates the divisive and destructive effects of the marketplace on human relations. Ishmael claims that paying is “the most uncomfortable infliction . . . entailed upon us,” (36) and he indicates the pleasure of receiving money. No one enjoys paying others, but no one regrets inflicting discomfiture on others in the act of receiving funds.

Moby- Dick reveals some of the injustices and the imbalances of power that often result from capitalist activity, and indeed it is likely that Melville is commenting upon the economic pressure that he felt in his own life. The tension between solidarity and exploitative selfishness, which is represented in Ishmael’s reflection on the act of paying versus being paid, can be attributed to the fact that capitalism, being born out of

industrialism, is based on competition rather than cooperation. Indeed, the free market is highly valued because it fosters intense competition. Michael T. Gilmore speaks of "the spirit of mutuality springing from commerce" when he says, "Capitalist enterprises such as whaling did not preclude positive interaction between individuals" (29). Indeed, Gilmore suggests, "The sailors who reduce the sperm oil work in concert rather than alone, and the physical experience of life on the whaler encourages an ethic of cooperation" (30). Furthermore, Gilmore suggests that "commerce can foster a sense of trust and mutual responsibility" (31). Gilmore's use of the terms "preclude" and "can" is extremely suggestive because they are conditional and imply that commerce can foster numerous other kinds of relationships.

Moby- Dick purposefully contrasts scenes of solidarity with scenes of isolation. Any "spirit of mutuality" in *Moby- Dick* does not spring forth from commerce, but springs forth in spite of commerce and therefore draws attention to the alienation, exploitation, and dehumanization that the individual experiences under marketplace forces. Gilmore uses the "Monkey-rope" chapter to support his claim of a "cooperative capitalist enterprise." Yet that same chapter also highlights the potential dangers associated with such an enterprise.

Ishmael describes the revelatory experience of being tethered to Queequeg by saying, "I seemed distinctly to perceive that my own individuality was now merged in a joint stock company of two: that my free will had received a mortal wound; and that another's mistake or misfortune might plunge innocent me into unmerited disaster and death" (349). Rather than simply displaying one side of this image, the image of cooperation described by Gilmore, this scene also expresses the possibility that the life of

every human being is in the hands of every other human being and we can either give life or take it away. Melville's use of the "joint stock company" metaphor succinctly captures the tension between private and public interests. The metaphor suggests that business relations should mirror personal relations more closely, because others' interests are one's own interests. The best business model does not sacrifice others' interests for one's own, but strives to accommodate the interests of all parties concerned. The Pequod is a microcosm of the globe and the "Monkey-rope" is a cautionary and suggestive image for readers. One sees this when Ishmael suggests, "I saw that this situation of mine was the precise situation of every mortal that breathes; only, in most cases, he, one way or other, has this Siamese connexion with a plurality of other mortals. If your banker breaks, you snap; if your apothecary by mistake sends you poison in your pills, you die" (349). Melville pinpoints the human condition in this passage. It is not mere coincidence that Stubb chides Dough-Boy for bringing ginger to Queequeg by saying, "we'll teach you to drug a harpooneer; none of your apothecary's medicine here; you want to poison us, do ye? You have got out insurances on our lives and want to murder us all, and pocket the proceeds, do ye?" (351). Hereby Stubb touches on one of capitalism's striking features – insurance. Life insurance enables one to apply a pecuniary value to one's life in the event of an untimely death. Insurance is a clause in the rule book of capitalism that reinforces the economic status of one's identity.

Melville calls free will into question in the "Monkey-rope" chapter, as well as throughout the rest of the novel, and highlights our ability either to care for one another with mutual respect or vindictively exploit one another for personal profit. Melville seems to suggest that if humans do have free will, then they should recognize that their

choices affect those around them. *Moby- Dick* implies that the individual's freewill, if he or she has any, is severely limited by the "uncomfortable infliction that the two orchard thieves entailed upon us" (56). As uncomfortable as it may be, one must pay one's way in this world – a necessity that often causes one to serve a function that is not directly inspired by one's personal aspirations. One sees this conflict in the "Try-Works" chapter, in which the crew seems to have lost all autonomy and instead are possessed by industriousness.

The "Try-Works" presents a dark vision of the Pequod's crew in the actual business of whaling. The crew does not operate out of any sense of mutual interest. In fact, they are stripped of both mutual and self interest. Their interests are consumed by the whaling industry and they operate in order to ensure the health and stability of the marketplace. If a whaling ship were a human, then the try-works would be its heart. If a whaling ship were a machine, then the try-works would be its engine. According to Ishmael, "an American whaler is outwardly distinguished by her try-works," which "are planted between the foremast and mainmast, the most roomy part of the deck" (461). In other words, the try-works are the most prominent feature of the Pequod and command the most space. Very little kindling is required after the initial ignition of the try-works. The whale carcass provides its own fuel. Ishmael likens it to a "plethoric burning martyr" or "a self-consuming misanthrope" and wishes that it would consume its own smoke, for its "smoke is horrible to inhale, and inhale it you must, and not only that, but you must live in it for the time . . . . It smells like the left wing of the day of judgment . . ." (462). The self-consumption of the burning whale and its smoke on board the microcosmic

Pequod parallel the decadent consumption and the surplus of waste and pollution created by the marketplace.

The “Try-Works” presents readers with a view of an industrialized environment akin to a factory or a steel mill. Yet Melville singes the industrialized environment with elements of the apocalypse in which “the harpooners wildly gesticulated with their huge pronged forks and dippers . . .” (463). Thereby, Melville suggests that industrialism is a form of hell on earth. Rather than working in a spirit of mutuality, the crew seem possessed. Their autonomy appears to have dissolved or to have been transplanted by a hive or mob mentality. In many ways, the chapter attests to the cultural dominance of capitalist industrialism and provides an unabashed commentary upon industrialist activity brimming over with satanic images of forks, flames, prongs, snakes, scorched eyes, and soot. If the “Try-Works” laments the effects wrought by man’s embrace of industrialism, then “Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish” reveals the ideology motivating such an embrace. At one point Ishmael introduces the notion of private property by asking, “. . . is not Possession the whole of the law” (435). Melville extends the image of the “Siamese connexion” presented in the “Monkey-rope” chapter from individuals to nations when Ishmael asks, “What was America in 1492 but a Loose-Fish . . . [and] . . . . What at last will Mexico be to the United States” (435). Industrialism is accompanied by complex organization, centralization of human populations, and an emphasis on efficiency. Industrialism also requires a great many resources, and the acquisition of land serves as a considerable contribution to a nation’s pool of resources. In addition, imperialism, colonization, and the general expansion of a sovereign nation’s territory create new markets.

One can detect a precursor to twentieth and twenty-first-century cerebral colonization in Ishamael's question about Mexico's fate. *Moby- Dick* seems to mourn the reality of the human condition, or rather, the choices humans make to cope with that condition. In its acute portrayal of humanity's many flaws, one can identify a strong desire within *Moby- Dick* for things to be other than they are. One can detect this desire when Ishmael concludes the chapter by inquiring, "What are the Rights of Man and the Liberties of the World but Loose-Fish? What all men's minds and opinions but Loose Fish . . . . What is the great globe itself but a Loose-Fish? And what are you, reader, but a Loose-Fish and a Fast-Fish, too?" (435). According to Ishmael, a Loose-Fish "is fair game for anybody who can soonest catch it" (433). A citizen's rights are fairly well caught from birth, and unless one retains one's rights as if they were Fast-Fish (objects or commodities that "belong[ ] to the party fast to it"), then it is safe to assume that someone else will pursue them (433). Ishmael's first question also exposes a potentially sinister and Nietzschean line of thought, for this question can lead one to reason that all is there for the taking. In other words, it can lead to an extremely self-centered and individualistic frame of mind. Indeed, *Moby- Dick* suggests that this rationale is quickly becoming the standard. Ishmael's first question reveals a potentially violent ethic, and historically laws have been established to protect those already in power, not the inverse. "Is not Possession the whole of the law?" is an ironic question when applied to the slave who owns no property but is owned by another human being (435). America was founded upon conquest, genocide, and slavery. Does one change what is wrong from within? Should one adopt an egalitarian ethic of equity and mutual respect or adopt the same

means as one's oppressors? This seems to be one of the many questions for which Melville seeks an answer in *Moby- Dick*.

Ishmael's second question at the conclusion of "Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish" carries us away from physical intimidation or coercion into a more subtle type of manipulation. Indeed, the captain of the Pequod is a veritable veteran at this form of control, as Ishmael indicates: "Starbuck's body and Starbuck's coerced will were Ahab's, so long as Ahab kept his magnet at Starbuck's brain . . ." (230-31). Again, one can detect a precursor to the commercial colonization of the modern mind, the further development of which can be observed in *The Catcher in the Rye*.

This line of reasoning suggests that if violence need be committed it is best to convince others that it is in their best interest to execute it in one's stead. The minds of Ahab's crew are Fast-Fish and Ahab is the party in pursuit. Although Ahab's fanatical pursuit of the whale is free from expectations of profit, he knows that the best way to secure the minds of his men is with the promise of money. Shortly after reflecting on Ahab's influence over Starbuck, Ishmael describes Ahab's thoughts by saying, "For even the high lifted and chivalric Crusaders of old times were not content to traverse two thousand miles of land to fight for their holy sepulchre, without committing burglaries, picking pockets, and gaining other pious perquisites by the way" (231). Furthermore, Ishmael relates, "I will not strip these men, thought Ahab, of all hopes of cash – aye cash" (232). Although Ahab's quest may appeal to the crew because it offers some loftier meaning to their lives other than the mundane process of hunting and slaughtering whales for a paltry living, Melville chooses continually to tie the crew's acquiescence to the potential for profit. Thus, *Moby- Dick* confirms that one of the most reliable methods for

gaining control is through cash incentives. Now, let us address the final two inquiries put forth by Ishmael at the conclusion of "Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish:" "What is the great globe itself but a Loose-Fish?" "And what are you, reader, but a Loose-Fish and a Fast-Fish, too?" The first question suggests that the entire planet is a Loose-Fish, encompassing land, peoples, and natural resources. Should one scramble to get what one can while one can, or should an ethic of sharing preside over the globe? At this time, colonization and the expansion of territory were still largely linked to physical presence, but in order to make a physical presence felt, a nation must persuade and motivate the minds of men to stand as representatives of its presence.

In other words, a nation must aim its magnet at the brains of men in order to populate an army. *Moby- Dick* displays a primitive or nascent form of cerebral colonization. Rather than convincing the opposition that it is in their best interest to relinquish control of their land, resources, and people, the party in pursuit convinces people to physically conquer the pursued under the auspices of sovereignty. These are the issues that Melville raises by putting these words into Ishmael's mouth. However, Ishmael's final question is highly suggestive.

It is a striking question that momentarily threatens to destroy the narrative thread entirely. By asking, ". . . what are you, reader, but a Loose-Fish and a Fast-Fish, too?" (36) Melville surfaces in his own novel. Although his question speaks to the multitudinous "Siamese connexions" that every soul shares with countless others, it also speaks specifically to the relationship between author and reader. In today's world these connections are amplified to an incalculable frequency. One driving down the highway, listening to the radio, places one's life in others' hands while holding the lives of others

in one's hands. In addition, the car radio broadcasts advertisements that pursue the Loose-Fish of one's mind in order to solicit consumption. Melville was already keenly aware of this interdependency in the nineteenth century. The final question indicates Melville's admission that he was in pursuit of his readers' minds. Although Melville is commenting upon generally universal aspects of the human condition, he also comments intimately upon his relationship with the reader. Melville admits to his participation and acquiescence in the commercial activities that he seems to criticize. All of Ishmael's concluding questions in "Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish" are centered on possession. Men's minds, rights, opinions, and even the planet are all cast as potential objects for acquisition and control. Once again, we return to the question of how the marketplace influences human relations.

Moby- Dick suggests that it makes private or self-interest the highest priority even at the expense of others. However, there are exceptions. Ishmael and Queequeg represent an egalitarian relationship that thrives in spite of the marketplace. Ishmael describes Queequeg: "There he sat, his very indifference speaking a nature in which there lurked no civilized hypocrisies and bland deceits" (57). Continuing this description Ishmael says, "In a countryman, this sudden flame of friendship would have seemed far too premature, a thing to be much distrusted . . ." (57). The key terms or phrases in these passages are "civilized hypocrisies," "bland deceits," and "a thing to be much distrusted" (58). In these passages one can detect an inherent distrust for the customs familiar to Ishmael, and Queequeg seems to represent the ideal qualities so often lacking in typical human interaction. One needs to look only at the numerous occasions in which Queequeg sacrifices his own well being in order to secure the safety of others, as in the case of the

"greenhorn" in the "Wheelbarrow" chapter and with Tashtego in the "Cistern and Buckets" chapter. The notion of self-sacrifice and sharing is also reinforced when Ishmael states, "[Queequeg] took out his enormous tobacco wallet, and groping under the tobacco, drew out some thirty dollars in silver; then spreading them on the table, and mechanically dividing them into two equal portions, pushed one of them towards me, and said it was mine" (58).

However, the three shipmates (Starbuck, Stubb, and Flask) are a stark contrast to the egalitarianism exhibited by Ishmael and Queequeg. Alan Heimert presents a convincing interpretation of the three shipmates and their respective harpooneers when he suggests, "The harpooneers . . . who so 'generously' supply 'the muscles' for the 'native American' mates, are representatives of the three races on which each of the American sections . . . had built its prosperity in the nineteenth century."32 Stubb represents the west and Starbuck the north. Heimert points to one of the more sinister elements of American culture and history exposed in *Moby- Dick* by poignantly suggesting that, "Flask, perched precariously on Daggoo's shoulders, seems, like the southern economy itself, sustained only by the strength of the [slave]" (307). Heimert's analysis of the mates and harpooneers exposes the exploitation of human labor, the exploitation of natural resources, and the alienating and dehumanizing effects of industrialism in *Moby-Dick*. Of the three shipmates Stubb represents Queequeg's opposite in at least two instances. Upon viewing the Rose-bud, Stubb sarcastically exclaims, "Poor devil! I say, pass round a hat, some one, and let's make him a present of a little oil for dear charity's sake" (441). In direct contrast to the present Queequeg offers to Ishmael, the reader soon learns that Stubb has no intention of assisting the crew aboard the Rose-bud. Indeed, he

swindles them instead. For Heimert the French captain of the Rose-bud “is gulled of one ‘Fast-Fish,’ as his nation of Louisiana, by the fast-talking Stubb” (307). as gold-hunters” (445-446). The Rose-bud gam typifies the negative influence that the marketplace can foster in human relations. The camaraderie displayed by the Pequod’s crew in this instance is at the expense of the Rose-bud’s crew, and Ishmael concludes the episode by saying, “and this, good friends, is ambergris, worth a gold guinea an ounce to any druggist. Some six handfuls were obtained; but more was unavoidably lost in the sea . . .” (446). Ambergris is an “important article of commerce” and Ishmael mockingly wonders why “fine ladies and gentlemen . . . regale themselves” with a substance found in the “inglorious bowels of a sick whale!” (447). Ishmael’s observation elucidates the absurdities that result from a preoccupation with social status. Ambergris is a rare and expensive commodity. Due to its limited supply and price, the “fine ladies and gentlemen” who use it, perform an act of fashionable consumption.

The final example of what commerce *can* foster among laboring men occurs in “The Castaway” chapter. The potential greed and resulting injustices that often accompany commercial activities are revealed with stark clarity in the misfortune that befalls Pip. Readers can detect the dark tone of “The Castaway” chapter when Ishmael says:

> When the cunning jeweler would show you the diamond in its most impressive lustre, he lays it against a gloomy ground, and then lights it up, not by the sun, but by some unnatural gases. Then come out those fiery effulgences, infernally superb; then the evil-blazing diamond, once the

> divinest symbol of the crystal skies, looks like some crown-jewel stolen from the King of Hell. (451)

Ishmael initially sets up an analogy of Pip as a brilliant diamond and describes how his experience "had most sadly blurred his brightness" (451). Ironically, Stubb's greed has a compounding influence. It was during the theft of the Rose-bud's ambergris that one of Stubb's oarsmen was injured, thereby resulting in Pip's presence on the whaling boat. The detrimental effects of commerce on human relations are horrifically expressed when Stubb says, "Stick to the boat, Pip, or by the Lord, I wont pick you up if you jump; mind that. We can't afford to lose whales by the likes of you; a whale would sell for thirty times what you would, Pip, in Alabama. Bear that in mind, and don't jump any more" (452). Pip's status is a stark example of the commodification of human beings in a culture dominated by the marketplace. Whereas Ishmael and the other crew members are at least paid something for their trouble, albeit a paltry sum, the slaves alluded to by Stubb not only receive zero compensation, but in fact are regarded as commodities. Ishmael reflects upon this problem by saying, "Hereby perhaps Stubb indirectly hinted, that though man loves his fellow, yet man is a money-making animal, which propensity too often interferes with his benevolence" (452). Hereby perhaps *Ishmael* indirectly hints that man loves himself more than anything else, and money is a sure-fire way to safeguard self-preservation – at least in the short term. Indeed, perhaps man does not love his fellow so much at all, but merely feigns love via the "hollow courtesy" of "Christian kindness" (57).

Moby- Dick grapples with a tension concerning whether commercial activity encourages isolation or solidarity. Images of both acute isolation and extreme sociability

are proffered throughout the novel, and they force the reader to think about human interaction. Despite a few instances in which congenial behavior between individuals occurs, the over-arching theme suggests that a system of social organization dominated by the marketplace often exacerbates severe selfishness. For the rare instances of congenial behavior occur in the face of the commercial circumstance; when it does occur, it is in spite of commercial activity, not because of it. "Call me Ishmael" demands the narrator at the opening of *Moby- Dick* (3). Ishmael provides very little information about his history. We know nothing about his family or where he was born. We don't know his surname. We aren't even certain about his first name, though we can be pretty sure that it is not Ishmael.

Similarly, Holden Caulfield foregoes any "David Copperfield kind of crap" in the opening line of *The Catcher in the Rye* (1). He does not begin his story with the hour of his birth. He does not reveal where he was born, what his "lousy childhood" was like, or what his parents were doing before they had him (1). However, we learn much about Holden's history as the story unfolds, and we learn early in the story that Holden is sixteen, but due to his height and the gray hair on the right side of his head, he looks older than his age. In addition, Holden confesses that, despite his appearance, he often acts as if he were twelve or thirteen (9). The nature of Holden's story has led some to describe him as a "quest" figure. He has been compared to Huck Finn, which is quite understandable because *The Catcher in the Rye* presents a marked tension between childhood and adulthood. Indeed, Holden's story is a kind of bildungsroman. My present analysis, however, will address *The Catcher in the Rye* as only in so far as maturation in America involves the commercialization of one's identity. Joshua Meyrowitz suggests

that, “as the confines of the prison, the convent, the family home, the neighborhood, the executive suite, the university campus, and the Oval Office, are all invaded through electronics, we must expect a fundamental shift in our perceptions of our society, our authorities, and ourselves” (34). *The Catcher in the Rye* epitomizes our culture’s struggle to make the “fundamental shift in our perceptions” that Meyrowitz discusses. Set in December 1949, Holden’s story takes place in a world forever changed by the Holocaust and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II. The Cold War is in full swing by the time Holden is expelled from Pencey Prep. The Hollywood Ten – ten filmmakers suspected of Communist affiliation – had already been to appear before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. The filmmakers were later convicted of contempt of Congress, sentenced to one year in prison and one-thousand dollar fines. Following their conviction, the Hollywood Ten were blacklisted from Hollywood productions. Television was in its infancy at the time, but the television networks and newsreels (shown in theaters before feature films) covered the HUAC investigations. A reiteration of the relationship between electronic communications technology and commerce may be useful at this point. That is, the first does not exist without the other. The proliferation of electronic communications technology and the saturation of society with electronic messages not only depend upon economic processes, but are fueled by them as well. Electronic communications technologies are the means through which the marketplace permeates modern life. Again, the marketplace and electronic communications technologies are not themselves responsible for any negative impact they have on individuals. Economic systems and technologies do not have agency – people do. Economic systems are social constructs used to organize society, and

technologies are tools used to reinforce those economic systems. Holden lives in a world threatened by weapons proliferation and atomic annihilation. He lives in a society that is increasingly dominated by market interests, and new communications technologies serve as tools that secure those interests. Finally, the dominance of the marketplace over Holden's life is a significant factor that leads to his "madman" days in New York City during December 1949, and this becomes immediately apparent from a cursory examination of the opening paragraph (1).

The opening of the novel, along with each subsequent page, is loaded with evidence of the impact of the marketplace on the individual. First, the concept of labor is called into question and the definition of "prostitution" is extended beyond the sale of one's body or the provision of sexual favors for cash. Prostitution is extended to include the sale of one's energies for a questionable purpose as is evinced when Holden refers to his brother D.B. who is "prostituting" himself in Hollywood as a screenwriter (2). Second, the reader's attention is drawn to the automobile as an item of fashionable consumption. Holden explains that "[D.B.] just got a Jaguar. One of those little English jobs that can do around two hundred miles an hour. It cost him damn near four thousand 36 bucks. He's got a lot of dough, now. He didn't *use* to" (1). Holden's tone expresses disapproval of D.B.'s purchase and his wealth. Holden focuses on the cost of the car and the speeds that the car can reach. His attention to those details indirectly highlights the absurdities involved in the purchase of such a car. He alludes to the irony of selling expensive automobiles that greatly exceed legal speed limits. A second account further establishes the automobile as an item of fashionable consumption. In an argument with one of his peers, Holden complains that people who are "crazy" about their cars "worry if

they get a little scratch on them, and they're always talking about how many miles they get to a gallon, and if they get a brand-new car already they start thinking about trading it in for one that's even newer" (130). Holden expresses his frustration with hyperconsumerism in this passage: "I don't even like *old* cars . . . . I'd rather have a goddam horse. A horse is at least *human*, for God's sake. A horse you can at least --" (131). Holden's exasperated listener cuts him off, but a horse can be fed. Horses have siblings and parents. A person who owns a horse establishes a relationship with the animal that, some would argue, one can not have with a manufactured automobile. Holden makes it quite clear that he has not been able to establish a connection with automobiles or anything else that he has been socialized to value.

Immediately following Holden's account of D.B. we learn that Holden attended a private boarding school:

> [Pencey Prep] is this school in Agerstown, Pennsylvania. You probably heard of it. You've probably seen the ads, anyway. They advertise in about a thousand magazines, always showing some hot-shot guy on a horse jumping over a fence. Like as if all you ever did at Pencey was play polo all the time. I never even once saw a horse anywhere *near* the place. (2)

In this passage, Holden points out a discrepancy between the leisure lifestyle that Pencey Prep advertises and the reality of his experiences at the school. Holden's world is no longer characterized by an economy that is powered by manufacturing. According to Christopher Brookeman, Holden lives in a postindustrial world in which "leisure industries, financial services, and consumption" stimulate the economy. Holden is acutely

sensitive to this fact and he recognizes how highly valued appearances and performance are in his culture. He confesses that he was once almost lured into the advertising industry: “I almost was once in a movie short, but I changed my mind at the last minute. I figured that anybody that hates the movies as much as I do, I’d be a phony if I let them stick me in a movie short” (77).

In the same manner that he analyzes the school’s magazine advertisement, Holden exposes and deconstructs “the official ideology of Pencey Prep” and the larger culture within which the school exists. Holden is being groomed for an Ivy League college and a subsequent profession appropriate to his upper-middle class station, and his parents are interested in his development from a safe distance. After admitting his irresponsibility with money Holden says, “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 it’s quite a lot. He’s a corporation lawyer. Those boys really haul it in. nother reason I know he’s quite well off, he’s always investing money in shows on Broadway” (107). Holden’s father has never discussed “that stuff” with his son.

The novel does not give readers any indication that his father has discussed many subjects with Holden. Holden must use his imagination to estimate how much his father makes. Broadway investments and a professional title indicate his father’s wealth and social status. In addition, Holden can gauge his father’s status on the basis of his interaction with his peer group and the representation of lawyers in the mass media. Pencey Prep is at least the third private school that Holden has attended. Educational institutions are the liaison between Holden and his parents. They represent Mr. and Mrs. Caulfield’s interest in their son’s development. Otherwise, Holden’s parents are largely

absent from the lives of their children. The father is absent to the extent that he can't attend his daughter Phoebe's Christmas pageant because "he has to fly to California" (162). The mother makes a single brief appearance towards the end of the novel to check up on Phoebe after returning home from a late-night party in Connecticut. Holden's observations on the values that he encounters at Pencey Prep "lead him to conclude that the whole official vision of the school as a cooperative caring family is a mask for an actual ideology of intense competitive struggle between its individual members and factions" (39).

Holden's problem is that he is being socialized to participate in a way of life that he abhors. His socialization, however, has been relatively effective. He has become proficient at a game that he despises. He knows the rules quite well, and for a sixteen-year-old, he can read the opponent with startling accuracy. An example of Holden's sophisticated grasp of the cultural codes that determine social interaction among his peers occurs when he and Stradlater are in the "can." Stradlater is pressuring Holden to write an essay on his behalf and Holden temporarily defuses the situation by putting on a comical performance. He pretends to be the son of a Governor who wants to be a tap-dancer. The Governor wants his son to go to Oxford, but Holden insists that tap-dancing is in his "goddam blood" (29). Holden narrates the climax of his performance by saying, "'Its opening night of the *Ziegfeld Follies*' . . . . 'The leading man can't go on. He's drunk as a bastard. So who do they get to take his place? Me, that's who. The little ole goddam Governor's son'" (28). Holden manages to distract Stradlater with an impromptu take-off on a popular Hollywood musical, but he also mocks the fact that both he and Stradlater are expected to attend Ivy League schools and conform to the mandates of their social

class. Stradlater is not impressed with Holden's performance. Actually, he sees through it. He knows that Holden is merely stalling, so he quickly returns to his request for academic "assistance." However, Holden is quick on his feet and diverts the subject again by asking Stradlater who his date is for that evening. Holden and Stradlater are dissociated from one another. In fact, one of the only reasons that Holden rooms with a "stupid bastard" like Stradlater is that one of Holden's former roommates at Elkton Hills kept telling him that his luggage was "bourgeois as hell" (108-9).

Holden's world is replete with an intense stratification of social position that is based upon rigid economic standards. According to Carol and Richard Ohmann, Holden's "desires point him toward a world in which human qualities like intelligence and a sense of humor would be the ground of relatedness, rather than Mark Cross luggage and the money that stands behind it" (26). Holden conveys his views on his culture, his role in that culture, and the timeline of his development in that culture, in at least three instances. While arguing with Sally Hayes, he criticizes private schools by saying, "[They are] full of phonies, and all you do is study so that you can learn enough to be smart enough to be able to buy a goddam Cadillac some day . . . and all you do is talk about girls and liquor and sex all day, and everybody sticks together in these dirty little goddam cliques" (131). Holden naively asks Sally to run away with him. She insists that the idea is too "fantastic" and assures him that there will be "oodles of time" and "oodles of marvelous" places to go after he goes to college (133). Holden disagrees. He insists that "it'd be entirely different" after college:

> I'd be working in some office, making a lot of dough, and riding to work in cabs and Madison Avenue buses, and reading newspapers, and playing

> bridge all the time, and going to the movies and seeing a lot of stupid newsreels. Newsreels. Christ almighty. There's always a dumb horse race, and some dame breaking a bottle over a ship, and some chimpanzee riding a goddam bicycle with pants on. (133)

The life that Holden imagines is completely devoid of anything that is not connected to commerce. He imagines that he will make as much money as possible and he will read the paper in order to be informed on any developments that may concern his interests. He ill play bridge in his leisure time and probably do a little social networking, and of course he will go to the movies. Finally, Holden's vision is complete with the image of a chimpanzee riding a bicycle and wearing pants. The image raises at least two questions. What makes humans and chimpanzees different, and how different are humans and chimpanzees from one another? Jane Goodall has done much to answer the latter question. Her work demonstrates that humans and chimpanzees are closely related. However, the first question is more difficult to answer. One important distinction, though, between humans and chimpanzees, is that humans have a much more complex social organization. Holden is frustrated with the complex social organization of humans because it is dominated by the marketplace, and the performing chimpanzee is a glaring example of that fact. The image of the chimpanzee wearing pants and riding a bicycle represents corrupted purity. The chimpanzee has been incorporated into the business of making money. The bicycle-riding chimpanzee is a parody of Holden as an adult, putting on a suit, and taking a taxi to work. Holden is concerned that after college he will be fully immersed in a commercial culture. In addition, he can not picture himself in any of the

roles he is expected to fill. All of the roles he imagines are "incompatible with the spontaneous feeling and relatedness" he wishes for.

Holden imagines that he will be "working in some office" after college, but he cannot define the kind of office or the kind of work he will do there. He can not imagine a life for himself that won't compromise his principles. Phoebe tells him to name something that he would like to "*be*" and she offers a "scientist" or a "lawyer" as suggestions (172). Holden thinks lawyers are all right if they save innocent people all the time, but he is afraid that they don't do that. He is afraid that "if you're a lawyer," then "all you do is make a lot of dough and play golf and play bridge and buy cars and drink Martinis and look like a hot-shot" (172).

Holden is even more concerned that if he were a lawyer he might lose himself in the role and forget why he became a lawyer in the first place. He is afraid that he might compromise his integrity and principles:

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

Holden is concerned with identity here. He feels that one would not know that one was a "phony" because a person's identity is increasingly determined by the marketplace – an artificial system. Holden's problem is that he is beginning to struggle with the idea that

one can not escape being "phony" if one's identity is defined economically. Ultimately, Holden is also concerned with storytelling. If so much of what constitutes day-to-day human reality is based on social organization and artificial systems, then why don't we make up a better story? Holden is disappointed that, in the story in which he lives, people don't go around saving each other. They trade in new cars for newer ones, they gather together in cliques, they commit genocide, and they drop bombs on one another. Holden is engulfed in a maelstrom of social change.

As the economy has become the dominant organizing principle of social life, science and technology have developed at an accelerating rate. Holden has convenient access to abundant products and services under the shadow of the atomic bomb. "Advanced capitalism" has made it conceivable that there could be enough "stuff" for everyone – that poverty could be eliminated, and that this abundance could co-exist with equality and "brotherhood." Capitalism "feeds" the desire for this coexistence, but prevents its "fulfillment." "Only a few can hope" for affluence, which is achieved "at the expense of the many." Consequently, one must stifle "awareness of the many" to enjoy one's affluence. William K. Shrader suggests that the awareness of the threat of the destruction of civilization by man-made weapons "can be seen to feed insecurity and cynical consumerism" (44). Holden is painfully aware of cynical consumerism's cultural presence, but he rejects it rather than embraces it, and he can not shut out his "awareness of the many." Electronic communications technologies are one of the primary scientific and technological developments that contributed to the social changes that Holden experiences, and they play a pivotal role in *The Catcher in the Rye*. Electronic media, film and television in particular, gave people a glance into one another's lives.

As mentioned earlier, the Hollywood Ten investigations were broadcast two years before Holden's "madman" journey home. Film and television put a face on public figures. They gave government a personality in the eyes of the public. William L. Rivers suggests that:

> The media have played a major part in transforming the social order into a mass society. More than that, they are an increasingly important means of power for the elite of dominant institutional orders. They not only filter man's experience of external reality; they also help to shape his experience. They tell him who he is, what he wants to be, and how he can appear to be that way to others. (45)

In the Cold War era of Holden's adolescence, film and television were still new tools for communication and propaganda. As time has passed, and people have become accustomed to them, their use has become more subtle, more sophisticated. Electronic media can certainly entertain and can sometimes, though not always, inform citizens. Lewis Lapham discusses an idea that he calls the "Eternal Now":

> the corporate media assume that because they are omnipresent they are also omniscient. Accustomed to believing themselves the creators of the character of the American president . . . they don't draw careful distinctions between democracy as a system of government and democracy as a form of entertainment. (47)

Lapham indicates the difficulties that arise when corporations own the media. Corporate media tend to impede the democratic process by turning it into profitable entertainment through editing and selective coverage. In an electronically mediated environment –

perception, belief, and truth are often based on performance – a performance of the type that Holden criticizes as he tries to expose the "phoniness" in the world.

Holden is poised on the cusp of the transition from a print society to an electronically mediated society. As a result, he seems to be sensitive to the impact of electronic communications technologies on the economic organization of society. Television and film have deemphasized language, literacy, and speechwriting in politics and emphasized body language, appearance, and performance. Holden has one foot planted firmly in the literary world and the other planted in the visual. He is an "ace composition writer" who is flunking every course but English (182). He discusses Shakespeare with a pair of nuns in a restaurant (111). He prefers *The Great Gatsby* to *A Farewell to Arms* (141). Readers learn by the second page that Holden claims to hate the movies, but he is peculiarly fascinated by them. In fact, Holden admits that he enjoys imitating movies during his Ziegfeld Follies routine in the "can" at Pencey Prep (29). After he gets punched in the stomach by Sunny's pimp (Maurice) at the end of chapter fourteen, he has an elaborate movie fantasy in the film noir tradition. He pretends that Maurice "plugged" him, so he sort of shuffles to the bathroom with a "bullet in [his] guts" (104). Then, Holden imagines that he craftily avoids the elevator and calmly walks down a few flights of stairs – dramatically dripping with blood the whole way. After putting six shots through Maurice's "fat hairy belly" and dropping the gun down the elevator shaft, he "crawls back to [his] room and call[s] up Jane to have her come over and bandage up [his] guts" (104). Then, he pictures himself bleeding all over the place while Jane holds a cigarette for him to smoke before he declares, "The goddam movies.

They can ruin you. I'm not kidding" (104). The following series of observations and experiences signify the transference of ritualized spiritual or religious ceremonies to the commercialized entertainment or cinematic experience. Holden observes that "Broadway was mobbed and messy. It was Sunday, and only about twelve o'clock, but it was mobbed anyway. Everybody was on their way to the movies – the Paramount or the Astor or the Strand or the Capitol or one of those crazy places" (115). He continues this description by saying:

> Everybody was all dressed up, because it was Sunday, and that made it worse. But the worst part was that you could tell they all *wanted* to go to the movies. I couldn't stand looking at them. I can understand somebody going to the movies because there's nothing else to do, but when somebody really *wants* to go, and even walks fast so as to get there quicker, then it depresses hell out of me. Especially if I see millions of people standing in one of those long, terrible lines, all the way down the block, waiting with this terrific patience for seats and all. (115-16)

Via repetition, Holden emphasizes the fact that it is Sunday and the scene that Holden describes above evokes the line for communion in a church or the line that forms as people are shaking hands with the clergymen before they shuffle towards their cars. Salinger juxtaposes the image of a cinematic communion with a different image: "This family that you could tell just came out of some church were walking in front of me – a father, a mother, and a little kid about six years old" (115). Holden says that they "looked sort of poor" (115). The father is wearing "one of those pearl-gray hats that poor guys

wear a lot" (115). The little kid is walking along the curb, precariously near the loud, speeding traffic, and he is singing "If a body catch a body coming through the rye" (115).

The family makes Holden feel less depressed among the swarm of holiday shoppers and moviegoers on Broadway. Seeing them makes him think that maybe some things are sacred. Maybe some things have a value that can not be determined by the marketplace. They give Holden hope. The day after Holden warns that movies can "ruin you," he goes to the movies. He says he's going just to pass the time, but Holden is becoming increasingly desperate. He could pass his time in numerous other ways, but everyone on Broadway is heading to the movies. As much as Holden seems to disapprove of the ritual, he joins the solemn spectatorship of the movie theater because he is looking for a connection to people and the world. He seeks an identity, a sense of fulfillment, and relationships that are not strictly determined by commercial interests. He does not find what he is looking for on this particular trip to the theater. Instead, he finds a dazzling display of human objectification. When Holden enters the theatre the stage show is on: "The Rockettes were kicking their heads off, the way they do when they're all in line with their arms around each other's waist. The audience applauded like mad, and some guy behind me kept saying to his wife, 'You know what that is? That's precision'" (137). The synchronized precision of the Rockettes mirrors the regulated movement of mechanical parts.

The individuality of the dancers is subjugated to conformity with profit-seeking practices. Then Holden describes a second portion of the stage show: ". . . they had this Christmas thing they have at Radio City every year. All these angels start coming out of the boxes and everywhere, guys carrying crucifixes and stuff all over the place, and the

whole bunch of them – thousands of them – singing 'Come All Ye Faithful' like mad" (137). Holden continues: "Big Deal. It's supposed to be religious as hell, I know, and very pretty and all, but I can't see anything religious or pretty, for God's sake, about a bunch of actors carrying crucifixes all over the stage" (137). Finally, Holden concludes: "When they were all finished and started going out the boxes again, you could tell they could hardly wait to get a cigarette or something" (137). Holden doesn't see the pageantry before him as sacred in any manner. He sees an advertisement for any and all products, an advertisement for consumerism.

Holden claims that he cannot "stand" ministers because they are "phony" (100). They "all have these Holy Joe voices" (100). He cannot understand why they don't speak in their "natural" voices (100). He suspects that their sermons are not genuine, that they are too much like a performance. They are more like actors than ministers. Holden offers a similar critique of Alfred Lunt and Lynne Fontaine, actors who "[don't] act like people" and "[don't] act like actors" (126). Instead, Holden believes that they act like celebrities (126). In Holden's world, corporate capitalism has strategically maneuvered and positioned itself to address any doubts concerning the existence of God. In the event that God does not exist, corporate capitalism offers itself for devotional purposes. Corporate capitalism is God's understudy. The relationship of religion with corporate capitalism is revealed by Holden's discussion of his dormitory at Pencey Prep, which is named after an alumnus, Ossenburger, who has "made a pot of dough in the undertaking business (16). Ossenburger is a successful product of Pencey's assembly line, and he is a figure after whom the students are expected to model themselves. He receives "obligatory" cheers

when he attends school football games. Ossenburger tells the student body at an assembly in the chapel that he "was never ashamed . . . to get right down on his knees and pray to God" (16 -17). Holden describes Ossenburger's address by saying, "He told us we ought to think of Jesus as our buddy and all. He said *he* talked to Jesus all the time. Even when he was driving his car" (16 -17). "That killed me," says Holden (17). He imagines Ossenburger, "the big phony bastard," shifting "his big goddam Cadillac . . . into first gear and asking Jesus to send him a few more stiffs" (16-17). According to Carol and Richard Ohmann, Ossenburger's "phoniness is rooted in the economic and social arrangements of capitalism, and in their concealment" (228).

Holden's account of Ossenburger "demystifies" the social order "better than if he had said, 'this man claims legitimacy for his money, his Cadillac, his business ethics, his eminence and class privilege, by enlisting religion on his side." Holden's problem with movies is that they threaten to co-opt his imagination in the same way that corporate capitalism co-opts religion. Holden gives the movie he sees a scathing review: "It was so putrid [he] couldn't take [his] eyes off it" (138). Ironically, the main character in the film shares significant similarities with Holden. He is a member of a privileged class who wanders "all over London, not knowing who the hell he is" (138). However, their similarities end there. The film's main character falls in love and regains his memory before the film ends. Holden's negative review of the movie can be attributed to its "happy ending" and its lack of verisimilitude. Holden's story ends with an uncertain future in a psychiatric facility. Later in the evening, after Holden has left the movies, he goes to a bar and starts drinking. Once he is drunk, Holden says, "I started that stupid business with the bullet in my guts again" (150). Nearly twenty-four hours after his

encounter with Maurice, Holden is still engaging in an elaborate movie fantasy: "I was the only guy at the bar with a bullet in their guts. I kept putting my hand under my jacket, on my stomach and all, to keep the blood from dripping all over the place. I didn't want anybody to know I was even wounded. I was con*ceal*ing the fact that I was a wounded sonuvabitch" (150). Even after Holden leaves the bar, he keeps his hand on his "wound." He is so influenced by movies that he is etached from himself and the world. He transfers his moral, psychological, and emotional wound to an imagined gunshot wound. He is performing concealment. The performance of his fantasy is not for anyone else. He does not share it with anyone. He uses it to cope with his estrangement from his parents, his society, and himself. Phoebe is the only person with whom Holden has a genuine, sustained relationship. After leaving the bar, Holden heads home to see her. In many ways, she is responsible for stabilizing Holden by suggesting that he does not like "*any*thing that is happening" and by challenging him to name "one thing" that he likes (169). We know Holden likes Phoebe, he likes his dead brother Allie, and he likes D.B.'s short story, "The Secret Goldfish." Holden also likes the way Jane Gallagher holds his hand and puts her hand on the back of his neck, and he likes that family that he saw on Broadway who were just leaving church – the one with the kid singing "If a body catch a body coming through the rye" (115). When Phoebe challenges Holden to name something that he would like to be, Holden dismisses her suggestion that he become a lawyer. In light of his recent encounter, he says, "I'd just be The Catcher in the Rye" (173).

The first person that Holden must catch is himself. Phoebe needs Holden just as much as Holden needs her. In fact, Holden and Phoebe seem to catch one another.

Determined to hitchhike out west, Holden fails to conceptualize his solitary existence away from one of the most important people in his life. In addition, he fails to imagine Phoebe's life in his absence. We have already gained a glimpse into Holden's adolescence and his parents' emotional distance. His father is a workaholic and his mother is "nervous as hell" (158). Most nights, she sits up smoking cigarettes until morning, "she doesn't enjoy herself much when she goes out," and she suffers from frequent headaches (177). Without Holden's presence, Phoebe's home-life is bleak. When Holden leaves to spend the night at Mr. Antolini's, Phoebe gives Holden her "Christmas dough" in Queequeg-like fashion (179). The gesture makes Holden cry and he returns the gesture by giving Phoebe his red hunting hat. When Holden grows anxious to travel out west, he arranges to have Phoebe meet him at the museum in order to say good bye. Phoebe arrives with Holden's red hunting hat on. She is lugging one of his old suitcases and she is intent on accompanying him out west. This time, when Holden refuses to let her go along with him, Phoebe cries. She takes the red hunting hat off as a sign of her anger and disappointment. Later, when their brief feud subsides, Holden says, "then what [Phoebe] did – it damn near killed me – she reached in my coat pocket and took out my red hunting hat and put it on my head (212). Holden confesses, "I was damn near bawling, I felt so damn happy" (213). Phoebe is the catalyst in Holden's redemption. He comes to realize that she depends on him, and their relationship enables him to conceive of a future in which he can navigate the economically determined social order. Phoebe's pointed questions and her demonstration of love force Holden to take responsibility for his own actions. The pressure that Holden feels to conform to social

mandates is intense, but Phoebe brings him to realize that he can create a life for himself that is comparable to his vision of *The Catcher in the Rye*.

The solidarity that Holden shares with Phoebe makes the social order endurable. He may not be able to change the systems of social organization that create the Ossenburgers or the “hot-shot lawyers” of the world, but Holden finally realizes that it might be worth giving it a shot.

IV. Conclusion

This research demonstrates the ways in which *Moby-Dick* and *The Catcher in the Rye*, explore the alienation of individuals who live under the pressure of an economically determined social order. Ishmael struggles to cast off the shackles of the "civilized" ports, but the hierarchical organization of the Pequod and the fact that Ishmael is given the "three hundredth lay" indicate that he remains shackled even at sea. As a minor, Holden is at the mercy of the social institutions that he scathingly criticizes. Like Herman, Holden has a difficult time taking "hold." He is not operating in proper accordance with economically sanctioned social mandates. As a result, he passes through a series of institutions – from educational institutions to a mental institution. Finally, Herman attempts to take "hold" by turning consumption into a sacred ritual, but his efforts are exploited. Ishmael characterizes himself as an "orphan" in the final sentence of *Moby-Dick* and in many ways Holden and Herman share that title. Each of these characters is orphaned by an economically determined social order that promises freedom and equality, but that actually neglects, abandons, and alienates its members.

However, Melville and Salinger do more than craft scathing social commentaries of capitalism's flaws. Certainly, they present varied visions, contextualized by time and place, of the tension between capitalism and democracy. Through the experiences of their characters, Melville and Salinger implicate the economically determined social order in the degradation of the individual and of human relationships. However, they also remind readers that the social order should be the result of consensus. It is the individual's responsibility to ensure that the social order is organized to serve the best interests of all of its members. *Moby- Dick* and *The Catcher in the Rye* remind readers that social

systems are established to mediate human relationships: they filter, frame, and structure interaction. Consequently, these novels also remind readers that the social order is negotiable, that it is not static. Indeed, the analysis of these three novels, taken together, demonstrates the momentum of social change since the Civil War, which has progressively fortified the domination of social life by capitalism.

Melville and Salinger appear to value or advocate a form of social life that values unmediated, spontaneous interpersonal relationships as opposed to an intricate, technologically supported global society that is structured by corporate capitalism. Finally, *Moby- Dick* and *The Catcher in the Rye* are valuable tools for examining historical and sociological processes. Melville and Salinger prompt readers to consider the ways in which we organize our lives, and most important, they prompt readers to evaluate and discuss those systems of social organization based on capitalism.

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