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The Catcher in the Rye: Holden vs. Consumer Culture

Dr. P. Ghasemi*

Associate Professor, Dept. of Foreign
Languages and Linguistics
Shiraz University, Shiraz
email: Pghasemi54@gmail.com

Dr. F. Pourgiv

Associate Professor, Dept. of Foreign
Languages and Linguistics
Shiraz University, Shiraz
email: fpourgiv@roze.shirazu.ac.ir

M. Ghafouri

Instructor of English Department
Islamic Azad University of Lar
email: masoud17@gmail.com

Abstract

The transformation of industrial city into modern city entailed the change in the dominant nature of the city from the site of production to that of consumption. In the postmodern city, the trend accelerated, or better to say, heightened into "mass consumption". Consumption is no longer considered a routine and banal activity. It is rather a consciously and unconsciously affected affair that is engaged in continuous dialogue with the most vital issues of contemporary urban life such as identity, aspirations, class status and culture. This is the context into which Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* was born and thrived; therefore, it should be conceived in the same context.

Keywords: 1. *The Catcher in the Rye* 2. Industrial City 3. Postmodern City
4. Consumerism 5. Identity.

1. Introduction

The concept of consumption has been widened so extensively over the

recent decades of the twentieth century that it embraces the consumption of not only goods and commodities, but also of services and ideas. As such, everybody is a consumer in the modern city. Nevertheless, we can distinguish between two kinds of consumers, in a kind of binary opposition: the "savvy consumer" who as Paterson (2006) suggests, "is able to creatively read and interpret signs, and to mobilise these readings and interpretations in order to engage in dialogue with other individuals within a culture or subculture" (6); and the "sucker consumer" who is "duped by media, government and corporations into being a passive consumer" (6).

Mark Poster in "Semiotics and Critical Theory: From Marx to Baudrillard" (1979) dates the appearance of the idea of mass consumption to the beginning of the 1920s—that is, after the First World War—as a result of an unprecedented growth in production, sometimes identified as "Fordism". He argues that "the greatly expanded productivity of the economy required new consumption patterns.... A new social character had to be created—the modern consumer—whose desires and needs were geared not to local traditions but to the exigencies of mass production" (278).

But it was the economic boom of the era after the Second World War—with its expanding the ability to consume to the whole society, even the lower classes and especially to the young, and with its ascribing the notion of identity to that of consumption—that opened up new domains in patterns of mass consumption and the ways of thinking about them. Frederic Jameson in his massively influential book, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), identifies this historical stage with the "late" or "multinational" or "consumer" capitalism. As Paterson (2006) asserts, "Jameson considers this stage to be the 'purest' form of capitalism, with an associated rapid expansion in commodification" (32). For him, as the title of his book shows, the very idea of postmodernism was a cultural phenomenon emerging from the exigencies of late capitalism. In such an expanded notion of culture, Paterson contends, "consumption can be seen as *the* characteristic socio-cultural activity of postmodern or late capitalism" (32).

One can find the formulation of the cultural and social implications of

mass consumption in the theories of the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, who is for a great part indebted to the theories of Marx and Veblen in his social criticism, and whose theories seem most pertinent in the study of these implications in *The Catcher in the Rye*. For that matter, it would be helpful to the task of this section to start with a general introduction to the history of the idea of consumption to find the mainsprings of Bourdieu's social theory.

Mark Paterson in his comprehensive and comprehensible book, *Consumption and Everyday Life* (2006) finds the beginning of the history of the idea of consumption in the works of Karl Marx, Thorstein Veblen, and Georg Simmel in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries. Marx was mainly concerned with the development of the commodity production system and his notion of consumption was limited to the difference in the economic power of different classes in eating, drinking, and procreation. In *Capital* (1867) Marx talks about "use value", that is, "the worth of the commodity in terms of the actual cost of materials and production", and "exchange value", that is, "the price such an object may attain in the marketplace –how much someone is willing to pay" (qtd. in Paterson 15). The difference between exchange value and use value is called "surplus value" which signifies the exploitation of labor and is the true source of alienation of the worker from his work. The surplus value goes to the privileged upper classes and gives them the economic power to buy and consume more goods, while on the other side of the spectrum, the members of the exploited working class are not even able to buy the commodity they themselves are producing.

Thorstein Veblen took the argument way further by liberating the idea of consumption from the world of economy and giving it a social dimension. In *The Theory of Leisure Class* (1899) he develops the idea of "social emulation" which connotes that each social class imitates its immediate higher class in its consumption patterns to show its affluence and to gain social status. This practice generated a "trickledown effect", the pattern of consumption always coming down from higher classes to lower classes, which eventually resulted in the dictation of the tasteful and the fashionable by the higher classes. Paterson quotes Veblen in explaining the

fact that the whole process is not just about "consuming freely of the right kinds of goods", but also to "consume them in a seemly manner" (19). At the end, as Storey observes, people "pursued 'luxuries' in place of 'decencies', and 'decencies' in place of 'necessities'" (qtd. in Paterson 20).

Perhaps the most progressive idea of consumption in the beginning of the 20th century can be found in the works of Georg Simmel. Simmel believes that the modern city is "not a spatial entity with sociological consequences, but a sociological entity that is formed spatially" (qtd. in Paterson 20). In his much celebrated prescient essay, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903), Simmel tried to delineate the interaction of such issues like the urban environment, the psychology of its inhabitants, the formation of their identity, and the patterns of consumption. He argues that the spectacular array of commodities in the urban environment on the one hand, and the urbanites' adjustment with the increased speed and intensity of the urban life on the other hand have induced the development of a "blasé attitude" in city dwellers towards others which has been unprecedented in smaller communities. Therefore, "within this larger, anonymous urban environment, one way we reassert our individuality and sense of identity is through patterns of consumption" (qtd. in Paterson, 21).

The curious silence that dominated intellectual thinking about consumption after Simmel was eventually broken by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (2004), the leading critics of the Frankfurt School. They founded the Institute of Social Research in New York, where they studied the social scene of their newly adopted home, that is, the postwar America. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), they argued that the expansion of mass production as an important exigency of capitalism has eventuated into the processes and products of mass culture which is observable in the mass-marketing of such cultural items as pop music, Hollywood movies, theme parks, etc. They observed that this mass production of cultural products leads to commodification of culture, and eventually, to standardization of culture: "under monopoly of capitalism all mass culture is identical" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1242). They coined the term "culture industry" for this massification and standardization of culture, under which, as they

write,

Something is provided for all so that none may escape; the distinctions are emphasized and extended. The public is catered to with a hierarchical range of mass-produced products of varying quality, thus advancing the rule of complete quantification. Everybody must behave (as if spontaneously) in accordance with his previously determined and indexed level, and choose the category of mass product turned out for his type. Consumers appear as statistics on research organization charts, and are divided by income groups into red, green, and blue areas; the technique is that used for any type of propaganda. (1243)

In other words, "with this homogeneity, predictability and standardization, the culture industries mass-produce cultural products, and these are passively consumed by consumers" (Paterson, 26). Herbert Marcuse, another prominent critic of the Frankfurt School, furthered the argument in his *One Dimensional Man* (1964) by proposing that by the industrialization of culture, capitalism promotes an "ideology of consumerism". This ideology entails the production of "false needs" which are easily transformed into mechanisms of social control and alienation.

Many facets of the radical social criticism of the Frankfurt School are reiterated and continued in the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu. He was not actually a member of the school, and as mentioned before, drew extensively on the theories of Marx and Veblen. In his greatly influential book, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1979), Bourdieu borrows structural distinctions between classes from Marx, and the desire to display those distinctions from Veblen. But he departs from both by assigning to consumption the centrality in creating these distinctions. He argues that not only "what" we consume, but also "how" we consume them contribute to how distinctions are made between different social groups.

Bourdieu extends the concept of "capital" by identifying four "fields" in the external social world within which struggles over goods and resources take place. "Fields are not restricted to struggles over economic capital: they might also deal with social capital (contacts and acquaintances), cultural capital (education, culture and related skills) or symbolic capital (distinction

and prestige)" (Baert, 849). Bourdieu believes that cultural capital is as important as the economic capital in shaping and differentiating social relations, as it is demonstrated in the "lifestyle" of a class, that is, "the choice of products and the desire for certain goods" (Paterson, 44). Paterson explains that lifestyle "is not simply a function of high or low income. It is generated from the *habitus*, the way that the perception of the social world is structured" (44). If the notion of class is related to economy and modes of production, the notion of *habitus* is derived from socialization and the modes of consumption. Bourdieu defines the *habitus* as a "generative and unifying principle which retranslates the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position into a unitary lifestyle, that is, a unitary set of choices of persons, goods, practices" (qtd. in Bennett, 202). This "generative and unifying principle" influences all aspects of individual's life, even that seemingly most personal aspect, that is, "taste". Bourdieu writes in *Distinction*:

Taste is an acquired disposition to 'differentiate' and 'appreciate', as Kant says –in other words, to establish and mark differences by a process of distinction.... It functions as a sort of social orientation, a 'sense of one's place', guiding the occupants of a given place in social space towards the social positions adjusted to their properties, and towards the practices or goods which befit the occupants of that position. (237)

In trying to summarize the implications of Bourdieu's notion of taste and lifestyle, Paterson stresses three significant ideas: first, that "our taste in commodities is in a large part structured by our need to distinguish ourselves from other consumers"; second, that "our social class and groupings already structure how we consume and the knowledge we bring to it"; and at last, that as a result of the two previous ideas, "cultural hierarchies and subordination are perpetuated" (48). This is to say, the identity of the individual is related to the symbolic meanings of his/her material possessions and how he/she is related to them. This identity not only expresses group membership, but also is itself perceived through that membership, while at the same time it distinguishes that certain group from

other groups and provides information about other individuals' identities.

"Pierre Bourdieu's social theory," Baert asserts, "aims at transcending the opposition between the individual and society" (848). This is exactly what we need in understanding Holden's confrontation with his society in *The Catcher in the Rye*. As Marxist and Neo-Marxist critics of the novel from the Ohmanns onward have noted, Holden is aware of, and suffers from, the social differentiation and inequality around him. It is not necessarily an intellectually conscious awareness. It comes to him through his oversensitivity and his deep-rooted insight into the heart of the modern urban life. But this is only the first level. Another level has recently been opened in the criticism of *Catcher* by the critics working in the fields of Cultural Studies and Critical Theory which aim at interrogating the novel's relation to the culture of consumption. These critics place the novel's publication and its huge success in the context of the burgeoning culture of consumption of the early 1950s, and contend that *Catcher*, despite its severity towards that culture, was itself an exemplary case for the workings of that culture. As Robinson states, "that *Catcher* was chosen as a Book-of-the-Month Club main selection—and that it was mass-marketed in paperback with a sensationalist cover—suggests that the mass-culture critique in the USA was so much a part of the popular discourse that it could, paradoxically, *itself* be commodified" (76).

2. Discussion

Holden's antagonistic attitude towards differentiation between the rich and the poor is nowhere more manifestly exhibited than in the case of the cheap and expensive suitcases which he remembers when he meets the two nuns. Read in the wake of Bourdieu's ideas of lifestyle and *habitus*, this anecdote reveals Holden's criticism towards the consequences of the unequal distribution of economic and cultural capitals in the consumer culture of late capitalism. Here is what Holden relates:

I hate it when somebody has cheap suitcases. It sounds terrible to say it, but I can even get to hate somebody, just looking at them, if they have cheap suitcases with them. Something happened once. For a

while when I was at Elkton Hills, I roomed with this boy, Dick Slagle, that had these very inexpensive suitcases. He used to keep them under the bed, instead of on the rack, so that nobody'd see them standing next to mine. It depressed holy hell out of me, and I kept wanting to throw mine out or something, or even *trade* with him. Mine came from Mark Cross, and they were genuine cowhide and all that crap, and I guess they cost quite a pretty penny. (*Catcher*, 129)

Holden cannot be more emphatic about his hatred towards the socioeconomic difference that shapes his and his roommate's consciousness. His awareness of the situation is obvious in his attempt to find a way (throwing his suitcase out or trading it with Dick) to deny this difference. Had the difference been derived from the economic status only, it would not have been that difficult to eliminate it. But a deeper realization is still to come:

But it was a funny thing. Here's what happened. What I did, I finally put *my* suitcases under *my* bed, instead of on the rack, so that old Slagle wouldn't get a goddam inferiority complex about it. But here's what he did. The day after I put mine under my bed, he took them out and put them back on the rack. The reason he did it, it took me a while to find out, was because he wanted people to think my bags were his. He really did. He was a very funny guy, that way. He was always saying snotty things about them, my suitcases, for instance. He kept saying they were too new and *bourgeois*. That was his favorite goddam word. He read it somewhere or heard it somewhere. Everything I had was *bourgeois* as hell. Even my fountain pen was *bourgeois*. He borrowed it off me all the time, but it was *bourgeois* anyway. We only roomed together about two months. Then we both asked to be moved. And the funny thing was, I sort of missed him after we moved, because he had a helluva good sense of humor and we had a lot of fun sometimes. I wouldn't be surprised if he missed me, too. At first he only used to be kidding when he called my stuff *bourgeois*, and I didn't give a damn--it *was* sort of funny, in fact. Then, after a while, you could tell he wasn't kidding any more. (*Catcher*, 129-130)

The two boys come to the irritating resolution that the socioeconomic gap that is separating them is impossible to bridge; that their relationship,

despite being based on genuine humane understanding, is to be sacrificed on the altar of class stratification. The keyword in this passage is "bourgeois", which Dick uses in an ironical and even grotesque way. When it turns from kidding to resentment, it shows that not even Holden, but also Dick himself suffers from the irritating situation. As Ohmanns brilliantly observe, "shame over his suitcases is one thing. But worse are the contradictory feelings: he hates the class injustice ... yet at the same time he longs to be on the *right* side of the barrier, to *benefit* from class antagonism by having others think he owns the Mark Cross suitcases" (31). To deny or to struggle, both are useless. They have to accept their socially imposed fate, and separate. The resolution wrenches Holden's heart: "The thing is, it's really hard to be room-mates with people if your suitcases are much better than theirs.... You think if they're intelligent and all ... they don't give a damn whose suitcases are better, but they do. They really do. It's one of the reasons why I roomed with a stupid bastard like Stradlater. At least his suitcases were as good as mine" (*Catcher*, 130). Read in the light of Bourdieu's theories, the passage shows that Holden's *habitus* necessitates a certain lifestyle, or to say, it necessitates a differentiated consumptive behavior. Holden has to group with those who consume the same suitcases, that is, those whose lifestyle is the same as his, regardless of his taste, and regardless of his internal feelings.

One can easily find a series of explicitly stated facts in Holden's narration that shows the status of his family as a privileged upper middle class, in possession of all four kinds of capital: first, Holden's father is quite wealthy (economic capital); second, he is a corporation lawyer and they have high-class acquaintances to go to their parties (social capital); third, he invests money in Broadway shows, and Holden's brother is a successful Hollywood writer, and they all read a lot and go to the movies a lot (cultural capital); and fourth, they live in a swanky apartment in upper Manhattan and they shop at Spaulding's and Bloomingdale's on the Fifth Avenue (symbolic capital). His identity, as such, is never separated from his social status. He may not enjoy the acquaintance of people like the "stupid bastard" Stradlater, and he may not be too positive about money – "Goddam money.

It always ends up making you blue as hell" (*Catcher*, 135) – but at the end, he may not escape the fact that these people and these patterns are strictly predetermined, strongly prescribed, and forcefully preserved. This is what depresses him mainly from the beginning of the story to the end.

A similar case is the episode with Maurice the pimp who, unlike Dick, shows his antagonism towards social distinction and privilege by threatening Holden and squeezing money out of him. There is a sort of contempt in his stock term, "chief", and statements that one cannot miss –for example, "Want your parents to know you spent the night with a whore? High-class kid like you?" (*Catcher*, 122). At last, when Holden, irritated and nervous, pictures the future of his low status as a poor, scraggy guy, he loses his control and smacks him.

One should note that Holden's depression does not arise from the concern about his own situation only. He is also dejected at the sight of those who are subordinated and are deprived of the privileges he is enjoying. Holden reveals his understanding of the role of these privileges when he scorns Mr. Spencer's advice about life being a game and how he should play according to the rules: "Game, my ass. Some game. If you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it's a game, all right – I'll admit that. But if you get on the *other* side, where there aren't any hot-shots, then what's a game about it? Nothing. No game" (*Catcher*, 13).

A good example for his depression at the sight of the inequalities is his comparison of the charity work of the nuns with the members of his own social class, like his mother or his aunt or Sally Hayes' mother. He thinks that while the nuns simply *do* the work honestly, his aunt and Mrs. Hayes will be always conscious of their prestige and distinction, and will always be trying to display that distinction. He condemns his aunt because she cares too much for her dress and lipstick when doing anything charitable. He points his harshest resentment towards Mrs. Hayes though: "And old Sally Hayes's mother. Jesus Christ. The only way *she* could go around with a basket collecting dough would be if everybody kissed her ass for her when they made a contribution" (*Catcher*, 136). If people kept ignoring her, "She'd get bored. She'd hand in her basket and then go someplace swanky

for lunch" (*Catcher*, 136). This is where Holden's caring attitude toward the unprivileged appears: "That's what I liked about those nuns. You could tell, for one thing, that they never went anywhere swanky for lunch. It made me so damn sad when I thought about it..." (*Catcher*, 136). As Ohmanns assert, "at the root of Holden's sadness are lives confined by poverty, the loss of human connectedness, the power of feelings distorted by class to overcome natural bonds of affinity and friendship" (32). There are a lot of people who evoke this sadness in Holden: the old man who works as bellboy and carries Holden's suitcase to his room in the hotel; Bob Robinson, Holden's friend, who "had a inferiority complex" because "he was very ashamed of his parents and all, because they said 'he don't' and 'she don't' and stuff like that, and they weren't very wealthy" (*Catcher* 162); etc.

"Phoney" is the term that serves as an indexical keyword into Holden's critique of the consumption culture. This frequent term is, as Ohmanns (1976) suggest, "definitely his strongest and most ethically weighted" (28) term of abuse, for Holden does not use it only for those who, as in the first sense of the word, "pretend" to be what they are not, but actually for those who "prostitute" themselves in the market-place of society. In other words, Holden uses phoney for anyone who produces himself or herself as a commodity to be consumed or exchanged.

Holden says he left Elkton Hills, one of his previous schools, because it was full of phonies. One in particular was the headmaster, "that was the phoniest bastard I ever met in my life" (*Catcher*, 19). Here is the reason:

On Sundays, for instance, old Haas went around shaking hands with everybody's parents when they drove up to school. He'd be charming as hell and all. Except if some boy had little old funny-looking parents. You should've seen the way he did with my room-mate's parents. I mean if a boy's mother was sort of fat or corny-looking or something, and if somebody's father was one of those guys that wear those suits with very big shoulders and corny black-and-white shoes, then old Haas would just shake hands with them and give them a phoney smile and then he'd go talk, for maybe a half an *hour*, with somebody else's parents. I can't stand that stuff. (*Catcher*, 19)

Mr. Haas is phoney because he judges people according to their

appearance-actually, according to their pattern of consumption, or their lifestyle – and exchanges his authenticity with their appearance.

Ossenburger, who makes a hypocritical speech in the chapel, and who very suggestively has "made a pot of dough in the undertaking business" (*Catcher* 22) (commodification of death), is again a phoney because he, as Ohmanns argue, "claims legitimacy for his money, his Cadillac, his business ethics, his eminence and class privilege, by enlisting religion on his side" (29). Osseburger exchanges his money with social eminence - by contributing money to Pencey so that a wing of the dormitory be named after him – and with religion – by claiming that he talks to Jesus all the time. Holden derisively says: "I just see the big phony bastard shifting into first gear and asking Jesus to send him a few more stiffs" (*Catcher*, 23).

The three girls in the Lavender Room are phoney because they are duped, sucker consumers of entertainment industry – their looking all the time for a celebrity to show up, their going to the first show at Radio City Music Hall – with which they exchange all their time and authenticity. Even an intellectual like Carl Luce is phoney because he is too much concerned with the exchange of the cultural and symbolic capital through the exhibition of learning and philosophy; for example, he has recently got a Chinese girlfriend and he claims that he simply happens "to find Eastern philosophy more satisfactory than Western" (*Catcher* 174). Ernie, the pianist who plays to please the audience rather than for the love of playing, is also phoney because he commodifies his art for the consumption of some "morons" who "always clap for the wrong things" (*Catcher*, 101). The significant point is that, in a much sensitive after-thought, Holden feels sorry for Ernie. "In a funny way, though, I felt sort of sorry for him when he was finished. I don't even think he knows any more when he's playing right or not. It isn't all his fault. I partly blame all those dopes that clap their heads off – they'd foul up anybody, if you gave them a chance" (*Catcher*, 102). That is to say, Holden is conscious of the rules of "demand and supply" in the market-place of the culture of consumption, and knows that it is the demand of the audience that, in part, turns Ernie and his art into consumer commodity.

A similar case is Sally Hayes. She earns the label "the queen of the phonies" (*Catcher*, 139) by producing her beauty as a commodity all the time for the consumption of the male eye; for instance, she wears the "little blue butt-twitcher of a dress" (*Catcher*, 153) only to display her body. But again, Holden feels sorry for her because he knows that, from another vantage point, it is the male eye that demands the display of her beauty for its consumptive gaze. On the whole, Holden feels sorry for most of those he calls phoney because he knows the deterministic force of the market-place. The understanding finds frightening dimensions when it comes to the case of Mr. Antolini. Holden is shocked when he feels Mr. Antolini stroking his head when he is sleeping on the coach because, in a radical reading like Medovoi's (1997), he generalizes the workings of commodification and exchange culture to this act: "compounding his fear of 'flits' is Holden's sudden anxiety that Antolini's generosity and advice were not genuine after all but calculated as an exchange for sexual favors" (277). Interestingly, as Sonja Beck mentions the word phoney has entered the American society and one finds the ghost of Holden going through America asking everybody if they are phoney.

Holden knows that the metropolis of New York is full of signifiers of mass consumption: "In New York, boy, money really talks – I'm not kidding" (*Catcher*, 84). Exceptional to this manipulated society is, in Holden's view, a small group including children, the two nuns, the drummer at Radio City who plays from the heart, James Castle, Jane Gallagher, and a few other, who "share an innocence of commodification, whether financial, symbolic, or sexual. Immaturity represents a preoccupied willingness to interact with people honestly, and for reasons other than market imperatives" (Medovoi, 1997: 278). It is only in the light of this argument that the rich implications of Holden's wish to become a "catcher in the rye" are fully revealed. The "crazy cliff" which Holden wishes to save children from falling in is the adult world of commodity and consumption culture. The fall from that cliff means falling from the state of humanity into the state of commodity. "To be" becomes undermined by "to have", and the pressure of the market-place affects human psychology strongly, turning

people into slaves of commodity. The unsatisfiable thirst for having is exemplified in the case of Pencey where the boys from affluent families are turned into thieves: "Pencey was full of crooks. Quite a few guys came from these very wealthy families, but it was full of crooks anyway. The more expensive a school is, the more crooks it has – I'm not kidding" (*Catcher*, 8).

The idea finds its strongest affirmation in regarding D.B.'s writings for Hollywood in contrast with Allie's writings on his baseball mitt and Phoebe's stories featuring Hazel Weatherby. In Holden's view, D.B. has "prostituted" himself by going to Hollywood, the biggest entertainment industry ever, and selling his art and talent. But Allie's and Phoebe's writings are authentic because they are not being subjected to the workings of the consumer culture. "In Holden's imagination, Allie and Phoebe occupy an innocent, non-consumer paradise uncorrupted by those 'phonies' who allow the movies, advertising, and corporate values to define and commodify their identities" (Robinson, 2007: 73).

In a final analogy, one can note that what perplexes Holden when he confronts Sunny, the prostitute, is the combination of both states, innocence and commodified, in her. He finds in her signifiers of both the state of innocence (her age, her voice, her nervousness) and of the state of corruption (offering her body as a commodity, watching films all day long). Holden rejects the second state and tries to awaken and strengthen the first state in Sunny by establishing a healthy relationship with her. He fails, naturally, because Sunny is already fallen.

The fall into the commodity culture is inevitable. So, Holden thinks if the children are going to grab for anything, it better be something as precious and as beautiful as "the gold ring". He comes to realize that with an exploring spirit, one will be able to find in the all-invasive world of mass consumption some little moments of joy, some little remains of humanity. He comes to understand that he should go back to the society of consumers, but as a "savvy", not a "sucker", consumer. This awareness establishes only the first level of the novel's criticism towards the culture of consumption. If Holden understands all this, we can only suppose that his creator, Salinger,

does too. Only, Salinger is much more cynical. Salinger never came back to society, never to let himself drawn away by the waves of the mass culture. This constitutes the second level of *Catcher's* criticism.

Analyzing *Catcher* at this level is most brilliantly carried out by Leerom Medovoi in "Democracy, Capitalism, and American Literature: The Cold War Construction of J. D. Salinger's Paperback Hero" (1997). The very title says all. Medovoi restores *Catcher* to its publication era, the early 1950s, in which two ideologies coincided: the ideology of democracy, as practiced in the Cold War discourse and its political emphasis on American democracy in the face of the USSR communism, and the ideology of consumption, generated in the era of affluence and economic boom and high capitalism. Medovoi (1997) argues that one of the especial workings of the second ideology was "the development of mass-market paperback, a book form that constituted the most drastic breakthrough in the modern history of print capitalism" (269). The Cold War discourse was trying to combine the two ideologies, that is, to associate the mass-production of cultural commodities with the idea of democracy, and expected this combination to lead to *democratization* of culture. But, as Medovoi (1997) contends, this was a wrong, ideologically motivated expectation: "The rise of mass culture, including the paperback, in fact represents a movement toward the *commodification* of culture", since it "derives from the expansionary dynamics of capitalism, not democracy" (276). Anyhow, *The Catcher in the Rye*, as one of the earliest experiments of this ideology, benefited from this commodification of culture when it was published in paperback and sold millions of copies.

Medovoi (1997) goes even further as to interrogate the canonization of the novel as a result of the questionable critical attention it received. He notes that intellectual and literary critics received the novel only mildly on its publication, when it was selling only respectably. But when the novel was published in paperback and met an enormous success in the market, critics saw their authority as leaders or even manipulators of public taste in danger. "As critics of culture, intellectual are conspicuous accumulators of cultural capital and important beneficiaries of economies of prestige"

(Medovoi 1997: 279-280). But the expanded availability of the paperback novels and especially their low price made it possible for all readers to choose any kind of book they wish. So, intellectuals were forced to reclaim their status by turning their attention to the novel, and by canonizing a work which was already carried away by the consumer culture.

3. Conclusion

The ways of the market-place are many and strange. The "ideology of consumerism" which Marcuse talked about is so wide a web from which nothing and no one can escape. Even a novel like *The Catcher in the Rye*, with its deep critique of social classification and industrialization of culture, itself becomes one of the most profitable cultural commodities in the market-place; and its critics feel the urge to respect the taste of the mass consumer in order to retrieve their cultural capital. Everybody is a consumer. Salinger saw this commotion and withdrew to his recluse. Perhaps he wished he could take Holden with him, but as he said in an interview, "so many unforeseen things happen when you publish" (Eppes, 1981: 38). He said he did not expect the flurry toward the novel, but when it happened, it was out of his hand, and so was Holden. Holden was left in the middle of the arena, lonely and depressed.

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