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**Kateřina Malá**

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**Three critical voices of post-war American  
literature**

*Diplomová práce*

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Autor práce: **Kateřina Malá**

Vedoucí práce: **PhDr. Jiří Hanuš**

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## **Abstract**

The thesis deals with critical views of the post-war American society as found in three literary works: Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. The thesis's aim is to introduce briefly the post-war society and then, on basis of text analysis, to provide criticism expressed by each book mentioned above. Divided into four main parts, it describes the post-war situation in the United States (political, social and cultural) and thereafter it focuses on the books itself. It provides a short biographical summary of each author's life but it mainly targets the criticism the book contains. The post-war period was significant because of the change it brought. The society of the 1950s was characterized by many "booms" that contributed to its development. The main features of this period were consumerism and materialism; these were also the principal things subjected to criticism. The question the thesis wants to answer is whether this criticism was justified or not. This objective is realized in the conclusion. Based on all facts provided by the thesis, the answer is that the criticism was justified; however, it is not so easy and it is necessary to read the whole thesis to understand all reasons that led to this conclusion and to think over the provided conclusions.

## **Abstrakt**

Diplomová práce se zabývá třemi literárními díly, které poskytují kritický pohled na poválečnou americkou společnost: Arthur Miller, *Smrt obchodního cestujícího*, J.D. Salinger, *Kdo chytá v žitě* a Jack Kerouac, *Na cestě*. Cílem diplomové práce je stručně představit poválečnou společnost a poté, na základě textové analýzy, prezentovat kritiku, obsaženou ve

výše zmíněných knihách. Práce je rozdělena do čtyř částí a popisuje poválečnou situaci ve Spojených státech (politickou, sociální a kulturní) a poté se zaměřuje na knihy samotné. Po stručném shrnutí autorova života, následuje hlavní část týkající se knihy a kritiky, kterou obsahuje. Poválečné období bylo významné, díky změnám, které přineslo. Společnost 50. let byla charakterizována mnoha „boomy“, které přispěly k jejímu rozvoji. Jejími hlavními rysy se staly konzumerismus a materialismus, které také byly hlavním předmětem kritiky. Hlavní otázkou, kterou chce tato diplomová práce zodpovědět je, zdali byla tato kritika oprávněná či nikoli. Tento cíl je realizován v samotném závěru práce a založen na faktech, poskytnutých během psaní vlastní práce, odpověď je, že tato kritika oprávněná byla. Nicméně, tento závěr není jednoduchý a je třeba přečíst práci celou k pochopení všech důvodů, které vedly k tomuto závěru a přemýšlet o poskytnutých vývodech.

## **Key words**

criticism, post-war society, consumerism, materialism, hypocrisy, American dream, responsibility, maturity, attitude toward sex, death, revolt, minorities, homosexuality

## **Klíčová slova**

kritika, poválečná společnost, konzumerismus, materialismus, pokrytectví, americký sen, odpovědnost, vyzrálost, vztah k sexu, smrt, vzpoura, menšiny, homosexualita

**Rozsah práce:** 252 818 znaků.

## **Prohlášení**

1. Prohlašuji, že jsem předkládanou práci zpracoval/a samostatně a použil/a jen uvedené prameny a literaturu.
2. Prohlašuji, že práce nebyla využita k získání jiného titulu.
3. Souhlasím s tím, aby práce byla zpřístupněna pro studijní a výzkumné účely.

V Praze dne .....

Kateřina Malá

## **Poděkování**

Na tomto místě bych ráda poděkovala vedoucímu své diplomové práce, PhDr. Jiřímu Hanušovi, za jeho ochotu a úsilí, které věnoval čtení jednotlivých kapitol a za jeho připomínky, které práci obohatily. Bez jeho pomoci by tato práce ztratila na své hodnotě (ať už po stránce jazykové či po stránce obsahové). Jsem mu nesmírně vděčná za veškerou poskytnutou pomoc a podporu, kterou jsem v jistých chvílích velmi potřebovala.

# **Institut mezinárodních studií**

## **Teze magisterské práce**

**Jméno:** Kateřina Malá

**E-mail:** [katkamala@seznam.cz](mailto:katkamala@seznam.cz)

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**Vedoucí diplomního semináře:** Miloš Calda

**Vedoucí práce:** Jiří Hanuš

### **Zdůvodnění výběru tématu práce (10 řádek):**

Již mé přechozí práce (absolventská a bakalářská) se zabývaly tematikou Spojených států, její historií (Karibská krize) a politikou (zahraniční politika G. W. Bushe). Pro svoji diplomovou práci jsem se rozhodla zaměřit na sociálně-kulturní oblast Spojených států, speciálně na americkou poválečnou společnost z pohledu literární tvorby. Toto období je velice zajímavou historickou etapou Spojených států, které konečně vystoupily do popředí mezinárodní politiky a opustily politiku izolacionismu (což jsme mohli sledovat zejména ve vytvoření mezinárodních organizací jako OSN nebo NATO, kde USA byly zakládajícími členy). Ještě zajímavější je ale americká poválečná společnost, která dala vzniknout tzv. spotřební, konzumní kultuře. Na tuto novou kulturu bych se ráda zaměřila, zejména na její reflexi v poválečné literární tvorbě.

### **Předpokládaný cíl (10 řádek):**

Práce nese název Tři kritické hlasy americké poválečné literatury, je tedy jasné, že se bude jednat o negativní postoj vyjádřený prostřednictvím literární tvorby. Na základě textové analýzy třech významných poválečných děl bych ráda zodpověděla otázku, proč se jejich hlavní postavy stavěli k poválečné společnosti negativně a zda-li ji kritizovali oprávněně či ne. Jak se budu snažit naznačit již v první části své práce, ne všichni byli nadšeni nově vzniklou konzumní kulturou a existovalo mnoho lidí, kteří nevěřili optimistickým ekonomických vyhlídkám a neomezené a nekonečné prosperitě. Tito lidé si byli vědomi, že



situace se dříve či později změní, ekonomika znovu poklesne či se objeví takové sociální téma, které celou konzumní kulturu převrátí naruby (což se také později v 60. letech opravdu stalo). Přesto, byla tato kritika oprávněná a byla založená na skutečnosti?

### **Základní charakteristika tématu (20 řádek):**

Jak již bylo zmíněno výše, americká poválečná společnost je velice zajímavým tématem, zejména s ohledem na vznik nové konzumní kultury a americké ekonomické prosperity. Mnozí věřili, že Amerika jde správnou cestou a že je možné tuto cestu uchovat. Znovu se oživil tzv. americký sen, který se najednou zdál dosažitelný mnohem více než kdykoliv předtím. Problémem ale zůstalo, že ne všichni ho nakonec opravdu dosáhli. A právě na tento rozpor poukazovali mnozí, kteří konzumní společnost a kulturu jako takovou kritizovali. Literární tvorba byla jedním z hlavních kritiků. Z tohoto důvodu bych ráda analyzovala postoje hlavních postav tří vybraných literárních děl poválečného období, které se snažily poukázat na problémy konzumní společnosti, na nebezpečí toho, jak nás může tato kultura ovlivnit a jaký dopad na nás eventuálně může mít. Za ukázkové příklady jsem zvolila jednu divadelní hru a dvě knihy poválečného období, které podle mého názoru nejlépe vystihly náladu tehdejší společnosti a její problémy. Jedná se o divadelní hru "Smrt obchodního cestujícího" od Arthura Millera, knihu "Kdo chytá v žitě" od J. D. Salinger a jednu z knih Jacka Kerouaca. Z názvu jasně vyplývá, že se bude jednat o kritické hlasy, tedy ne o celkový obraz poválečné společnosti. Nicméně po dokončení práce by mělo být jasné, zdali tato kritika byla oprávněná a tedy zdali tato stanoviska mohla charakterizovat poválečná léta.

### **Předpokládaná struktura práce (15 řádek):**

Struktura mé diplomové práce je následující:

Kapitola 1 se bude zabývat poválečným obdobím Spojených států se zaměřením se na poválečnou společnost a již zmíněnou konzumní kulturu. Část bude také věnována pohledu těch, kteří spotřební kulturu a společnost, která by na ní měla být postavena, odmítali.

Kapitola 2 se bude zabývat prvním ze tří kritických pohledů na poválečnou společnost a to divadelní hrou "Smrt obchodního cestujícího" od Arthura Millera. Tato ukáзка má nabídnout pohled starší generace na poválečnou společnost a její hodnoty a má ukázat to, kam tato může vést.

Kapitola 3 se bude zabývat dalším kritickým hlasem americké poválečné společnosti, tentokrát z pohledu mladé generace. Jako hlavní zdroj zde poslouží kniha "Kdo chytá v žitě" od Salinger.

Kapitola 4 se bude zabývat posledním kritickým hlasem a to z pohledu nové generace, která se postupně začala vyvíjet v 50. letech 20. století, tzv. beatnická kultura, která dala později vzniknout kultuře hippies. Zdrojem zde bude jedna z knih hlavního představitele Beatníků a to Jacka Kerouaca.

V závěru se pak budu snažit o shrnutí jednotlivých kapitol a tedy i pohledu, jaký měly na poválečnou americkou společnost. Pokusím se samozřejmě zodpovědět i základní tezi práce, tedy proč se hlavní postavy stavěli ke konzumní společnosti negativně a zdali tento jejich postoj byl oprávněný.

**Základní prameny a literatura (20 nejdůležitějších titulů):**

HALBERSTAM, David. The Fifties. New York : Fawcett Columbine. 1993.

RIESMAN, David. Osamělý dav. Praha : Mladá Fronta. 1968.

MILLER, Arthur. Death of a Salesman. London: Penguin Books. 1971

SALINGER, J. D. The Catcher in the rye. London: Penguin Books. 1994

KEROUAC, Jack. On the Road. New York : NAL/Dutton. 1958.

CASSADY, Carolyn. Off the road: My years with Cassady, Kerouac, and Ginsberg. New York : Morrow. 1990.

CAUTE, David. The Great Fear : The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower. New York : Simon & Schuster. 1978.

COOKE, Alistair. A Generation on Trial. New York : Knopf. 1982.

DAVIS, K. Charles. Two-Bit Culture : The Paperbacking of America. Boston : Houghton Mifflin Co. 1984.

GANS, Herbert, J. The Levittowners : Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community. New York : Pantheon. 1967.

GOLDMAN, Eric. The Crucial Decade : America 1945-1955. New York : Knopf. 1956.

GOODWIN, Richard, N. Remembering America : A Voice from the Sixties. Boston : Little, Brown & Co. 1988.

HOROWITZ, Irving, L. C. Wright Mills : An American Utopian. New York : The Free Press. 1983.

JAMES, Clayton, D. The Years of MacArthur : Triumph and Disaster, 1946-1964, Vol. III. Boston : Houghton Mifflin. 1985.

NICOSIA, Gerald. Memory Babe : A Critical Biography of Jack Kerouac. Fred Jordan, ed. New York : Grove Press. 1983.

POTTER, David. People of plenty. Chicago : University of Chicago Press. 1954.

## Context:

Introduction.....	2
1. The post-war America .....	7
1.1. The political situation.....	7
1.2. The American society .....	11
1.3. The post-war culture .....	19
1.4. Criticism.....	24
2. Arthur Miller.....	27
2.1. Death of a Salesman.....	33
3. J.D. Salinger.....	47
3.1. The Catcher in the Rye.....	54
4. Jack Kerouac.....	66
4.1. On the Road.....	71
Conclusion .....	81
Resumé.....	86
Sources.....	87
List of appendixes.....	93
Appendixes .....	94

## **Introduction**

Literature is one of the possibilities how to express ourselves and how to describe what we feel, what we think, and what the world is according to us. There are many types of literature: one can describe reality around us, another is trying to mix reality with our feelings, next uses just our imagination and it describes world as we want it to be. The following thesis deals with three specific literary examples of the post-war period with the aim to compare them with the reality. As the name suggests the thesis will discuss critical approaches to the post-war society trying to answer the question if the critique was justified.

The post-war period was one of the most significant periods in American history, full of events that shaped the following decades and that changed America in a way we know it today. The 1950s laid the foundations of the bursting events of the following decades; it was in the post-war period that the status of minorities and women started to improve even it was not before the end of the next decade they achieved real equality; the families started to change; people's values started to change; the new society slowly started to shape itself. Still, the society of the 1950s remained very conservative, stuck in the traditional values and images of the American dream and its likeness. Nevertheless, as every historical period even this one had its critics. They focused on the new consumer society and people's preoccupation with material things over other virtues, a society that was closely united with the new style of life presented by suburbs, cars, fast foods, motels, television and many other things. The feelings of change and the anxiety about the future of these changes were expressed in many piece of art form painting, songs, poetry to literature. New movements arose, among them the beats, civil right movements or the counterculture. Many scholar paid attention to the form of post-war society trying to alert the people that such situation cannot continue forever.

The structure of the thesis is following: firstly, there is an introduction devoted to the topic itself and it deals with literature used for its creation. The first chapter is an introduction into the post-war period that is inevitable to understand better the following parts and that offers fascinating reading while presenting well-known facts as well as facts people are not familiar with so much. This chapter is divided into four sections dealing with post-war politics, society, culture and critics. Each section tries to provide the basic facts for better understanding of this period and the developments that were taking place under the surface of everyday life. The political situation deals with administration of two presidents, Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower, and the affairs that happened during their governance. Many

important events occurred after the end of the Second World War, events that shaped the world for next almost forty years and that influenced significantly the post-war society. The start of the Cold War, the Korea War, the space race, the American involvement in Vietnam, the McCarthyism – these are just some examples. The next section, the American society, represents a long sighted insight into the life of ordinary Americans, their families, values and dreams but also their problems. Starting with the concept of American dream, going through the economic and baby boom, concept of post-war family, sexual revolution, car boom and change of lifestyle, ending with the origin of civil right movement is the ravishing tale of the Americans living in the 1950s presented here in a short form. Third section, the post-war culture, tries to examine briefly various forms of art and their importance and influence in the 1950s. The focus is aimed at television, movies, theatre, literature and music. There is not much space for greater analysis however the provided passage should cover the most important matters. Criticism, the last section of this chapter, presents a short example of discontent with the new consumer society and it tries to draw our attention to the fact that the society is not perfect and there is a place for improvement. David Riesman, William H. Whyte, C. Wright Mills, Sloan Wilson, Grace Metalious, David Potter are some of those who dissent the society in its post-war form. However, it was not just individuals but also groups of people who opposed the post-war status, for example gray flannel dissident, beats (latter replaced by hippies), or the magazine Playboy.

The literature used for the first chapter is very heterogeneous and wide. The base forms two book dealing with the 1950s, David Halberstam's *The Fifties* and Andrew J. Dunar's *America in the Fifties*, that provided me with the basic outline of happenings in the post-war American society, politics and culture. However, the books were full of interesting facts and it was not easy to choose just the most important ones and write a short abstract. This base I tried to expand by other sources, mainly from JSTOR database (for example *Eisenhower and Stevenson in the McCarthy Era*; *Individualism and Conformity in the 1950s vs. the 1980s*; *Hydrogen Bombs: The Need for a Policy*; *Women's trials: The Approval of the First Oral Contraceptive Pill in the United States and Great Britain*; *The Origins of McDonald's Golden Arches*; *Thurgood Marshal and Brown v. Board of Education*) but as well as through following books: *Consumer Society in American history: A Reader*, a very useful reading dealing with the history of consumerism, its development and manifestation but as well as its criticism; *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*, an interesting publication describing the American family life and its changes through

the time; it deals with the status of men and women in marriage and its gradual change (considering mainly the men point of view); *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*, a book devoted to an idea that goes along the whole American history and that is tremendously important for this thesis itself; it offers to the reader to understand fully the basis America was created on and the values people are trying to preserve until nowadays; *America in Our Time: From World War II to Nixon*, a publication that served very well for the part dealing with the post-war politics but included some important facts about the society and culture as well; *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, a very interesting book that describes the American family life during the post-war conflict between West and East and its influence on the life of ordinary American people; it presents some interesting facts about feelings of both partners in the marriage and their actual attitude to each other; *The Haunted Fifties, 1953–1963*, an another interesting publication dealing with the fifties from other point of view, especially the political one; it is not providing facts itself (such as exact dates) but it describes the events in atypical way people are not used to. To complete all information provided by books and articles mentioned above, I also used some basic data from publications such as *Dějiny Spojených Států Amerických* or *Basic Readings in U.S. Democracy*. Of course, I did not leave out the internet pages relevant to particular topics and events that happened during the post-war period, for example Earl Warren College, Rewind the Fifties, Television history, The Kinsey Institute, Theatre History, US Department of Health and Human Services, The Fifties Web or Vanity Fair.

Before the analysis of the second chapter it is important to note that chapters two, three and four have some common characteristics. All of them are divided into two sections: the first describes the author's life and it tries to provide the basic facts that influenced his life and his writing. For each author I had a comprehensive biography that covered their whole life and sometimes even their work. Moreover, I tried to support these data from other sources, mainly internet ones. The second part after deals with the book itself and it offers a text analysis completed with personal insight based on thoughtful reading and also on comments of other scholars dealing with the topic. The literature used here is the book alone together with JSTOR articles and internet sources where I found much instigation from Literature Online<sup>1</sup> (that is the only source common for all the parts). The chapters also have one common theme – they represented three critical voices of post-war literature. Moreover they should also represent one part of the generation that deal or dissent with the society.

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<sup>1</sup> This page is accessible only through system of Charles University library and its electronic sources.

The second chapter represents the older generation that was born at the beginning of the twenty century and that went through the Great Depression and the Second World War already in adult age. Since there is no better representative of such generation than salesman Willy Lomann, his family and his tremendous dream I chose Miller's play *Death of a Salesman*. The first part of this chapter, devoted to Miller's life, is based on two huge and comprehensive biographies, namely Martin Gottfried's *Arthur Miller: His Life and Work* and Christopher Bigsby's *Arthur Miller 1915-1962*. Gottfried's publication was also useful for analysis of Miller's plays (not just *Death of a Salesman*) when he proved his understanding of Miller's work and his ability to pass his knowledge on his readers. It was a fascinating reading written in not complicated and very readable way. Bigsby is taken for an expert on Miller; however I have to confess I was not impress much by his biography and it served me only as a secondary source. To compete all the facts (and sometimes to organize them as well), I also used some useful internet links and websites that offered more structured data. The second part is thereafter based mainly on the book itself, *Arthur Miller: Collected Plays 1944-1961*. During my work on the thesis I found out that other versions of the play exist as well because in some literature were references to parts I did not read in this publication. However, the difference should not be critical because the main facts and events are the same. For the text analysis I also used some JSTOR articles that offered me important ideas I tried to incorporate into my text. A great source proved to be internet page Literature Online (mentioned above) that provided me with interesting and worthwhile remarks and observation.

J.D. Salinger and *The Catcher in the Rye* constitute the chapter three and they represent the young generation born during the Great Depression without real perception of this period. Holden Caulfield constitutes a great example of this generation and his adventures that occurred one winter in New York soon after the war and that led to his hospitalization in psychiatric clinic could not be left out of this thesis. The chapter is based on the same principle as the previous chapter. The main source for the first part was Paul Alexander's biography of Salinger that provided me with a lot of interesting facts. Despite its length (it is not as extensive as the biographies of Miller and Kerouac) it is a book that will not let you stop reading it. The style of writing is readable and the language is vivid. This will be due to the fact that Alexander is a journalist by profession and he knows how to address his readers. The book is very objective, talking openly about all parts of Salinger's character and his appealing life. The facts used from Alexander's publication are again competed by various

internet pages dealing with Salinger's life. The second part is based on the book alone, *The Catcher in the Rye*, and enriches by personal comments and the JSTOR article's insights. The JSTOR offered in this case various articles dealing with the language Salinger used for the book, the word "phony" or the psychological structure of the book. Once more, the internet page Literature Online provided an interesting observation.

The chapter four deals with the last critical voice of post-war literature and it should represent the new generation. Again the choice of author and book were not complicated. The new generation was characterized by "beat movement", for this reason I chose Jack Kerouac and his book *On the road* that is the best expression of what this movement was about. New vision of society, new values and priorities, revolt and dissent to the existing society – that is the main characteristic of the beats. The biography used for the first part is written by Paul Maher and it provides comprehensive information about Kerouac's life. It is maybe the fact that Kerouac life was kind of chaotic (lot of moving, travels, and friends) that the book is in some parts chaotic as well. For this reason it was really needed to use additional information from various internet pages that offered more structured data. The second part is as usual based on the book itself completed with personal notes. This time JSTOR did not offered many articles dealing with the book but many articles and reviews were on the internet (including Literature Online) and they proved as good source of inspiring ideas and notions.

In the conclusion, last part of the thesis, I would like to evaluate the previous chapters and to answer the main question of the thesis: was the critic presented by provided examples justified? To answer this question I would like to compare all presented examples and to find common points but also the differences. Next I will write a final outcome where I will try to compare it with the reality of the post-war society and the life in America in this period.

Every time literature offers another, interesting and novel view to the things that enclose us, as well as things that exist just in our mind. If the book deals with our society and the problems we have, two outcomes are possible: the description of reality is realistic or not. Sometimes we can identify with the book, sometimes we cannot. Sometimes reading can enrich our life, sometimes it is only a matter of relax. Nevertheless, if we read book that is realistic or not, we like it or not, we extend our mental horizons or we just relax, it is always important to approach it unprejudiced as much as possible because only by this attitude we will be able to enrich our knowledge by other points of view that can change our perception in many ways.



## 1. The post-war America

Post-war period brought a huge progress in many ways. This period was marked by a “boom” in economy, population, industry and other sectors. During the 1950s we observed a relative social calmness, something that will change radically in the following decade. However, the period was clouded with doubts connected with fear of Cold War and a permanent threat of nuclear extinction<sup>2</sup>. “*The nervous peace that followed the war tempted men and women who had endured nearly two decades of ceaseless turmoil to turn toward the satisfaction of cultivating their backyard gardens, and many of them did so.*”<sup>3</sup> What concerned the political aspect of the post-war period, the United States as a winner of the Second World War, and was fully aware of its position. The entry into the war in 1941 ended the period of isolationism and the United States started to become involved in world happenings.

All these factors, economic, political and military superiority (that was proved by the use of atomic bomb against Japan to end the war), led many scholars to start to call the 20<sup>th</sup> century an American Century. As many other decades, even the post-war period went through its greatness and major developments to protest and oppose some part of the society (in this case the counterculture of the 1960s). However, the 1950s were important in the vivacity of these changes that were unprecedented to any other decade in American history. The post-war period adumbrated the events of the following decades and it gave rise to the movements that consequently changed the society in a dramatic way into a form we know it today.

### 1.1. The political situation

The post-war years were associated with two strong and important presidents – Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower. Republicans, after almost twenty years out of the White House, prepared for their chance already in the presidential election in 1948 (when they nominated Thomas E. Dewey<sup>4</sup> against President Harry Truman) but they had to wait another four years

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<sup>2</sup> Once, Albert Einstein was asked how the Third World War would be fought. He answered “*that he had no idea what kind of weapons would be used in the Third World War, but he could assure the questioner that the war after that would be fought with stones*”. HALBERSTAM, D. *The Fifties*. New York : Fawcett Columbine. pp. 48.

<sup>3</sup> CONN, P. *Literature in America : an illustrated history*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press. pp. 447; DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas E. Dewey was the Governor of New York (1943-1954) and in 1944 and 1948 he was the republican candidate for President but in both case he lost the elections (even though that in 1948 he was the favorite). In the Republican Party he was the leader of liberal fraction when he fought conservative Senator Robert A. Taft. [Http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/160474/Thomas-E-Dewey](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/160474/Thomas-E-Dewey); 1. 4. 2011, 8:52.

before gaining power back. In 1949, after his reelection, Truman introduced his “*Fair Deal*”<sup>5</sup>. Truman wanted, among others, to strengthen the economy, bring prosperity to farmers, secure natural resources, improve health care and offer civil rights to all citizens. This was a very ambitious plan and Truman had problems with its implementation. First of all, the Congress created one obstacle and the problem was also that Truman had to focus more on the international scene where three important things happened – the Chinese revolution (1949), the Soviet successful test of atomic bomb (1949)<sup>6</sup> and the Korean War (1950) broke out and America decided to take part in it and began to play the role of the world’s protector against communism.

The post-war period brought both promises and threat. The war ended; nevertheless, there was the atomic bomb that represented a grave threat to everybody. The trend continued that the world slowly divided into two blocks and the Cold War emerged. Truman tried to respond to this new threat by his policy of containment that was mainly expressed by the Truman doctrine<sup>7</sup> (March, 1947) and by the Marshall Plan<sup>8</sup> (June, 1947). Truman also focused on the national security apparatus which he tried to improve by the creation of National Military Establishment (later Department of Defense), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the National Security Council (NSC).<sup>9</sup> Since the United States abandoned its policy of isolationism (definitely confirmed by the creation of the United Nations in 1945), and together with the emergence of the Cold War, Truman considered as very important objective to create a defense organization for the Western hemisphere. The opportunity came in 1949 when the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) came into force and America openly declared to protect the Western world against the communist menace.<sup>10</sup>

The communism theme (see appendix 2) dominated the American post-war political scene. Still during the Truman administration, there burst out the anti-communists hysteria led by Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy (and by The House Un-American Activities Committee

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<sup>5</sup> This was a 21 point program of domestic legislation outlining a series of proposed actions in the fields of economic development and social welfare.

<sup>6</sup> This event launched the race for development of the H-Bomb (weapons of this design get a large part of their explosive energy from hydrogen fusion and they are more powerful than atomic bombs) that was achieved by the United States in 1951 and by the Soviet Union in 1953. The destruction power was really great and many experts asked government to declare they would never use it. THOMSON, G. *Hydrogen Bombs: The Need for a Policy*. International Affairs, pp. 465, 469.

<sup>7</sup> It stated US economic and military help to Greece and Turkey to prevent their falling into the Soviet sphere.

<sup>8</sup> It was officially called the European Recovery Program that stated the US economic help to the countries in Europe. It was in progress between 1947-1951.

<sup>9</sup> In 1950 was accepted NSC-68 that was based on the premise that the Soviet Union posed an extraordinary threat and it urged for rapid build-up of the political, economic, and military strength of the free world.

<sup>10</sup> DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 8-15,26-27; HALBERSTAM, D. *The Fifties*. New York : Fawcett Columbine. pp. 6-8.

– HUAC; see appendix 1). This hysteria was preceded by so called spy cases of Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs but it really widened when McCarthy delivered his speech in West Virginia on February 1950. Here he claimed he had a list of 205 Communists in the State Department. As was proved later, McCarthy had no list and he revised the number all the time (to 57, then again to 81). Nevertheless, thanks to a subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (and support of republican Senator Robert Taft) he got a chance and he continued with his investigation. The hearing became bitterly biased and partial. The whole mania continued for almost next four years but at the end McCarthy overdrove by accusing George Marshall, the Secretary of Defense and when he started to accuse a high ranking official of the Army. In 1954 the Senate voted to condemn the conduct of Senator McCarthy. However, the activity of HUAC continued until it was abolished in 1975 (however, in the late 1950s its decline began).<sup>11</sup>

In 1952 presidential election, Republicans finally succeeded (with a campaign targeted on questions of Korea, communism and corruption) and after twenty years of democratic rule Dwight Eisenhower, the war hero, became the American president. According to many scholars, there was need for Republicans to win. They pointed out that “*the real need for a change in this country arises, not from the decay of Democrats, but from the need to give the Republicans the sobering experience of responsibility.*”<sup>12</sup> Eisenhower came to a difficult time, with major crisis abroad (Korea) and at home (McCarthyism) but he was able to manage both of them.<sup>13</sup> Eisenhower tried to seek the “middle way” when he believed that any political extreme actually threatens the American democracy. This way involved a commitment to conservative fiscal policy (especially by reducing New Deal programs) with welfare as an anathema. One of his most ambitious projects was the Interstate Highway System; a project that had great impact on American society.<sup>14</sup> Eisenhower’s overwhelming personal popularity ensured him reelection in 1956; however, it was not enough to win Congress where (in both houses) Democrats won the majority.

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<sup>11</sup> DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 26-27; HALBERSTAM, D. *The Fifties*. New York : Fawcett Columbine. pp. 49-57; STONE, I. F. *The Haunted Fifties. 1953-1963*. Boston : Little, Brown and Company. pp. 70-71; BROWN, S. G. *Eisenhower and Stevenson in the McCarthy Era: A Study in Leadership*. Ethics, pp. 233, 254.

<sup>12</sup> HALBERSTAM, D. *The Fifties*. New York : Fawcett Columbine. pp. 236.

<sup>13</sup> The Korean War was ended by signing the ceasefire in July 1953. The question of Senator McCarthy was solved by gradual losing of his influence and power where he became more a problem than anything else for the Republican Party and thank to his strong drinking habits McCarthy died in 1957.

<sup>14</sup> This project beneficiated the automobile and trucking industries, it allowed people to flee to the suburbs and it guaranteed the future urban growth to perpetuate.

What concerns Ike's foreign policy, the United States was involved in events such as the Iran or Guatemala coup or the Suez Crisis (1956). In the case of the Suez Crisis, France and Britain undertook a provocative action without consulting the US and Eisenhower was very enraged because the invasion would give the Soviet Union an opportunity to gain more influence in the region. At the end, the whole crisis just left a bitter taste among the Western alliance. But the dominant of the foreign policy stayed the Cold War where it had become clear that the rivalry with the Soviet Union would not probably evolve in direct confrontation, but rather there will be crisis in geopolitical hot spots around the globe (for example China and Taiwan, Vietnam, Latin America, Cuba and others). What concerned Vietnam, the American commitment to the Diem regime deepened because the American goal was to stop and prevent the spread of communism to other areas in Southeast Asia, to weaken Soviet influence and strengthen the anti-communist government in South Vietnam (by reunification of the country under anti-communist leadership). This policy of Eisenhower administration was very important because it determined the course of American involvement in the 1960s.

The Cold war took a dramatic turn in 1957 when the Soviet Union launched into space an orbit (first artificial satellite) called "Sputnik"; an action that caught the United States by surprise. The immediate reaction was shock; people did not believe Soviets were able to achieve something like this and they became scared. Many questions arose about national defense, system of education related to the science and engineering and the American ability to compete with Soviet in space program. Eisenhower tried to calm the nation but he obviously underestimated the reaction of the society. The situation was even worsened when a secret defense report leaked to the press informing the public that Soviet Union was superior to United States in nuclear weapon technology and there was a possibility of attack within two years. Eisenhower was forced to take action to energize the nation's missile programs and in 1958 he signed the act authorizing establishment of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). At the end, the Sputnik crisis helped to undertake reforms in education, it also led to the creation of a national civilian space agency and another round of arms race was initiated as well.<sup>15</sup>

The end of fifties was marked by a big change in the political scene. Eisenhower's administration was slowly coming to its end and new elections were set for 1960. Democrats were already able to win the majority in the Congress two years before and now they had

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<sup>15</sup> DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 88, 101-104, 117-124, 163-164, 278-286; HALBERSTAM, D. *The Fifties*. New York : Fawcett Columbine. pp. 410, 625- 628.

good chances to win the presidential office back from Republicans. Two candidates, John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon, faced each other in the race for presidency. Thanks to many factors (and the influence of the media, especially television), John F. Kennedy won the elections. The youngest president, the first catholic in the White House, Kennedy entered the office with a vision for his nation. During his administration the turbulent inside the society finally got over the calm surface and everything that took roots in the fifties came to burst out: the sixties were here.

## 1.2. The American society

The concept of **American dream** can serve as a simplified description of the post-war period in the United States. This concept accompanies the nation from its beginning; it is expressed in the Declaration of Independence from 1776 where it is stated that “*all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.*”<sup>16</sup>. The idea “*that one’s children might have a better life has been a core component of the American dream.*”<sup>17</sup> The American dream is composed of more dreams: the dream of good life that include the upward mobility, personal fulfillment, fame and fortune (everybody can get ahead), the dream of equality or the dream of home ownership. The 1950s was exactly the period that encompassed all of these dreams together and enabled many to achieve it. Thanks to the post-war economy that brought unprecedented economic growth and the emergence of new consumer society, the dream of upward mobility and personal fulfillment became possible for realization (even if not in full extent). The 1950s also launched the movement for accomplishment of equality that was still not fulfilled. The blacks were free for almost one hundred years now but they were not equal (there was need for another “civil war” to change this question and this came in the form of civil rights movement of the 1960s). The most visible, however, was the dream of home ownership when almost the whole middle class could afford to buy and own a house.<sup>18</sup>

As was mentioned earlier, the postwar expansion brought “**economic boom**” and the United States left the war as one of the most powerful nations and also one of the most affluent. Thanks to the war; employment, productivity, and capital investment sharply expanded.

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<sup>16</sup> UROFSKY, M. I. *Basic Readings in U.S. Democracy*. p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> CULLEN, J. *The American Dream*. New York : Oxford University Press. pp. 16.

<sup>18</sup> CULLEN, J. *The American Dream*. New York : Oxford University Press. pp. 8-9, 60, 115-116.

The economic boom can be described in the following way: “*America’s rejuvenated economy brought with it an era of prosperity without precedent in the history of any industrial society. Consumer goods multiplied, and sectors of the population that previously had been excluded gained increased access to education and medical care.*”<sup>19</sup> The manufactures responded to expanding market by goods that should satisfy not only the needs but also the wants of consumers. The veterans of the Second World War moved into their professions and they created the basis for U.S.-based multinational corporations which were moreover reinforced by a huge number of talented refugees from Europe and Asia. Even the governmental spending (mainly on defense) stimulated the expansion of the economy.

The 1950s also spread a new phenomenon, the **consumer culture**. In post-war America started a new style of life – life on credit without saving money. The years 1947-1960 were marked by huge increase in spending. This was enabled by the new generation that did not suffer the fears of the Great Depression and also thanks to the great economic growth. But it must be said that Americans did not spend money for personal luxury items but the spending was oriented mainly on family need, primarily on house equipment (for example refrigerators, stoves, television, etc.) The huge prosperity created optimism in people as though it would never stop. Even some professional economists claimed that there would not be any other big collapse like Great Depression and that permanent growth is not only possible but it is inevitable. The situation for United States really looked favorable – they had monopoly on market (because other countries were destroyed by war) and also new technologies that helped to enlarge the productivity of work. The main driving force of this development was a demand for consumer goods when people were tired of saving money during the whole of the 1930s and during the war, they finally launched into buying.<sup>20</sup>

The 1950s also presented the so called “**baby boom**”. This trend can be traced from 1946 when twenty percent increase was registered in the previous year (there were around 3.4 million babies). The boom continued until 1965 when from 1952 the birthrate did not drop below 4 million. Many people tried to find reasons for such a boom. Some reasons were obvious, for example the return of veterans from the war, but some were not so clear. Some scholars notified the change in attitude to marriage that occurred in the post-war period and

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<sup>19</sup> CONN, P. *Literature in America: an illustrated history*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press. pp. 445.

<sup>20</sup> CONN, P. *Literature in America : an illustrated history*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press. pp. 443-450; MCQUADE, D.. *The Harper American literature. Vol. 2*. New York : Harper Collins. pp. 1505; DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 167-168; HALBERSTAM, D. *The Fifties*. New York : Fawcett Columbine. pp. 507; MAY, E. T. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold Era*. New York : Basic Books. pp. 147-148.

that was based on the fact that women married younger and they wanted to have children.<sup>21</sup> Other reasons presented by some scholars were the sense of security after the war (something that could not be compared with the uncertainty of their parents). The young couples had reasons to be hopeful: they had the governmental support<sup>22</sup> and the economy continued to grow and expand which suppressed the fear of an economic depression. It is ironical that at the end, it was this generation of children born in the post-war period that grew up without the fear of crisis or experience of the war, in the time of relative affluence, that created the radical movement and that rejected the domestic and sexual codes of their parents by creating their own. When this generation came to maturity, they influenced the existing patterns of consumption, residence, employment, social order and the governmental policy as well.<sup>23</sup>

When speaking about the “baby boom”, the **concept of family** cannot be omitted. The post-war family was strengthened and it became the basic unit of the society. One of the most interesting questions related to family was re-establishment of status of women. The post-war woman should become a housewife. During the war it was necessary for women to work and replace men who served in the war. Nevertheless, after the war men returned home and they needed a job. There were three solutions on how to arrange this situation: some men did not have any troubles to find work so they did not need any help; for those who had troubles, there was the GI Bill created to solve this situation; and at the end, there were women who did not have to work anymore, hence they could hand work over back to men. Afterward, women had to return back to home and their duty was to take care of the family. The image of “ideal woman” or “house women” was created; a woman who is not only a perfect mother, a perfect companion but in the same time also a great care person.<sup>24</sup> Soon after the war, the antifeminist campaign emerged in its full power. One of the first publications was *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (1947), written by psychiatrist Marynia Farnham and sociologist Ferdinand

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<sup>21</sup> This actually proved to be right – after the war Americans of all racial, ethnic, and religious groups as well as of all socio-economic classes and educational levels, tended to marry younger and they also had more children than other time in the twentieth century. Also the trend of divorce reduced after the war, especially in the period between 1940 and 1960 and the marriage that started in the late 1940s could be described as particularly stable. MAY, E. T. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold Era*. New York : Basic Books. pp. IX, XI.

<sup>22</sup> The governmental help was expressed through programs as Veterans Administration that offered loans, the Federal Housing Administration that made it possible for young families to buy its own homes or the GI Bill that responded to fears of unemployment after return about 15 million soldiers from the war. It offered the opportunity to attend universities for free or to take a loan for buying house, farms or small businesses. HODGSON, G. *America in Our Time: From World War II to Nixon*. New York : Random House. pp. 54.

<sup>23</sup> MAY, E. T. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold Era*. New York : Basic Books. pp. XV, 120-121; DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 174-175.

<sup>24</sup> Some women resisted and they continued to work/or finding new work (even most of them started family as well). Nevertheless, their work’s conditions were poor and the opportunities for advancement had changed very little. The fact was that most women who entered the workforce did so out of necessity. MAY, E. T. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold Era*. New York : Basic Books. pp. 65-66.

Lundberg. This book settled the pattern for post-war family: man, a provider for the family, woman, mother and housewife. Moreover, they argued that marriage and procreation are biologically determined functions and if resisted, people can have psychological and social problems. Very fast, the American culture started to be oriented in this way, from women magazines (*Ladies' Home Journal*, *McCall's*), through books (*Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*), newspapers, popular media such as television (*I Love Lucy*, *Ozzie and Harriet*) to open government support of this family image. The purpose of this governmental propaganda was the effort to give a new meaning and importance to the traditional role of women and try to change home to place of security during the ongoing Cold War (there was need to preserve appropriate gender roles in case of atomic attack).<sup>25</sup>

The family model of the 1950s was created already in the 1920s. It was a model based on the fact that women need men more than the other way round, explicitly said women were economically depended on men. The 1920s family model introduced the principle of the family wage: a male worker was supposed to earn enough to support the family. This principle, to be preserved, depended on two things: 1) the fact that men earn more than women; and 2) the assumption that men use their higher wages to support women. In the post-war era both conditions were fulfilled and reinforced. The 1950s family was therefore based on firm expectation of men to grow up, marry and support their wives. Marriage and within it the breadwinner role was the only normal state for the adult male. The trend was to be mature and the children were brought up with this notion. Love required discipline and maturity while men as well as women should overcome romance to seek a mutual state of emotional maturity. Both men and women knew that marriage is more than anything else, but a hardwork aimed to building a sound and a promising partnership.<sup>26</sup> However, this model was destabilized later by sexual revolution, the pill, the revival of feminism and the “me generation”. And also by the increasing need to have two breadwinners in the family as the price of real estate and medical insurance grew. It also became an explanation for phenomenon known as the “breakdown of the family.”

In the fifties we could find the roots of **sexual revolution** of the 1960s. Alfred Kinsey<sup>27</sup> and his *Sexual Behavior of the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior of the Human Female*

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<sup>25</sup> MAY, E. T. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold Era*. New York : Basic Books. pp. 90-91,93; DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 193-195; HALBERSTAM, D. *The Fifties*. New York : Fawcett Columbine. pp. 591-592.

<sup>26</sup> EHRENREICH, B. *The Hearts of Men*. New York : Anchor Press. pp. 1-11, 14-19.

<sup>27</sup> Alfred Kinsey was an American biologist and professor of entomology and zoology. In 1947 he founded the Institute for Sex Research and he concerned with human sexuality. He is considered to be a major contributor to



(1953) were just one example of this revival and rediscovery of sex. Kinsley focused on sexual behavior in the United States and his results were surprising, for some even shocking, and most Americans were not willing to believe his findings.<sup>28</sup> Still, the change was here. Probably the most observable was the change that occurred in the institute of marriage where the attitude toward sex slowly became more open and the prudery supported by many forms of Christianity stepped back to more enlightened view on sex that was based on satisfaction of mutual needs. Both women and men expected that sex would strengthen the marriage, enhance the home and that it would contribute to the sense of happiness for both of them. This change and the need for fulfillment were further connected with the question of searching for female hormonal contraception (to prevent unwanted pregnancy). The research, in the United States, was conducted mainly by scientist Gregory Pincus (vice president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America), Margaret Sanger, the advocate of women rights, and Katharine McCormick who supported the whole research by her money. The research proceeded for many years when finally in 1956 tests started on human beings. The pill got a trade name Enovid and the final approval from Food and Drug Administration (FDA)<sup>29</sup> came in 1960. The society was already prepared to accept the birth control pill to improve marital sex and also to enable the family planning but the people definitely were not prepared to accept it as liberation of sex outside marriage. However, the result was the opposite; the contraception actually launched the sexual revolution of the 1960s.<sup>30</sup>

The 1950s, as mentioned above, were decades of many “booms”. There was not only economic and baby boom but also, for example, a “**car boom**”. Cars became important not only for those who needed to travel for business but for those who wanted to shop, eat or spend their leisure time. Moreover, the car industry drove the general economy by great consumption of cars. The most famous car manufactures were General Motors, Ford and

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the modern field of sexology. His work provoked controversy in the 1940s and 1950s and influenced social and cultural values almost all over the world. <http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/about/>; 31.3. 2011, 16:44

<sup>28</sup> Kinsey, for example, found out that 12 percent of males (6 percent of females) had sex by the age of sixteen; according to his estimation around 50 percent of males (around 26 percent of females) had extramarital sex; and maybe the most controversial was the finding that 37 percent of males (13 percent of females) had at least one homosexual experience. DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 187; HALBERSTAM, D. *The Fifties*. New York : Fawcett Columbine. pp. 277.

<sup>29</sup> FDA is an agency of the US Department of Health and Human Services. It is responsible for protecting and promoting public health through regulation and supervision over products such as food, tobacco or drugs. <http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/WhatWeDo/WhatFDARegulates/default.htm>; 31.3.2011, 18:25.

<sup>30</sup> JUNOD, S; MARKS, L. *Women's Trials: The Approval of the First Oral Contraceptive Pill in the United States and Great Britain*. Oxford University Press, pp. 123-124; MAY, E. T. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold Era*. New York : Basic Books. pp. 101,118.

Chrysler.<sup>31</sup> Slowly, there were more cars in the United States than in the rest of the world put together (to have some numbers, in 1950 three out of five American families owned a car, in 1960 it was already four out of five). The car became a very fast symbol of a changing society and came to a new peak as commodity and as a cultural symbol. During the 1950s there were more and more, mainly young people and teenagers, who had their drivers license and owned a car. One expression of this new interest was the publication of *Hot Rod*<sup>32</sup> that offered almost all information concerning cars to everybody interested in it.<sup>33</sup>

The car industry and the higher consumption of cars influenced the American society in many ways. I would like to highlight three examples of this influence. First of all there were the new created suburban shopping centers that slowly evolved into islands of stores, separated from the city center and surrounded by endless parking lots. As the most common example there was Eugene Ferkauf and his E. J. Korvettes; a chain of discount stores on the suburbs. Secondly, there was the creation of “fast foods”. The most famous one was that of brothers Dick and Maurice McDonald who opened their first fast food in San Bernardino, California. They understood the main change in American society that people are more and more in hurry and there was need for quickness. Moreover, the car industry made it possible for the people to travel for food or take the food on the road. Last thing was the low prices that allowed the families to eat outside, in a restaurant, rather than home. However, the brothers did not have tendency to expand and they started to sell franchises. It was Ray Kroc who actually built from McDonald the great empire. The third example was motels that were especially connected with the name of Kemmons Wilson and his Holiday Inn (first one opened in 1952). His concept was simple and clear – he wanted to build places mainly for families traveling through the United States. This place should be cheap, nice, clean, simply and free for children. Wilson also did not want to expand alone (in this case it was almost impossible) and he used the franchise system as well. Today there is around 1,500 Holiday Inns all over the world.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> There was car almost for everyone: “*The Chevy was for blue-collar people with solid jobs and for young couples just starting out who had to be careful with money; the Pontiac was for more successful people who were confident about their economic futures and wanted a sportier car (...); the Buick was for the town’s doctor, the young lawyer who was about to be made partner, or the elite of the managerial class; the Cadillac was for the top executive or owner of the local factory*”. HALBERSTAM, D. *The Fifties*. New York : Fawcett Columbine. pp. 120

<sup>32</sup> Hot Rod is an American monthly magazine devoted to modifying cars for performance and appearance.

<sup>33</sup> DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 168-169; GLICKMAN, L. *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader*. New York : Cornell University. pp. 282-283.

<sup>34</sup> DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 171-174; HALBERSTAM, D. *The Fifties*. New York : Fawcett Columbine. pp. 144-149, 155-157, 160-162, 173-179; HESS, A. *The Origins*

With the growing population, unprecedented economic progress and the spread of automobile industry throughout the population, the **change in demography** took place as well. The move from rural areas to cities still continued (as was already for a century) but the biggest change was inside the cities where people were leaving the downtown areas and moved to the suburbs. They still continued to work in the cities but they were not obliged to live there anymore. However, with the return of veterans, marriages and baby boom there was unprecedented housing shortage in the aftermath of the Second World War. This was an opportunity for William Levitt and his dream to build cheap houses that can be affordable almost for everybody (he saw it, as many others, as a fulfillment of an American dream). Moreover, Levitt connected the question of homeownership with national allegiance when he said: “*No man who owns his own house and lot can be a communist ... He has too much to do.*”<sup>35</sup> The first Levittown offered around 17,000 homes and with every other Levittown there were improvements. At the end, they offered affordable, well-build, single-family houses – exactly what the residents wanted. The problem became soon that the suburbs were strictly homogenous (not only with respect to age and marital status but also to race). William Levitt tried to justify this discrimination by statement: “*We can solve a housing problem, or we can try to solve a racial problem. But we cannot combine the two.*”<sup>36</sup> This movement of population had great impact in cities (mainly economical one) and the cities administrations tried to improve the living conditions within cities (but until today this remained a problem).<sup>37</sup>

The last important part of American post-war society was the **status of minorities** in the United States. It was obvious that the American dream was not accessible to the whole population. The post-war development stimulated fundamental changes in American society and became the base of civil rights movement and other movements that asked for equal rights and equal attitude for all minorities (blacks together with the native population, Latinos as well as homosexuals<sup>38</sup>). Many of the major achievements of the civil rights movement took

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*of McDonald's Golden Arches*. Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, pp. 62-66; BELASCO, W. *Review: The Motel in America*. Annals of the Association of American Geographers, pp. 161-162; [Http://people.umass.edu/q4/0%200%20Profiles/Wilson\\_2004.pdf](http://people.umass.edu/q4/0%200%20Profiles/Wilson_2004.pdf); 25. 3. 2011, 17:00.

<sup>35</sup> GLICKMAN, L. *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader*. New York : Cornell University. pp. 298.

<sup>36</sup> DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 178.

<sup>37</sup> DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 176-180; MAY, E. T. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold Era*. New York : Basic Books. pp. 151-152; CULLEN, J. *The American Dream*. New York : Oxford University Press. pp. 150-151.

<sup>38</sup> What concern gays and lesbians, the post-war era supported the homophobia to this question. Homosexuals were treated in a very bad way (loss of job, beating) and for this reason they pretended to be normal and in most of time they got married. There was also problem with people who were not homosexuals but they chose to live outside of marriage and parenthood; they were also many times treated as dangerous individuals and even government considered them to be as security risk and they became object of their investigation. MAY, E. T. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold Era*. New York : Basic Books. pp. 82-83.

place in the 1960s but some events that opened the way for further progress happened during the 1950s. The first changes came with the administration of President Truman who released two executive orders in 1948 to cease the segregation of armed forces and to mandate equality of treatment in federal employment.<sup>39</sup> Next important event came with the Supreme Court decision of 1954 in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case. The unanimous decision was declared by the chief justice Earl Warren<sup>40</sup> who stated: “*in the field of public education the doctrine of “separate but equal”<sup>41</sup> has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.*”<sup>42</sup> Even though this decision was a landmark for the civil right movement, the situation did not prove immediately and there was need for governmental intervention to meet this decision. (The most famous accident happened in 1957 at Little Rock Central High School where the public protested against entry of nine black children into school. President Eisenhower was forced to send federal troops to ensure student’s safety and enforce their right to attend school.) But the Supreme Court could not change everything; hence the blacks took initiatives into their hands. One of the most famous events was the Montgomery Bus Boycott in which Martin Luther King was involved. Rosa Parks, a middle-aged black woman, refused to give up a seat to a white woman in the bus. She was arrested and charged of disorderly conduct. On the protest, the black community organized bus boycott that continued for almost one year and its power surprised both the organizer and city officials. During the time, black community went through hard time (for example the police arrested one by one for minor offences). The whole case went in front of the Supreme Court who eventually decided that the laws in Alabama that segregated buses were unconstitutional. It was another victory for the movement. There was also the Civil Rights Act of 1957 (passed thanks to Senator Lyndon Johnson) that actually did change almost nothing and just gave the impression that blacks cannot depend on whites to defend their rights and that they would have to take that responsibility themselves. This started in 1960 by so call sit-ins protests and the civil rights

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<sup>39</sup> It should be noted that he asserted the orders before the presidential election. He took the risk of losing support for his reelection.

<sup>40</sup> Warren was chosen to the position of chief justice by President Dwight Eisenhower. According to Eisenhower, this decision was his biggest mistake because Warren started to promote social justice. He became known for the decision such as prohibition of school segregation or giving rights to accused people (by which he changed some parts of American law). [Http://warren.ucsd.edu/about/biography.html](http://warren.ucsd.edu/about/biography.html); 31.3.2011, 18:58.

<sup>41</sup> Separate but equal was a legal doctrine in the US that justified the system of segregation. According to this doctrine, all services, facilities and public accommodation could be separated by race; however, the quality of each group’s facility had to be equal. [Http://law.yourdictionary.com/separate-but-equal](http://law.yourdictionary.com/separate-but-equal); 31.3.2011, 19:02.

<sup>42</sup> DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 209.

movement had broadened its base with established organizations to serve as a foundation and demonstrated a commitment to nonviolence.<sup>43</sup>

### 1.3. The post-war culture

The question of culture was also very important. Literature, music, art, theaters, cinemas – all somehow revived. But the most popular at that time became television that hit the consumer market in 1947 and very fast replaced radio. Also some movie stars became idols or icons for young generations who admired them. Almost everyone knew names such as James Dean or Marilyn Monroe. In music, a new style was set up. It was rock and roll which derived from African American blues. Rock and roll differed radically from other popular music. The main figure was Elvis Presley, a white singer with black voice that enabled the desegregation of rock and roll because he gained the white public that slowly started to discover the black culture.<sup>44</sup> The development of television and expansion of the movie industry, formed together with art, literature, music and theatre the cultural background that also had great influence on the changing American society and it contributed by its own part in this change.

Television (see appendix 3) had great impact on American society: *“No other invention, not even the motion pictures, automobiles, or radio, brought so much change to so many people in such a short time.”*<sup>45</sup> Television, for the first time, offered the opportunity for all Americans to watch and listen to the same shows at the same time – it made the United States a smaller place. The power of television was in visualization. The words and opinion presented were reinforced by live interviews, by graphs and charts that made things more understandable; it created the illusion of knowledge, not merely names on paper but vivid and realistic pictures. Moreover, the television had great impact on things like entertainment, preferences in food, clothing and other goods, cultural taste and others. The bad side it brought was that people spent more time indoors, watching TV rather than going out, talking to friends or neighbors or reading books. The impact of television was immediate – the radio

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<sup>43</sup> DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 201, 204-222; CULLEN, J. *The American Dream*. New York : Oxford University Press. pp. 119-121; STONE, I.F. *The Haunted Fifties. 1953-1963*. Boston : Little, Brown and Company. pp. 58-62; HODGSON, G. *America in Our Time: From World War II to Nixon*. New York : Random House. pp. 184; VASILLOPULOS, Ch. *Thurgood Marshall and Brown v. Board of Education*. The Journal of Negro Education, pp. 293; HALBERSTAM, D. *The Fifties*. New York : Fawcett Columbine. pp. 539- 563, 674-676.

<sup>44</sup> TINDALL, G. *Dějiny Spojených Států Amerických*. Praha : Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny. pp. 650 – 664; CONN, P. *Literature in America : an illustrated history*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press. pp. 443 – 450; MCQUADE, D. *The Harper American literature. Vol. 2*. New York : Harper Collins. pp. 1505.

<sup>45</sup> DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 233.

lost many of its biggest stars to television and even Broadway's attendance dropped. Television actually presented another "boom". During the period of 1949 and 1952 over a quarter of a million of new television sets were sold but the real boom came in 1952 when the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) allowed new stations to start its broadcast (at the end of the decade there was already 562 stations). In 1950 there were just 12 percent of American homes that had a television set; by 1960 it was already 87 percent. Television became something that people soon added to their "must have" list. Television offered a lot of shows, especially comedy show that became one of the most popular formats in the 1950, variety shows, episodic stories such as *I Love Lucy* or *Ozzie and Harriet* that became the greatest television hit of the fifties, or television drama such as *12 Angry Men*, *Night to Remember* or *Peter Pan* (they were later re-made as movies). Of course, the news and sport events could not be omitted. Another thing television enabled was advertising, something that became the biggest revenue for televisions and they started to spend more on producing commercials than on regular programming. As was soon found out, the advertisements had great influence on potential customers by showing to people the abundant life-style on the screen, now accessible also to them. However, soon one of the most famous television scandals brought to light the notion that television is not as innocent as it appeared. It happened in 1956 when the practices used for contestants of various quiz shows (which were enormously famous) revealed. The contestants were given the answer in advance and when their popularity went down, they failed to answer questions in a dramatic theatric way. To many Americans this scandal symbolized a betrayal of public trust and the end of an age of innocence.<sup>46</sup>

The 1950s came up with great change in the movie industry mainly due to the emergence of television that became the main competitor for movies. At the beginning of the decade, the movie industry faced the most serious political threat in its history (McCarthyism). Nevertheless, thanks to the new technologies (increase of color production and experiments with 3-D movies), production of big-budget movies and the greater latitude with sex that allowed the producers to express more frankly the sexual themes, the situation improved somehow. Despite the fact that the number of theatres screening movies decreased a lot, the movie industry offered an innovation that differed much from television and that helped

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<sup>46</sup> DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 233-239, 248-249; HODGSON, G. *America in Our Time: From World War II to Nixon*. New York : Random House. pp. 142-143; SCHREIBER, F. R. *Television's New Idiom in Public Affairs*. *Hollywood Quarterly*, pp. 144-145; [Http://www.tvhistory.tv/1946-1949.htm](http://www.tvhistory.tv/1946-1949.htm); 25.3., 16:01, 2011.

the movies; it was outdoor drive-in theatres. The types of movies produced by the industry were various, from classical types such as musicals (*Ringling in the Rain, Gigi*), westerns (*The Searchers with John Wayne, The Horse Soldiers*), epics (*Ben-Hur*) to new types of movie such as science fiction (*The Day the Earth Stood Still, The Incredible Shrinking Man*), rebel movies (*Rebel Without a Cause, East of Eden* with James Dean) to movies addressing social issues as racial intolerance and others. In the late 1950s, the new music style also entered the movie industry when first soundtracks started to be done for movies (*The Blackboard Jungle* with the song *Rock around the clock* by Bill Haley and His Comets). Still, the inspiration for creation of many movies was drawn mainly from the theatre, books and television. The 1950s were rich of stars that Hollywood presented to the public. Among the most famous stars belonged Marlon Brando who became an icon of the Hollywood (he cooperated a lot with Elia Kazan, one of the most influential producer of movies and theatre plays in the post-war period), James Dean, the idol of rebellious youths whose life was cut short by a car accident, Paul Newman who excelled in William's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* or Marilyn Monroe who became the sex symbol of the post-war movie industry known for her personal life and sexual scandals with many famous and influential men (among others her two husbands Joe DiMaggio, a major baseball player and Arthur Miller, a playwright but she reportedly had a sexual affair also with president Kennedy).<sup>47</sup>

The television and movie industry could be considered a promoter of the new society based on consumerism and by its production they tried to even improve this image. On the other hand, there were also art, literature, theatre and music which were not so enthusiastic about the changes in the American society. It is a well known fact that artists have always refused to accept the society's norm and the conformist fifties were no exception. Most of these movements laid the grassroots to the counterculture of the sixties. One of them was a movement connected with Black Mountain College and persons such as composer John Cage, poet Charles Olson or painter Robert Rauschenberg. In painting, the most influential style became an abstract expressionism represented by Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline or Willem de Kooning.

The theatrical production continued to prosper. There were important dramatics such as Arthur Miller (*All My Sons, Death of a Salesman, The Crucible*) or Tennessee Williams (*The Glass Menagerie, Cat on the Hot Tin Roof, A Streetcar Named Desire*) that helped

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<sup>47</sup> [Http://www.lotl.com/fifties\\_movies/Hollywood\\_Movies\\_and\\_the\\_1950s.htm](http://www.lotl.com/fifties_movies/Hollywood_Movies_and_the_1950s.htm); 31.3.2011, 19:39; DUNAR, A. *J. America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 250-255.

the post-war theatre to enjoy a rich decade in qualitative terms and that became the best playwrights the country has ever produced. They both understood the post-war situation and they had the gift to articulate what many Americans were feeling. Their importance laid in the fact that in the time of prosperity and success, they were writing about the unsuccessfulness. Among others influential playwrights belonged Eugene O'Neill (*The Iceman Cometh*, *Long Day's Journey into the Night*), Edward Albee (*The American Dream*) or Neil Simon. The principal approach to production became a theatricalized realism that emphasized intense psychological truth; this was used especially in the work of Elia Kazan (for example production of William's *Streetcar* or Miller's *Salesman*). The playwrights also profited from the fact that American acting was marked by high quality of naturalism. The fifties were also rich for musical production that was very successful (*The King and I*, *My Fair Lady*, *West Side Story*). There was the rise of new theatres for example college and university theatres, children theaters or smaller, off-Broadway theaters that could be more experimental and took less risk (The New York Shakespeare Festival and the Living Theatre created by producer Joseph Papp).<sup>48</sup>

The post-war literature was enormously influenced by the Second World War and by the changing society of the fifties. The explosion of the atomic bomb, the emergence of television, communistic hysteria presented by McCarthy, the consumer society, civil right movements, Korea, feminism and many other things had an enormous impact on American writing. The 1950s brought growth in literature of all sorts. Among the most important writers of this period were Ernest Hemingway (*The Old Man and the Sea*), John Steinbeck (*East of Eden*), J.D. Salinger (*The Catcher in the Rye*), Norman Mailer (*The Naked and the Dead*), Joseph Heller (*Catch-22*) Saul Bellow (*Herzog*), Flannery O'Connor (*A Good Man is hard to find*), William Styron (*Lie Down in Darkness*), Vladimir Nabokov (*Lolita*), John Updike (*Rabbit, Run*), Ralph Ellison (*Invisible Man*), Richard Wright (*The Outsider*) or James Baldwin (*Go Tell It on the Mountain*). Their novels were very popular and they dealt with the contemporary American life and society. Most of the time the ends of the novels were not positive and they did not admire the new post-war society. Their main characters fiercely involved the world around them (most of the time full of anger) and they were looking for

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<sup>48</sup> [Http://webhost.bridgew.edu/adirks/ald/courses/hist/hist\\_Amer.htm](http://webhost.bridgew.edu/adirks/ald/courses/hist/hist_Amer.htm); 31. 3. 2011, 19:52; [22](http://www.google.cz/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=7&ved=0CFUQFjAG&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.uab.ro%2Freviste_recunoscute%2Fphilologica%2Fphilologica_2007_tom3%2F32.cebotari_luminita.doc&rct=j&q=1950%20american%20theatre&ei=_76UTeD2MYWWswbZ2u2xCA&usq=AFQjCNEa5551vZ5v_HpUnZML9WRM AWfTtA; 1.4.2011,10:08; DUNAR, A. J. <i>America in the Fifties</i>. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 257-260, 265-267.</a></p>
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their own identities because they were tired of being imposed identities by the world. The literature can be described as literature of dissent (sometimes with the flavor of despair) and the writers very often used new experimental techniques. In the middle of 1950s, there arose new movement that dominated the period, the beat movement (see chapter 5). Among the main representatives belong Allen Ginsberg (*Howl*), Jack Kerouac (*On the Road*), William S. Burroughs (*Naked Lunch*), Lawrence Ferlinghetti (*A Coney Island of the Mind*) and Gregory Corso (*This Hung-Up Age*). Their work was a free expression of their feelings and a clear refusal of conventions of the middle class. They were not desperate; on the contrary they persistently extolled life (but life according to their images).<sup>49</sup>

The music of the fifties reflected the post-war American optimism. The young people, mainly teenagers, not fated by the war experience, were looking for something new and exciting and the fifties offered it to them - Rock and Roll. Together with jazz and rhythm and blues, these musical styles shaped the post-war music scene. The fifties were also inherently connected with the black music from which the musicians drew inspiration. Among the main musician of the fifties belong representatives of jazz culture such as Charlie Parker, Ella Fitzgerald, Miles Davis or Louis Armstrong. The other stars were connected mainly with R&B and rock and roll, for example Joe Turner, Chuck Berry, Bill Haley and His Comets, Bing Crosby and, of course, Elvis Presley, the star of rock and roll (that became the dominant form of popular music over the world). Presley, a 19-year-old truck driver from Memphis, became overnight an idol for the new young generation of Americans that started to define itself by the music and who was breaking the habits of its parents. The popular music of the fifties underwent a radical transformation and enabled to originate new music forms and style that continued to evolve in the sixties and moreover it reflected the larger society as a whole: calm on the surface, turbulent below. Just like in television, popular music also did not do without scandals. The biggest one occurred in 1959 and is known as “payola” scandal (payola is a system when the record companies are giving money or gifts to disc jockeys to play their songs). After the television scandal, investigated by the House Legislative Committee, the Committee focused on payola practice in radio. The purpose was to stop the rock and roll music that was at that time considered to be the devil that corrupted the teenagers morally.

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<sup>49</sup> [Http://www.sfu.ca/english/Gillies/Engl20701/amww2.htm](http://www.sfu.ca/english/Gillies/Engl20701/amww2.htm); 2. 4. 2011, 11:02;  
[Http://www.waggish.org/2003/american-writers-of-the-1950s/](http://www.waggish.org/2003/american-writers-of-the-1950s/); 31 .3. 2011, 19:50. DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. Pp. 260-265.

The radio was blamed for spreading such music, moreover for money from payola. At the end there was a ban on playing rock and roll that was revoked in the mid-sixties.<sup>50</sup>

#### 1.4. Criticism

*“The conformity of the 1950s was followed by the rebellious individualism of the counterculture in the late 1960s and the retreat into narcissism during the “me decade” of the 1970s”*<sup>51</sup>

Despite this positive view of a new society, a society full of sufficiency, there were “islands of anxiety”. They existed especially among sociologists, artists and writers who asked themselves: “Is America not too materialistic and conformable?” This feeling can be described as a neuralgic point of American life: the tension between idealism and materialism which carries on until now. We can describe the postwar America as a power which tried to harmonize its two desires – to extend possession and simultaneously make good deeds. Nevertheless, these critics affected the postwar societal and cultural life hardly ever because post war society did not want to admit some deeper political or social problems. The paradox showed itself later – it was the generation of baby boomers which revolted in the 1960s against mass and consumer society, conformity and consumption.

As it was mentioned above, the changes in patterns of the American society were not admired by everybody. There were people who found these trends disturbing and they tried to draw attention to them. Among the most important critics of the post-war society were David Riesman, William H. Whyte and C. Wright Mills. David Riesman presented his ideas in one of the most famous books of 1950s – *The Lonely Crowd* (1950). Here, he described the American society as a society of individuals that respond to conformist pressures from contemporary influences such as friends or the mass media. Another sociologist C. Wright Mills offered different analysis in his book *The Power Elite* (1956) where he insisted that a “power elite” ruled America. This elite could be found in business, government and military and he warned against the danger posed by the abuse of power. The last example is

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<sup>50</sup> [Http://www.fiftiesweb.com/music.htm](http://www.fiftiesweb.com/music.htm); 2. 4. 2011, 18:09; DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 267-277; [Http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/506004/rock](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/506004/rock); 2. 4. 2011, 18:12. HALBERSTAM, D. *The Fifties*. New York : Fawcett Columbine. pp. 473; [Http://www.lotl.com/fifties\\_music/the\\_payola\\_scandal.htm](http://www.lotl.com/fifties_music/the_payola_scandal.htm); 2. 4. 2011, 18:48.

<sup>51</sup> THOMSON, I. T. *Individualism and Conformity in the 1950s vs. the 1980s*. Sociological Forum, pp. 498.

*The Organization Man* (1956) written by William H. Whyte who examined the impact of modern corporations and bureaucracies on mid-level managers. He proposed a notion that if individuals found something in the group that troubled them, they would rather adapt themselves to the group than to change it. Hence the source of ideas and innovations is not the individual but the group.

There were also other critics, for example Sloan Wilson and his novel *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955), one of the most influential American novels of the fifties. The main message of the book was the struggle of young Americans against the pressures of conformity and imprisonment that brings the suburban life. Also Grace Metalious and her novel *Peyton Place* (1956) reacted critically to the new society that was not still able to speak openly about sexuality. Her novel describes inhabitants of a small, fictitious town and their sexuality. She also presented a new image of woman that was more independent than even before. Among other critics, there was a historian David Potter (*People of Plenty*, 1954) or the beat movement that created the base for the counterculture and hippies movement of the 1960s.<sup>52</sup>

At the end I would like to show one particular criticism concerning the institution of family. The first “rebels” against the system of maturity and family were known as gray flannel dissidents. They did everything as they should (find a job with opportunity of advancement; find a wife they married; buy a house; being successful, mature, adult breadwinner). However, they felt something was wrong. It was neither material, political nor psychological problem, it was the conformity that became the code word for male discontent (the feminine equivalent was described not so much longer by Betty Friedan as “the problem without a name” in her *Feminine Mystic*) The only thing these rebels did was that they cultivated an acute awareness of the problem of conformity and thanks to this they achieved more reflective conformity. However, the gray flannel rebel stayed where he was, mainly because he could not think of anywhere to go. He could blame his corporation, he could blame his wife but he would not leave either of them. This rebellion was more about critique that did not lead to any action; however a critique that alerted the future generation of rebels. More serious critic of family came from Hugh Hefner, the founder of *Playboy* magazine that started in 1953. *Playboy* challenged conventional mores and also the importance of family life and the maturity theme children grew up with. The magazine did not disapprove of women (it was not even possible with the sexuality of the magazine) but it disapproved of wives. The

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<sup>52</sup> TINDALL, G. *Dějiny Spojených Států Amerických*. Praha : Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny. pp. 650 – 664; DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 189-192; HALBERSTAM, D. *The Fifties*. New York : Fawcett Columbine. pp. 522, 578-580.

message for men was to stay free, single and to enjoy company of women without becoming emotionally, or financially, involved. Playboy presented a program for the male rebellion: it criticized the marriage; it obtained a strategy for liberation and a utopian vision. It also converted the wide-spread opinion of not being normal if staying single. Simply said, Playboy reflected a new chord in the American society: the changing attitude toward sex and the view on sexuality in general.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> EHRENREICH, B. *The Hearts of Men*. New York : Anchor Press. pp. 29-31,39-48, 50-51; DUNAR, A. J. *America in the Fifties*. New York : Syracuse University Press. pp. 188; HALBERSTAM, D. *The Fifties*. New York : Fawcett Columbine. pp. 575.

## 2. Arthur Miller

Arthur Miller (see appendix 4), born in October 17, 1915 in Harlem, New York City, was one of the most prolific and most influential American playwrights of the twentieth century. His father, Isadore Miller, was a coat manufacturer and his mother, Gittel Miller, worked as a teacher. They were a wealthy family and they could afford many things that were not available to ordinary people (for example living in multi-room apartment that offered them space and privacy). Miller had an older brother Kermit and a younger sister Joan. He described his childhood as happy and comfortable. What concerned young Miller and his attitude to school, he can be described as an indifferent student with difficulty to concentrate; on the other hand he had gift for athletics (he preferred sports over studies until he got to the university). Miller was also interested in classical music (something his mother taught him) but he was never, as a child or a teenager, interested in books, writings or theatre.

The family situation changed a lot after the Great Depression when the Miller's family lost almost all their money, their home (they had to move to Brooklyn) and their social status. This change had an intense impact upon Miller. He blamed his father (his mother did the same) but he still loved him a lot. *"This confusion of contempt, admiration, anger and love for his father would remain with Miller all his life, to surface time and again in his plays."*<sup>54</sup> Secondly, and more importantly, Miller blamed the American economic system for their unlucky fate. This feeling of powerlessness and injustice stayed with Miller for the rest of his life. *"It is no surprise then that many of his plays deal with individuals rendered helpless in the face of uncontrollable social forces and the impact that this sense of helplessness has on the individual and the relationship that surround him."*<sup>55</sup>

The family started a new life in Brooklyn and Miller and his brother started to attend James Madison High School but soon they changed for Abraham Lincoln High School where Miller excelled in sports; he immediately became a second squad of the football team and he also started to play basketball. However, Miller was a very bad student, his results were weak and he even failed algebra. Still, Miller did not care about school much – what he needed was money. One of his first jobs was during the summer in 1931 when he worked for his father's company. His job was to carry samples for the salesman. The whole day he could observe how salesmen are treated – with rejection, insolence and even humiliation.<sup>56</sup> During

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<sup>54</sup> GOTTFRIED, M. *Arthur Miller: His Life and Work*. Cambridge : Da Capo Press. pp. 15.

<sup>55</sup> [Http://www.umich.edu/~amfiles/biography/earlyyears.html](http://www.umich.edu/~amfiles/biography/earlyyears.html), 21. 3. 2011, 11:51.

<sup>56</sup> This experience provided Miller with great theme for *Death of a Salesman*.

the school year Miller worked as deliverer of bagel bags, rolls and rye bread for a local bakery and later he got a job for an automobile supplier store where he was driving a truck and made deliveries. In 1933 he graduated from Abraham Lincoln High School and even with poor results, he decided to escape from the atmosphere of defeat at home and he applied for Stanford University. However, he was rejected and he had to accept a job in his dad's company again. Still, he continued his search for some other university and he finally started reading. Soon he found what he was looking for – the University of Michigan. Miller applied but again, he was rejected. This time Miller acted more assertively – he wrote an audacious letter of proposal to dean of the university and at the end he was accepted for a one-semester probationary period. Miller entered the university in September 1934.

Miller decided to study journalism because it offered him a possibility to earn money already at school (through winning essays). His attitude to school changed a lot; it was no longer duty but he had real interest in studies and he even participated in classes. During the studies he needed to have a part-time job, hence he worked at the university kitchen (washing dishes), the laboratories (cleaning) and he started to work also for school newspaper, *Michigan Daily*. At the university, Miller met Professor Kenneth Rowe who taught play writing and had a great influence over Miller and with whom Miller consulted with his writing even after graduating from the University.<sup>57</sup>

At the university Miller wrote his first play, *No Villain*. The play contained a technique that Miller would use for most of his future work: the plots were drawn from experience or research, with characters based on people he had known or studied. With *No Villain* Miller almost won the Hopwood Award in creative writing (he was second).<sup>58</sup> After this success, Miller in 1936 changed his major to English. He also became the editor of *Michigan Daily* and in this time we can also trace the bases of his radical thoughts and views when he joined the radical youth. The reason why Miller believed in communism was their claims to support everything he cared for, such as worker's rights, unionism or condemnation of racism.

Miller's second play was actually revision of *No Villain* called *They Too Arise*. Essentially the plot was the same, but critics appreciated the fact that the play was more humorous. Miller finally won one of the competitions and got a stipendium (1250 dollars) that secured him

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<sup>57</sup> [Http://www.umich.edu/~amfiles/biography/earlyyears.html](http://www.umich.edu/~amfiles/biography/earlyyears.html), 21. 3. 2011, 11:51. [Http://www.ibiblio.org/miller/life.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/miller/life.html); 21. 3. 2011, 11:51; GOTTFRIED, M. *Arthur Miller: His Life and Work*. Cambridge : Da Capo Press. pp. 5-9, 11-17, 18-20, 22-23; BIGSBY, Ch. *Arthur Miller, 1915-1962*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press. pp. 20-23, 33, 38-42, 45, 60, 64, 68, 73-77.

<sup>58</sup> The play was produced in 1936 in theatre Guild.

place at the university. However, Miller still thought about winning the Hopwood Award; he wrote another play for this competition, *Honors At Dawn*, and he succeeded. His third student's play was a revision of *They Too Arise* and it was called *The Grass Still Grows*. Another play, *A Great Disobedience*, was not, for the first time, autobiographical; rather it was based on research and it dealt with social problems that did not affect Miller personally. Many critics considered this play a sign of Miller's progress as a dramatist.<sup>59</sup>

Miller finished his studies in 1938 when he received his bachelor degree. After graduation he came back to his parent's place where he stayed for some time without bigger success in his career, but he was certain he would become a playwright. He depended mainly on his brother and father. Eventually he started to work for the radio where he tried to write short serious radio plays. He finally got some income. He also joined the Federal Theatre from where he received monthly support (\$22,77). However, the theatre was closed in 1939 thanks to the HUAC investigation. During the time Miller spent home he wrote a play *The Golden Years* that used the Aztec epic as symbolism of Nazi Germany. Even though the play was considered good, Miller still had a problem to succeed. He began to doubt his choice of career. He expressed it in the letter to professor Rowe: "*I can't write again feeling with every word that I'm writing for the dresser drawer ... I fear that I will never be able to write for the theatre ... How do I face my brother—starting on another writing siege which he knows will last months and no money coming in? ... How long I can bear, "The question is, Arthur, would anybody risk twenty thousand dollars on it?"*"<sup>60</sup>

In 1940 Miller wrote the last play that went unproduced. It was *The Half-Bridge*, a curious play because of its negatives (mainly wartime propaganda, angry approach to homosexuality, melodrama). In 1942 Miller finished his first novel, *The Man Who Had All the Luck* that was consequently converted into a play. Miller finally made his debut but he considered it disastrous because of the critics that described Miller's work as philosophical and tiresome. Miller decided that if the next play failed he would find another line of work. In 1940 Miller married Mary Grace Slattery whom he met at the university and their first baby, Jane, was born in 1944. In 1945 Miller wrote another novel called *Focus* (dealing with anti-Semitism). In commercial terms the book was successful, the critics, however, were again unfavorable. The success finally came with *All My Sons*, a very powerful play described as Miller's first substantial, mature and fulfilled work containing autobiographical aspects and elements of

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<sup>59</sup> GOTTFRIED, M. *Arthur Miller: His Life and Work*. Cambridge : Da Capo Press. pp. 27-43, 51; BIGSBY, Ch. *Arthur Miller, 1915-1962*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press. pp. 87, 99-100, 135-139.

<sup>60</sup> GOTTFRIED, M. *Arthur Miller: His Life and Work*. Cambridge : Da Capo Press. pp. 61.

Greek tragedy. Miller had to find a producer for his play and he found him in Elia Kazan, a very talented young producer. Their cooperation and friendship started here. The play opened in January 1947; the public loved it, reviews were mixed. In spring *All My Sons* won the season's best play in New York Drama Critics Circle. Miller finally did it; he succeeded and his play was produced on Broadway. Moreover, the success of *All My Sons* gave Miller the needed confirmation as a playwright and it also provided him with money.<sup>61</sup>

Miller was able to buy a new apartment for his family and they moved to Brooklyn. Mary was again pregnant and in 1947 son Robert Arthur was born. Meanwhile, Miller started to work on his next play, *Death of a Salesman* (see appendix 7) Here Miller wanted "to take his audience on internal journey through the mind, memories, fears, anxieties of his central character, locating these in the context of those he encounters both in fact and in imagination."<sup>62</sup> The play was to be produced in 1949 and Miller again cooperated with Elia Kazan. The budget for the play was enormous (around 100 000 dollars) but there were a lot of investors who put their money up even without reading the script. Kazan put a lot of energy into the production and he made his statements about the meaning (such as that the play is not only about Willy but also about love and competition, the failure in teaching his sons that ended in crash between them). He also set up the intended impression: the audience should feel pity, compassion and terror for Willy; they all should feel for their fathers. The play was opened in February, 1949 and it was immediately a success that assured Miller prestige and reputation as a playwright. The play became successful all over the world. As Robert Martin commented: "*The tragedy inherent in Death of a Salesman is no longer only an American tragedy. It is part of the universal tragedy of love, grief, despair, and betrayal that today characterizes life in most countries of the world. With "a few right words" Miller has again and again expressed in his plays the thoughts and fears of people everywhere.*"<sup>63</sup>

From his youth, Miller inclined to Marxist and communist thoughts (especially during his years at Michigan University, as was mentioned above). By early 1949 he became more involved in left-wing causes and publicly presented his opinions. He was aware of the risks

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<sup>61</sup> KAZIN, A. *Writers at Work*. London : Secker & Warburg. 1967. pp. 197, 214, 219; GOTTFRIED, M. *Arthur Miller: His Life and Work*. Cambridge : Da Capo Press. pp. 44-61, 68, 83, 87-89, 99, 107-111; BIGSBY, Ch. *Arthur Miller, 1915-1962*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press. pp. 140-144, 150-152, 163-164, 180, 270-271; [http://webhost.bridgew.edu/adirks/ald/courses/hist/hist\\_Amer.htm](http://webhost.bridgew.edu/adirks/ald/courses/hist/hist_Amer.htm); 31.3.2011, 19:52; [Http://www.umich.edu/~amfiles/biography/earlyyears.html](http://www.umich.edu/~amfiles/biography/earlyyears.html), 21. 3. 2011, 11:51; [Http://www.ibiblio.org/miller/life.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/miller/life.html); 21. 3. 2011, 11:51.

<sup>62</sup> BIGSBY, Ch. *Arthur Miller, 1915-1962*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press. pp. 319.

<sup>63</sup> MARTIN, R. A. *The Nature of Tragedy in Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman"*. *South Atlantic Review*, pp. 106.



that came with these public statements and activities but he was determined to continue because according to his opinion he had the right to say what he thinks, to sign petitions and to go to meetings. Nevertheless, Miller still continued in his work when he had in-process three projects: play *Plenty Good Times*, another play *An Enemy of the People*, an adaptation of Ibsen's play (the production opened in December, 1950) and *The Hook*.<sup>64</sup>

In 1951 Miller met Marilyn Monroe (while trying to sell *The Hook* in California), the Hollywood "sex symbol" for the first time. He was charmed by her and they stayed in contact through letters. He resisted Marilyn for a long time, but he confessed his thoughts to Mary. This was very bad for their marriage but Miller decided not to leave his family for another woman (who was not mistress at that time). Miller's personal life was also threatened by the hysteria of McCarthyism that spread through Hollywood and Broadway. At this time, 1952, Miller was not subject of investigation by HUAC, however Elia Kazan was. In January 1952 Kazan confessed to his views in front of the Committee and at the end he gave names of some of his colleagues. He did not manage the pressure. This spoiled his relations with Miller and it took a long time (almost fifteen years) before these two met and cooperated again. However, McCarthyism brought a great topic for Miller and his work. In 1953 *The Crucible* was produced on Broadway. The play dealt with the historical events that occurred in 1692 in Salem and it was an allegory to the contemporary political situation that slowly became known as "witch hunting" (just as it happened in Salem). The play was not received as well as the *Salesman* but still it was a success. In 1954 Miller was invited to go to Brussels to see the opening of the play in the National Theater. However, he was not allowed to travel from the United States (the government denied him passport with explanation that this is a new rule for people who are believed to be supporting communism even if they are not Party members). Miller stayed at home, working on his new play *A View From the Bridge*. But he was sure that very soon even he would receive subpoena from HUAC. He also finished *A Memory of Two Mondays* that demonstrated Miller's unique approach of creating a style that suit each play (here he tried to apply documentary realism).

In 1956, Miller's life turned in many ways. The relationship with Marilyn was no longer platonic and his marriage with Mary deteriorated. They divorced in June 1956. However, Miller had other problems. He had to go in front of the Committee. He refused to give any names and he explained his reasons for supporting communism. On June 27, the Committee

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<sup>64</sup> GOTTFRIED, M. *Arthur Miller: His Life and Work*. Cambridge : Da Capo Press. pp. 112-113, 136-137, 142, 157-158, 162; BIGSBY, Ch. *Arthur Miller, 1915-1962*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press. pp. 319-320, 408.

gave Miller an ultimatum to give the names in ten days or they would accuse him of contempt of Congress. During this time Miller married Marilyn (on July 1) and he decided he would not give any names. On July 10, the Committee cited for contempt (379 for x 9 against). The charge went in front of court at the beginning of 1957 and at the end the appellation court decided in Miller's favor (still, he had to pay the legal costs). The life with Marilyn (see appendix 5) changed considerably his own life; he lost his secrecy but on the other hand he got publicity. He started to work on a screenplay for Marilyn, *Misfits*, that was based on one of his stories. The screenplay was finished in 1960, when the marriage with Marilyn was over. Marilyn was, by this time, in deep depression, having an affair with one of the protagonists of the movie (she committed suicide in 1962). The movie was introduced in 1961 but it did not receive positive reviews. Miller wanted to get over this period, to forget Marilyn with whom they were already divorced. Luckily, he met the Austrian born photographer Inge Morath (see appendix 6) whom he married in 1962. In the same year, Inge gave birth to Miller's son, Eugene. However, this is not a well-known fact because Eugene was diagnosed with Down syndrome and he had to spend his whole life in a special institution for mentally retarded. Inge was visiting him there almost every week but Miller never came. He also never recognized or mentioned Eugene's existence. One year later Inge was again pregnant, but this time she gave birth to a healthy girl, Rebecca Augusta<sup>65</sup> who became a talented actress, director and screenwriter.<sup>66</sup>

In 1964 Miller finished *After the Fall*. It was an autobiographical story about his life with Marilyn. Miller remembered the day when he decided the main protagonist Maggie (= Marilyn) had to die in the story and the next day Marilyn committed suicide (it was as if Miller had sensed that Marilyn was at the edge of breakdown and he projected it into the play). In 1964 Miller finished *Incident at Vichy*; play with Nazi thematic that, however, it did not receive good reviews. Even though Miller was used to bad reviews through his whole career, it began to eat him. For this reason Miller devoted himself to other activities as well. He joined the political life when he won the 1968 elections as a delegate to the Democratic

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<sup>65</sup> Here I found discrepancy between Gottfried and Bigsby interpretation. Bigsby does not mention Eugene at all and he puts his date of birth to Rebecca Augusta. After search on internet, I found reference to son Daniel that suffered Down syndrome but was born in 1966.

<http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2007/09/miller200709>; 3. 4. 2011, 15:50.

<sup>66</sup> GOTTFRIED, M. *Arthur Miller: His Life and Work*. Cambridge : Da Capo Press. pp. 171, 181-183, 195-202, 236, 242-243, 253, 287, 292-300, 310-311, 326-332, 339-347, 354; BIGSBY, Ch. *Arthur Miller, 1915-1962*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press. pp. 303, 378-379, 411, 415, 476-478, 522, 594-600, 622-623, 649; KAZIN, A. *Writers at Work*. London : Secker & Warburg. 1967. pp. 228;

[Http://www.umich.edu/~amfiles/biography/earlyyears.html](http://www.umich.edu/~amfiles/biography/earlyyears.html), 21. 3. 2011, 11:51.

[Http://www.ibiblio.org/miller/life.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/miller/life.html); 21. 3. 2011, 11:51.

Party convention. He accepted presidency of Pen International (writers' organization) where he focused mainly on the issue of freedom of expression. He also openly opposed the war in Vietnam. With Inge, they started to travel a lot (Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand and even the Soviet Union). During the time he also wrote *The Prince*; a play that was obviously rooted in his personal history but Miller refused to confirm this. The play actually described how Miller saw his life and it was considered being his attempt to justify his life choices. However, after *The Prince*, the great years of his career were over. But Miller did not stop working; he devoted himself to writing other plays (*The Archbishop's Ceiling*, *The American Clock*, *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan*, *Broken Glass*), screenplays (*Everybody Wins*, *The Crucible*), television and radio plays (*Fame*, *The Reason Why*, *Playing for Time*) and nonfiction (*In Russia*, *In the Country*, *Salesman in Beijing*) but never achieved such a success as in the fifties and sixties. However, his plays are still staged all over the world. In 2002 his wife Inge died of cancer and Miller died three years later, in February 10, 2005, in his bed surrounded by his family.<sup>67</sup>

## 2.1. Death of a Salesman

The play is describing last days of Willy Loman, the salesman, who has to face the terrible fact that his life is a failure: his sons do not admire him anymore and his dream of success has fallen into pieces. It seems to him that there is nothing to live for and the only way how to get out of this misery is to die. The play contains a lot of truth and it talks about the values of post-war American society in such a way that it offers frightening social criticism. Miller shows us the hollowness and the delusion of Willy's ideal of success in achieving the American dream. The importance of the play is also that Miller managed to illustrate the contemporary problems on certain characters that are so real that we sympathize with them in their struggling. Willy is represented as a character that has to sell himself in order to sell things and that has nothing than his smile and a shoe shine to get the order.<sup>68</sup>

Who is Willy Loman? There is a perfect description provided by his wife Linda: "*Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being and a terrible thing is happening to him. So*

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<sup>67</sup> GOTTFRIED, M. *Arthur Miller: His Life and Work*. Cambridge : Da Capo Press. pp. 344, 378-381, 384, 390-393, 397, 445, 448; BIGSBY, Ch. *Arthur Miller, 1915-1962*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press. pp. 645, 664, 671.

<sup>68</sup> MILLER, A; VIDAL, G; WATTS, R. "Death of a Salesman". *The Tulane Drama Review*. pp. 63-64.

*attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person.*"<sup>69</sup> Willy is a 63 year-old well-intentioned, unsuccessful traveling salesman who is currently lost and confused by the life around him. The hard life, continuous tiring traveling that does not produce the expected results, unstable profit that is not adequate to the needs – all this marked Willy and made him a broken, half-crazy man afflicted with hallucinations consisting of his happier past memories. These moments of hallucinatory conversations show the audience the great difference between his massive dreams and the disappointing reality. Willy was many times described as a victim of the false values of society who is not able to cope with his failure or the failure of his sons, Biff and Happy. But is it really true? Did not Willy just hang on to high dreams that were not possible to fulfill? Was society the guilty one?

As was mentioned above, from the beginning of the play one thing is more than clear – Willy's state of mind is pretty bad. He is not able to concentrate properly all the time and sometimes he even finds himself out of his mind (these escapes to the past are more and more frequent and alarming). Willy starts to be dangerous and this is significant because he can threaten not only himself but also the others (but he would never, and this has to be a highlighted, knowingly hurt anybody else). The story begins when Biff, the elder of Willy's sons has come back home after few years. Willy is pleased by having Biff again at home because he is putting all his hopes in him; on the other hand Biff also represents his greatest source of disappointment. The problem is that Willy starts to be more unstable when Biff is present because his ideal perception of his son is directly confronted with the reality and Willy's illusion is harder to sustain. Biff's physical presence also puts a question who is to blame for his failure; a question Willy is terribly afraid to answer.<sup>70</sup> However, Willy's image of his son and his hopes for Biff's better future can be described as another false dream because there is really nothing that would signify Biff can still succeed in society. Biff used to be a successful young man who suddenly lost all his interest in making a career, left the house for West where he worked as a freelancer. He returns home (without any obvious reason) and he finds himself in his father's great dream once more. The confrontation will come soon and

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<sup>69</sup> MILLER, A. *Collected Plays 1944-1961*. New York : Literary Classic. pp. 194-195. This speech became one of the most famous speeches in American theatres; GOTTFRIED, M. *Arthur Miller: His Life and Work*. Cambridge : Da Capo Press. pp.124.

<sup>70</sup> Literature Online:

[http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN046&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1304079997\\_23413&trailId=12F06BAD3CA&area=ref&forward=critref\\_ft](http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN046&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1304079997_23413&trailId=12F06BAD3CA&area=ref&forward=critref_ft); 28. 4. 2011, 18:22.

it will clarify a lot of misunderstandings, injuries and wrongdoings. Still, it is not perfectly clear if it overcomes the basic premises and the main problem – the unshaken faith in dreams.

Willy, mentally and physically exhausted, is returning from another unsuccessful sales trip and he seems really tired. He confesses to Linda that there has to be some change – he cannot travel like this anymore. Linda who is afraid about Willy (and who observes the changes in Willy's behavior) supports him and moreover encourages him to ask for a desk position in New York.<sup>71</sup> Willy is never asking for favors if he really does not have to but he is so exhausted and tired that even he feels that the change is needed. What still creates problems for Willy are the memories of his great and successful (as he sees it) career as a salesman, and the reality in which he is not able to make sufficient money anymore (and he has to ask his neighbor and friend Charley to lend him some<sup>72</sup>) and who is at the end of his powers.

Willy's attention focuses on the fact that both his sons, not very successful and without any real perspective for future, are again at home. Happy, a cheerful young man who has a stable but second-rate work (something that would not matter if he would not spread the illusion of being someone important); he envies his superiors and he is trying to get some prominence and status by taking bribes and trying to seduce every beautiful woman around. He is more superficial than his brother and he appears very self-confident; however, that is only pretense. From his childhood he was the second one, nobody paid him proper attention and his contemporary behavior is façade to face the reality.<sup>73</sup> He has everything he longed for (his own apartment, a car, plenty of women) but he still feels alone without a clue why and for what is he actually working. Biff, on the other hand, was always the beloved one, the football hero with more than great future awaiting him. People admired him, he was well-known (something Willy considered being the key to success). However, things are not the same as at the secondary school and currently Biff has no real job; on the other hand, he has a criminal record for stealing (something parents still do not know about). He has also no idea about his future, what he is supposed to be or to do.<sup>74</sup> Biff is sure of one thing: he does not want to have ordinary job as his brother and father. He hates the idea of getting up every morning, working

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<sup>71</sup> The problem with Linda is that she truly loves Willy but her endeavor to protect him from the truth (by rationalizes his shortcomings when Willy tries to address his problems) prolongs his misery; Literature Online: [Http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN046&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1304079997\\_23413&trailId=12F06BAD3CA&area=ref&forward=critref\\_ft](http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN046&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1304079997_23413&trailId=12F06BAD3CA&area=ref&forward=critref_ft); 28. 4. 2011, 18:22.

<sup>72</sup> Charley is trying to help Willy through the whole play by offering him job but Willy has never accepted this offer. The question why is not answered properly; however there will be dispute at the end of the book that will offer a possible reason.

<sup>73</sup> To understand better the nature of Happy we should note that what concerns his future, nobody have ever paid real attention to it both in the past and in the present.

<sup>74</sup> JACOBSON, I. *Family Dreams in Death of a Salesman*. American Literature, pp. 251, 253-254.

at the same place for the rest of his life, to suffer all of this just for a two-week holiday. He wants to work outside while breathing fresh air and earn living by his hand.<sup>75</sup> The audience will discover very soon that there is a tension of unsolved problems between Willy and his oldest son. Willy is irritated by Biff's attitude to everything and he is not able to understand why somebody as Biff, with such a great potential, is just wasting his life.

The Loman's family is living in New York, in a house on the suburbs. It used to be a very nice place full of trees and green but it slowly changed during the years. More and more new houses were built with less green to stay. The streets became full of cars and it is hard to find fresh air in the neighborhood. Such a living is not exactly what Willy imagined for his family and he is still dreaming of buying a house in the countryside surrounded by nature and enjoying the "autumn of life". During the play the audience will discover Willy's natural gift for gadgetry that could evolve more just if Willy changed his priorities. By description of such a neighborhood Miller criticizes the new demographic changes that occurred after the war. This is still not the time of Levittown (just its beginning); but the fact remains that more and more people are coming to the cities to find better work despite the fact they have to accept such living condition. Some people do not mind, they are satisfied and they would not change, but in case of Willy is pretty clear that he is not one of them. All his life he continued dreaming to leave the city and to live in countryside, with fresh air and intact nature all around; the exact opposite of what he has. The criticism is also aimed at Willy alone because of his lack of courage to change his life. The problem of Willy is that he chose the wrong dream first, being a salesman (= being successful) to achieve his other dream, to leave the city. Miller does not draw the audience's attention to the fact of Willy's nature talent to work by his hand randomly. He tries to say that Willy would be more successful or at least more satisfied with his life if he followed his talent, not his false dream. I would like to note that at the time Willy was choosing his future, he did not know the salesman's career would be the false dream; he really believed in it and he took this feeling into his grave. On the other hand, I would agree with Miller that the reasons why Willy chose this career were not right at all. He once met a salesman who was already eighty-four years old but he was still able to make his living. Moreover it seemed to Willy that he did not have to try so much, to work hard – the important thing was to know people, to have connections and to make good impression on others. Also the fact that after the salesman death hundreds of salesmen and buyers came to his funeral was not a good reason to found his dreams on. Still, Willy saw the selling as

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<sup>75</sup> Biff has a great ability for manual work (the same as Willy) he is most comfortable with but he has been raised with a prejudice against it because it does not offer adequate monetary success.

the greatest career a man could want and he did not think about consequences of his decision, about the fact that his talent for selling does not have to be the same. I also have to agree with Miller that the original incentive of Willy was to become successful. But Willy should judge his abilities to fulfill his dreams. If he was not infatuated by the “great future” of being a salesman, he would be able to see his possibilities more clearly and to consider his chances to succeed. He would discover that more important things than being tremendously successful exist as well, for example having a comfortable life he would provide by his hand, enclosed by his loving family, living in a place he always wanted. It is very hard to judge Willy for his former decisions. Still, it is important to call attention to them and to show the audience where huge dreams can lead.

Thanks to one of Willy’s returns to his past the audience can learn another dream of Willy: to own a business. This was also his motivation to become a salesman; to earn money and position in the company he worked for to reach the point of being able to establish his own company. Willy was confident this dream would come true. There is one more fact about Willy’s past: he was very proud of himself and his work; he was successful and people liked him and were nice to him. He felt like someone important. By this part Miller is trying to show why Willy continued to believe in his dream: he had a job he believed in, the people knew him and he felt he was on the good way to succeed. However, this began to change slowly and Willy was not able or not willing to react on it, to take the right decision and quit his job when he still had a time to start all over. As I mentioned above, it is not possible to judge Willy for choosing his career. But it is possible to notify Willy’s mistake to persist on his dream even he started to notice that the success will maybe never come. The problem is that Willy is proud and quitting his job would mean confessing he was not right, he believed in wrong dreams; something Willy has never had courage to do. But Miller’s social criticism goes deeper: the audience feels Willy’s despair at having no future perspective. He is tired, he is refused a desk job, but he has no money to retire on because the system does not support those who are unsuccessful – there are no old-age pensions and as Willy has not managed to save any money he has to work until he drops dead.

Still absorbed in this memory, Willy remembers Bernard, the son of Charley and classmate of Biff. Bernard is an intelligent young man, not as popular as Biff, but more responsible and with better life values. The importance of Bernard and Charley is striking. Their characters represent the opposite of Willy and his sons. Charley is a successful owner of a business (Willy’s dream) while Willy is still toiling for someone else. Bernard is a good student while

Biff (to some extent also Happy) excels in sports but his performance at school can be described as poor. Despite these facts that are clear and persuasive and that predicate about what is really important and what counts in the life, Willy is convinced that his sons will succeed in long run because they are popular and they knew the right people. *“Willy has bought into the superficial notion of the American dream as something that promotes success among those who dress the part, rather than those who work hard. Ironically, Charley and Bernard are actually enjoying the fruits of what the American dream promises, while the Lomans continue to be passed over.”*<sup>76</sup> At this point, Miller tried to point to Willy’s illusion that success can be achieved without intelligence, talent or work as Willy claimed. The problem with Willy is that he believes that the success is available almost without any effort to those who deserve it. The source of this fantasy is obvious; it is the American Dream, *“the cultural doctrine that America is by definition the land of opportunity, the place where any boy can grow up to be President, the place where success is a birthright waiting to be claimed, and that’s the wonder, the wonder of this country, that a man can end with diamonds here on the basis of being liked.”*<sup>77</sup> Despite his loving family and supportive friends Willy cannot see the value in these things and the only definition of success is to earn money and be liked by the others. It seems that Willy has never thought about another possibility than to believe the American dream.

Willy also remembers a scene that is enormously important for interpretation of the play. The memory offers the audience a description of the life of an American family of the 1930s and 1940s that is slowly adapting to the conception of conformity, of sufficiency, of renewed American dream that prevailed in the post-war period. But we are not able to see the positive part; we are familiarized with the negative one. Miller is trying to show us where the consumer society can lead; the audience can see the consequences at the end of the play. With all the bills for the repayment for house, refrigerator (which is again broken), washing machine, vacuum cleaner, roof, carburetor for the car we can learn what Willy has been working for his whole life – the things Willy becomes unable to earn enough money for. It is not surprising Willy gets angry with all the bills because it means his dream is far away from coming true and his security in old age is constantly threatened. The audience will also understand that Willy is not as successful as he tries to tell others, especially to his sons.

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<sup>76</sup> Literature Online:

[http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN046&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1304079997\\_23413&trailId=12F06BAD3CA&area=ref&forward=critref\\_ft](http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN046&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1304079997_23413&trailId=12F06BAD3CA&area=ref&forward=critref_ft); 28. 4. 2011, 18:22.

<sup>77</sup> BERKOWITZ, Gerald, M. *American drama of the twentieth century*. London : Longman. pp. 79 – 80.



The truth is slowly but surely showing itself. Even if Willy is absorbed in his dream, he can be honest to himself and see that the people are not accepting him as amiably as they used to and that he actually spends more time by talking instead of selling anything. As I already mentioned above, this was the time Willy should think about his future, about his life and the possibility to succeed the dream he resolved for. Willy's tragedy is that he is not able to do this – he believes so strongly he chose the right way that almost nothing can convince him about the opposite. Moreover it becomes clear that if he stopped believing it he would have to commit suicide.

Willy also opens a touchy part of his work as a salesman when confessing: *“Cause I get so lonely – especially when business is bad and there's nobody to talk to. I get the feeling that I'll never sell anything again, that I won't make a living for you, or business, a business for the boys. There's so much I want to make for ...”*<sup>78</sup> While admitting the sad truth, a new character, a mysterious woman, assures Willy she chose him from many other salesmen in Boston. It is just a glimpse of memory, but it is more than clear Willy has a mistress and moreover he is giving her presents (namely stocking he is selling). Moreover the fact, that the woman does not have a name indicates that she was not the only one with whom Willy attempted to bolster his self-esteem and to fight his loneliness.<sup>79</sup> By creating the mistress Miler tries to focus more closely on the character of Willy alone. He uses it as an example of a part of Willy's file and his feeling of loneliness, emptiness and also failure to provide for his family according to his ideas. Moreover, and more importantly, Miller creates the mistress character to enable the tragic construction between Willy and Biff that will reveal at the end of the play.

Ben, Willy's dead brother and one of the main characters came to Willy's memories as well. Ben will accompany Willy till the end, supporting him in his ideas and plans. In this memory Ben has his place because he really visited Willy; however later, the audience witnesses conversations between Willy and Ben that are not memories anymore and this shows the disturbance of Willy's mind and the seriousness of his problems. It is this scene Miller tries to show us that Willy sometimes doubts about himself, especially his role as a father and for this reason he need assurance he is doing everything right. Although we are already aware of the fact that Willy is not as successful as he pretends, he is still trying to show off his sons,

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<sup>78</sup> MILLER, A. *Collected Plays 1944-1961*. New York : Literary Classic. pp. 181.

<sup>79</sup> Literature Online:

[Http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN046&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1304079997\\_23413&trailId=12F06BAD3CA&area=ref&forward=critref\\_ft](http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN046&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1304079997_23413&trailId=12F06BAD3CA&area=ref&forward=critref_ft); 28. 4. 2011, 18:22.

especially Biff and his shiny future. He assures Ben that the kids like him and they would do everything for him. Ben agrees but it seems more like politeness. Willy is glad Ben agrees because if he should be honest, sometimes he has the feeling that he is not teaching the boys the right things. He put a lot of importance on tutoring his sons how to do things; he wants to transmit his legacy to them. But he is not sure if he is doing it right.<sup>80</sup> He asks Ben for an advice but his only answer is that he went into the jungle and when he came back he was rich. Willy reacts: “... was rich! That’s just the spirit I want to imbue them with! To walk into a jungle! I was right! I was right! I was right!”<sup>81</sup> Thanks to Miller description of Willy’s memories it is more than clear that Willy’s doubts about teaching his sons the right things are justified. However, on the example of the last extract Miller also makes clear how little is enough for Willy to assure him he is not doing anything wrong, to persuade him that he chose the right way that will provide his sons success. It also shows that this little does not have to even been supported by any real facts but some abstract vision that has any predicative meaning.

After obtaining all the important facts (still not completed) about Willy’s life, the scene finally returns back in reality. There is Linda with Biff and Happy. The boys are astonished because they saw their father wandering through house, lost in his memories, talking for himself. Linda is already used to it and she understands his disturbed mind: “*He drives seven hundred miles, and when he gets there no one knows him anymore, no one welcomes him. And what goes through a man’s mind, driving seven hundred miles home without having earned a cent? Why shouldn’t he talk to himself? Why?*”<sup>82</sup> Biff is touched by the situation and he reaches the decision to stay home and to find a proper job. The idea of starting a sport shop with Happy comes up; the plan to gain money for it as well. Still, there is one thing that has to be said. Linda is sure Willy is trying to kill himself: Willy went through some car accidents in the past that actually proved not to be accidents at all and moreover there is the short rubber pipe in the garage Linda found some time ago (but she did not remove because she is too ashamed to do it). Miller is trying to draw our attention to Willy’s state of mind that is very bad at that particular moment. The discovery of the rubber pipe signalizes that Willy has already decided to commit suicide; the question is why he is still waiting. This particular part also foresees the future happening of the play, disclosing the reasons for Willy’s decision to end his life that would inevitably led to the sad end. Miller also criticizes the society and its

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<sup>80</sup> FIELD, B. S. *Hamartia in Death of a Salesman*. Twentieth Century Literature, pp. 21.

<sup>81</sup> MILLER, A. *Collected Plays 1944-1961*. New York : Literary Classic. pp. 192.

<sup>82</sup> MILLER, A. *Collected Plays 1944-1961*. New York : Literary Classic. pp. 195.

values that can led to such situation. By setting down the American dream as the main and utter aim of individuals, everyone who succumbs to its magic has to accept the demands of it. However, such a burden is not possible to handle by all of them and just the best can succeed. But I would not say that Miller criticizes the American dream as whole. He rather tries to show us, and I agree with him, that the dream alone is not the problem. The problem is that the dream has many levels and it depends on people which level they choose to achieve. But to do so, the people have to be able to distinguish their potential and the likelihood of their success. Something Willy did not manage. As Miller said alone: *“The trouble with Willy Loman is that he has tremendously powerful ideas”*.<sup>83</sup>

Despite the fact that the situation seems to improve (the boys have a plan that can finally provide them with success and even Willy feels better; he sees the better future waiting for him with open arms with the last payment for the insurance premium and mortgage almost done), the reality is different. Here, I would like to focus on one concrete scene of the play and to analyze it more deeply. Willy is leaving his boss office after a big argument he had with him. Willy came to ask for a job in New York because he is not able to travel anymore. *“Well, tell you the truth, Howard. I’ve come to the decision that I’d rather not travel any more. (...) Speaking frankly and between two of us, y’know – I’m just a little tired.”*<sup>84</sup> Howard did not pay Willy attention and he was reluctant to meet Willy’s demand. Willy tried to negotiate but everything in vain. At the end Howard informed Willy he did not want him to represent the company anymore. He advised him to ask for help from his sons; there is no time for false pride. This idea is something Willy would never agree with; he is a very proud, self-sufficient man that would rather die than to ask his sons for help and reveal to them that he did not succeed. Here we are coming to the important part. Willy needs the money for last payments on house and insurance and the only one who can help him is Charley. Willy goes to see him but he meets Bernard first. Bernard became a prosperous young lawyer and Willy is again confronted with the reality and his dreams. Successful Bernard, Willy never supposed to achieve anything, in contrast to his unsuccessful sons he put so many hopes in. Then Charley comes to the office. Willy tells him what happened in Howard’s office and that he lost his job. Charley reacts by offering Willy a job in his company (and it is very clear that he already made this offer before). But Willy refuses; he just came to ask him for some money to pay the insurance. They are arguing and Charley gets really angry because Willy still refuses to take the job even though he was fired and he wants to know what the reason is.

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<sup>83</sup> JACOBSON, I. *Family Dreams in Death of a Salesman*. American Literature, pp. 247.

<sup>84</sup> MILLER, A. *Collected Plays 1944-1961*. New York : Literary Classic. pp. 211.

Even though the reason is not presented in the play itself, if Willy accepted the job, he would have to admit he had believed in all the wrong things and that he had taught his sons all the wrong lessons. He would have to admit he made mistakes in his past and to accept a favor from someone who represents of the exact opposite of all that he holds to be true. There is also possibility that Willy does not want to be depending on someone; he was use to some extent of freedom, even if it was just illusory. However, Charley expresses it by other words accusing Willy of being jealous. At the end he just gives him the money for insurance and lets Willy go. Before Willy leaves, he says weird thing: *“Funny, y’know? After all the highways, and the trains, and the appointments, and the years, you end up worth more dead than alive.”*<sup>85</sup> This is very important critic from Miller’s part. Through Willy’s character he shows his attitude to the social system set by the state. He pictures Willy as a dreamer without enough abilities to achieve his dreams. The critic thereafter concerns with the situation when these dreamers failed – who will take care of them? Without any state programs supporting people without work, providing pensions or health benefits, the prospect of their future is not good. And this is exactly the situation of Willy. He feels he does not have any other choice and the social system set like this does not give him many possibilities. Miller pictures Willy as a poor man who is struggling whole life to maintain the appearance of success, something essential in capitalistic society, that costs him all his power and that leads to the conclusion to end his life. This strong critic of the social system and the notion that a person is more worthy dead than alive, attacks all values and principles the society is built on and it represents the main theme of the play.

The assumption that Willy’s decision cannot be changed is confirmed by the events in the restaurant where Willy should meet his sons and that finally provides the audience with the secret between Willy and Biff that damaged their relationship forever. Here comes Biff who did not success with obtaining money from his old boss and the dream of having a sport shop with Happy is dead. Biff seems destroyed; this day just opens his eyes: *“How the hell did I ever get the idea I was a salesman there? I even believed myself that I’d been a salesman for him! And then he gave me one look and – I realized what a ridiculous lie my whole life has been! We’ve been talking in a dream for fifteen years. I was a shipping clerk.”*<sup>86</sup> It is preciously this moment Biff finally understands the unreality of his father’s dream; the dream he was raised up with and he also believed; the dream that actually prevented him to succeed in his life. However, Miller saves Biff’s awakening for later when

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<sup>85</sup> MILLER, A. *Collected Plays 1944-1961*. New York : Literary Classic. pp. 225.

<sup>86</sup> MILLER, A. *Collected Plays 1944-1961*. New York : Literary Classic. pp. 229.

he will try to show us that Biff really realizes the truth. At this moment the focus is on Willy who is again hallucinating, coming to the restaurant where the boys wait for him. Willy desperately needs to hear good news because it is probably the last thing that could stop him to end his life. He hopes that his dreams can be still fulfilled at least for his sons if not for himself. However, Willy's mind is all confused and he is not able to comprehend what Biff is telling him. He is not able to handle to accept the reality and he is again lost in his memories. Before the final return into Willy's memory, Miller provides the audience by one more important thing. Biff accuses Happy that he does not care about Willy at all; he is desperate, he cannot help Willy and he asks Happy to do it, to help both of them. Then he runs out from the restaurant. Happy follows him with some girls from the restaurant he was trying to enchant during the evening. Here comes the important part: when the girls ask him about his father he just answers: *"No, that's not my father. He's just a guy. Come on, we'll catch Biff, and, honey, we're going to paint this town!"*<sup>87</sup> How this behavior can be understood? Hatred, total lack of interest, indifference? Happy's behavior is unforgivable and it just shows how selfish he is. However, Happy was not always like this. During his adolescence he was trying to gain his father's attention, but without bigger success (through the play we are witnesses of sad moments when Happy is desperately trying to catch his father's attention to announce that he made a progress in loosing pound, but Willy is totally ignoring him, concentrating all the time on Biff and his bright future). This indicates what Happy's future would look like; his try to always succeed, to be the best and to show his father he is the better one. However, in doing so he is losing his own individuality and he is adopting someone else's dreams and not creating his own. The disregard from Willy's side changed him, made him stubborn, indifferent and denies Willy, seeing him as an embarrassment.

An important part of the play is disclosed during Willy last return into his memories. This memory makes clear the reasons for bad relationship between Willy and Biff that influenced Biff's future, broke up his dreams and made him leave home. Willy returns back to the summer night some twenty years ago when he stayed in a hotel room with the strange woman. Suddenly Biff appears on scene mumbling something about disappointing Willy because he flunked math. He begs Willy to go to school and speak to the teacher: *"You gotta talk to him before they close the school. Because if he saw the kind of man you are, and you just talked to him in your way, I'm sure he'd come through for me ... He'd like you, Pop. You*

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<sup>87</sup> MILLER, A. *Collected Plays 1944-1961*. New York : Literary Classic. pp. 238.

*know the way you could talk.*”<sup>88</sup> Here Biff has expressed the respect and admiration he feels to his father. Willy is his hero and nothing can change it. Willy decides to leave immediately but suddenly, the woman appears in the room. Biff is astonished, he cannot believe it. Willy is trying to defend himself but Biff does not want to listen to him anymore. He calls Willy a liar, little phony fake and he leaves. Here comes the confrontation Miller creates the place for: worshipped father against the preferred son. Miller tries to show the difference between Willy full of ideals and great dreams he spreads to his sons and Willy who is cheating his wife, preferring other woman and giving her things the his own wife lacks. Biff no longer trusts his father and he starts to question everything that Willy has taught him. Unfortunately at that time he is not able to negate all values he was brought up with and in the same time to create his own that would allow him to choose what he wants to do, where he wants his life to head. Miller shows us that the fate of Biff was really caused (to some extent) by Willy, his teaching and influence over Biff that was destroyed by Willy’s cuckoldry; a thing Biff cannot forgive him. It takes Biff almost twenty years to realize how he really wants to live and to take courage to attempt it, to end with his past and to forgive his father.

The final conclusion that happens the next day enlightens the main theme of the play; the belief in dreams (false or right) and its consequences. During the argument among all members of Loman’s family many things are said, all of them containing great importance. Finally the truth comes out, however, its notion will not stay for a long time. Moreover, just one member of the family is able to see the truth, Biff. *“Why am I trying to become what I don’t want to be? What am I doing in an office, making a contemptuous, beginning fool of myself, when all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am! Why can’t I say that, Willy? Pop! I’m a dime a dozen, and so are you!”*<sup>89</sup> Willy, afraid of what Biff said, realizes he failed as a father. He tried to bring the boys up according to his ideals but it was not working and he accomplished exactly the opposite of what he wanted. The boys lack morals and social intelligence and they have the same defect as he – they are convinced they can make anything happen.<sup>90</sup> Everything is falling into the smallest pieces and the possibility to fix it back seems to him unrealistic. There is not much to do; there is just one possible solution of this misery Willy can think off. Then comes Biff for the last time during the argument confessing that there is no spite in him anymore, no hatred. He wants Willy to abandon his phony dreams before something serious will happen. He starts to cry.

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<sup>88</sup> MILLER, A. *Collected Plays 1944-1961*. New York : Literary Classic. pp. 239.

<sup>89</sup> MILLER, A. *Collected Plays 1944-1961*. New York : Literary Classic. pp. 250-251.

<sup>90</sup> FIELD, B. S. *Hamartia in Death of a Salesman*. Twentieth Century Literature, pp. 23.

The tragedy of this scene is following: even after revealing the truth, confessing the injuries and wrong-doing caused by the dream, Willy still believes in it. Moreover, he is not able to notice anything else than the fact that Biff does not hate him and that he actually loves him all the time. Willy decides to realize his plan: to commit suicide that will look as an accident and that will provide Biff, not the whole family, by money from his insurance. Through the whole play Miller's attitude to Willy is good, he describes him as a tragic character whose false dreams led to his death. Still, I cannot fight the feeling that by mentioning only Biff for the insurance money, something dark in Willy's character should be noticed. There are two possibilities: Willy does not care about his wife and Happy, and the only one he can see is Biff, the former football hero whose future can be still saved. The other possibility is that Willy thinks about his family and by providing money for Biff he hopes Biff would take care about Linda and Happy as well. After reading the whole play I would tend to the second explanation; however I am sure somebody can oppose. The idea of suicide is supported by Willy's conviction he is worth more dead than alive and the consent of Ben who encourages Willy to do it. An important fact, not the main one, is also Willy's picture of his funeral: massive attendance, everybody remembering Willy Loman, the great salesman. Willy's decision to commit suicide can be described by following statement: "*he chooses death not simply as an escape from shame but as a last attempt to re-establish his own self-confidence and his family's integrity*".<sup>91</sup> Miller is not explicitly criticizing Willy's decision but by creating the funeral picture Willy bears in his mind he stress the absurdity of the act. Moreover Miller also stresses the fact already mentioned above: being more worthy dead than alive. Something the society would never accept but that can seem real to some people in similar position; people who are struggling their whole life for material thing and comfort of their families finding out people do not care about them and they can provided better future for their family if dead.

Miller concludes the play by scene in the cemetery. Its meaning of the scene is more than clear: to show who learned the lesson and who stayed blind. It is only Biff who finds out that there is another alternative and he escapes his father's fate by choosing reality over fantasy (in contrast to his brother). Biff, finally with his open eyes, blames Willy for all wrong dreams; those dreams that killed him. However, at this moment comes Charley who does not agree with Biff and who is trying to explain the real life of a salesman: "*He's a man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back –*

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<sup>91</sup> JACOBSON, I. *Family Dreams in Death of a Salesman*. American Literature, pp. 255.

*that's an earthquake. (...) Nobody dast blame this man. A salesman is got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory.*"<sup>92</sup> I think the meaning of this sentence shows the biggest differences between Willy and Charley. Charley also believes in his dream (even though we do not know what is it). Nevertheless, he was the one who did not conform his life to it. He knew he would succeed if he worked hard, if he tried, but he never determined becoming someone as his definitive goal. They are just last two persons Miller wants to deal with. Despite the ignorance from his father's side, Happy is the one who determines to continue Willy's dream he considers to be right. He believes that there is only one dream you can have: to come out number-one man. Miller expresses his view of Happy's decision through Biff who just gives Happy a hopeless glance and who understands that Happy has not learned anything, that he has not learned a lesson from all events they witnessed. The last person attending the funeral is Linda. Linda has never believed in Willy's dreams but she believed in Willy. She loves her husband and she has always supported him. Somebody suggest that one part of guilt is also lying on her; she could be more courageous, she could confront Willy's dreams if she knew they are wrong but she did not. Here I would point out the connection with American families and the roles they possessed in the 1930s and 1940s. It was the man who provided family with all needed; woman stayed home and provided the care needed to make the family work. In such environment was not easy to oppose your husband's dreams, especially if you loved him and you believed in him.

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<sup>92</sup> MILLER, A. *Collected Plays 1944-1961*. New York : Literary Classic. pp. 256.



### 3. J.D. Salinger

J. D. Salinger (see appendix 8) was one of the most influential writers of the 1950s and many consider him to be one of the most popular and influential authors of American fiction during the second half of the twentieth century. Together with personalities such as Elvis Presley or James Dean they challenged the status quo of the post-war society. In the case of J. D. Salinger it was through his best character who he worked on for almost ten years – Holden Caulfield. This young teenager spread the message about the American society full of hypocritical people (“phonies”) whose dreams and beliefs were false and who stood for nothing. The book can be described as a novel of disillusionment, Salinger’s expression of disappointment with the American society.<sup>93</sup>

J. D. Salinger was not as other authors and writers – he did not follow the most basic rules of the publishing-industry establishment (to publish on regular basis, to communicate with an audience, giving readings, answering mails, etc.), he actually never did a traditional interview, he forbade publishing his stories in anthologies, there was nowhere you find his biographical information or his picture, and, what was the most important, in 1965 he stopped publishing his work (but he never stopped writing). Despite this fact (deciding to stay in seclusion), he became very famous; it actually had the opposite effect – the more he tried to stay out of attention, the more he attracted it.<sup>94</sup>

Salinger was born on January 1, 1919 in New York to Sol and Miriam Salinger.<sup>95</sup> Sol was a successful businessman and for a long time he worked as a general manager. During Salinger’s childhood they moved a lot (all the time to a better place). At school, Salinger was mediocre, his marks were around B and his IQ was measured around 104. During his adolescence, Salinger could be described as a good kid who preferred to be alone than with other people (maybe a little bit more than it is normal). At the age of 13, Son Salinger, at that time very successful businessman, enrolled J. D. in a private institution where he again was not exceptional (he was actually even bellow the school standards). However, it was there that his talent for drama showed. It was during performance of two school plays (interesting is the fact that both parts were female) that he showed his potential as an actor. Still, the school

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<sup>93</sup> OHMANN, C, OHMANN, R. *Reviewers, Critics, and “The Catcher in the Rye”*. *Critical Inquiry*. pp. 15-16; ROSEN, G. *A Retrospective Look at the Catcher in the Rye*. *American Quarterly*, pp. 548.

<sup>94</sup> [Http://www.notablebiographies.com/Re-Sc/Salinger-J-D.html](http://www.notablebiographies.com/Re-Sc/Salinger-J-D.html); 18. 3. 2011, 14:43. Alexander, P. *Salinger*. Los Angeles : Renaissance Books. pp. 23-26, 28-29.

<sup>95</sup> Sol Salinger was Jewish and Miriam was Scotch-Irish – she changed her name to sound Jewish not to have problems with the wedding. It is important to note that this fact, having Jewish roots, did not influence Salinger much and that he decided to write about the life of upper class than his descendant, the immigrant Jews.

performance was so poor that he was forced to leave and to find a new educational institution.<sup>96</sup> The relations between son and father they were not the best ones either. We definitely could not speak about warm family relations and even if Sol was later very proud of J. D.'s achievements, it would not change anything.<sup>97</sup> However, his relation with his mother was very good and he was in touch with her all the time.

Sol Salinger did not see any other way how to toughen J. D. up than to send him in Valley Forge Military Academy<sup>98</sup> (1934) that was known for its graduates going to West Point rather than to Harvard (they focused mainly on sport and military than on academic sphere). J. D. understood the message and he really tried to change – he was successful and he changed both as a student and as a person. However, he did not like the military routine and he did not try to do anything to be promoted among the cadets because he considered this childish and absurd. During the studies at the academy, he joined several clubs such as glee, aviation, and, of course, the drama club. He contributed to school's literary magazine and helped write the lyrics for the school's anthem. He also improved his academic results. It seemed that the fact he needed some discipline was proved and J. D. grew into a more responsible and productive young man. At the academy Salinger also started to write his stories, a thing that soon became his greatest passion. He graduated from the academy in 1936.<sup>99</sup>

After graduation Salinger entered New York University but he quit not even after one year. Since there was nothing else to do in the immediate future, he decided to join his father's business for a while to get experience. Sol wanted him to get some knowledge first hand and for this reason he sent J. D. to Europe where he stayed mainly in Vienna. Soon it became clear that this work and style of life were nothing for J. D. and that he would never be able to continue in his father's business. Hence, he spent time in Europe to write more stories and he even started to send them to magazines with hope of possible publication.

When Salinger returned to the United States, he thought about what to do next and in the end he decided to enroll again to college. Nevertheless, this was not so easy because he had big trouble to find school that would accept him (after his poor performance in New York

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<sup>96</sup> This life experience was projected in *The Catcher in the Rye* that is to some extent autobiographical.

<sup>97</sup> The part of the problem was in Sol's wish J. D. to join the family business but J. D., on the other hand, wanted to devote himself just to writing and theatre.

<sup>98</sup> Here we have another example of the fact that *the Catcher* is based on Salinger's life – Holden's father threatened Holden to send him on a military academy if he failed another school.

<sup>99</sup> [Http://www.notablebiographies.com/Ro-Sc/Salinger-J-D.html](http://www.notablebiographies.com/Ro-Sc/Salinger-J-D.html); 18. 3. 2011, 14:43; Alexander, P. *Salinger*. Los Angeles : Renaissance Books. pp. 31-33, 35, 36-39, 41-44; [Http://www.biography.com/articles/J.D.-Salinger-9470070](http://www.biography.com/articles/J.D.-Salinger-9470070); 18. 3. 2011, 14:43.

University). In the end he succeeded and in the fall of 1939 he started to attend Ursinus College in Pennsylvania. The time he spent there was even shorter than in New York. This time it was not that he would flunk his subjects but he decided to leave because he was looking for something else – he already decided to become a writer and he was looking for a way how to accomplish his dream; namely finding a course that would teach him how to improve his writing skills. The chance to become a real writer opened to J. D. when he took a course in Columbia University where he signed up for a creative-writing class (without any credit) led by Whit Burnett.<sup>100</sup> At the beginning Burnett had a feeling there was no potential in Salinger and he actually did not understand why he was attending his class; however, the situation changed unexpectedly when Salinger finally started to work – he rewrote his first stories and gave them to Burnett for judging. Burnett was amazed by them and assured Salinger he had the potential for professional writing. He also accepted his story *The Young Folks*<sup>101</sup> for his journal and paid him – this was Salinger's first salary he received as a writer. The story was issued at the beginning of the 1940s.<sup>102</sup>

*Story magazine* was a respectable journal and many literary agents read it while looking for new talents to represent. Thanks to the publishing of *The Young Folks* Salinger found his agent, Dorothy Olding. At the end of the 1940 Salinger published his second story *Go See Eddie* and he started to think about writing a longer story. Meanwhile, he was sending more and more stories to the literary magazines. His dream was to have a story published in *New Yorker*<sup>103</sup> and it was for this magazine Salinger started to work on a new character – a teenage boy from Upper East Side, Holden Caulfield. He called the story *Slight Rebellion Off Madison*.<sup>104</sup> Salinger understood the importance of inventing Holden's character and for this reason he started to work on another story about him and in turn he would write the whole novel. After years of refusal of Salinger's stories, the *New Yorker* finally accepted this story –

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<sup>100</sup> Whit Burnett was a professor at Columbia University and editor of *Story magazine*, which published four of Salinger's early works (and works of other important writers of that time such as Joseph Heller, Norman Mailer, Tennessee Williams or Truman Capote). [http://salinger.org/index.php?title=Whit\\_Burnett](http://salinger.org/index.php?title=Whit_Burnett); 1.4.2011, 10:42.

<sup>101</sup> The story shows Salinger's interest in playwriting and the later obsession of his work – his fascination of young people, their life, thinking and actions. This story made the readers felt the emptiness and aimless actions of the children of the rich people.

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.biography.com/articles/J.D.-Salinger-9470070>; 18. 3. 2011, 14:43; Alexander, P. *Salinger*. Los Angeles : Renaissance Books. pp. 45-53, 55, 57-58; <http://www.notablebiographies.com/Ro-Sc/Salinger-J-D.html>; 18. 3. 2011, 14:43.

<sup>103</sup> The *New Yorker* is an American magazine publishing reportages, essays, satire, commentary criticism, and poetry. It is well known for its commentaries on popular culture and the attention is paid to modern fiction (mainly by inclusion of short stories and literary reviews).

<sup>104</sup> The story is based on a short period of life of Holden Caulfield who seems to be normal young teenager but he suddenly revolts against the society when confessing that he hates everything in his life. He wants to run with his girlfriend Sally and to live easy life, from day to day. This story constitutes one part of *The Catcher*.

it should be published in Christmas issue in 1941. Nevertheless, there was the attack on Pearl Harbor and the publishing of the story was postponed (the reason was that society did not need a rebelling young teenager in time of war) and the story was not published before the end of the war. Although Salinger was not happy about the fate of his story, he had another problem to deal with – he was 22 years-old and therefore ideal to go to war.

In April 27, 1942 Salinger joined the Army. He was moving from place to place when finally at the end of 1943 he was moved to Maryland where he should undergo training. Despite being in training Salinger continued to publish (for example *The Long Debut of Lois Tagget* or *The Varioni Brothers*) but he did not have time for writing. Early in 1944, three of his stories were bought by *Saturday Evening Post* (that was a great success) and Salinger felt again the sense of urgency about his writing even he knew he would have to go overseas soon. During this time of publishing Salinger experienced for the first time the bad treatment from the side of editors and publishers when they changed the titles of his stories without his permission and they even did not bother to inform him. At this moment we can detect Salinger's future unwillingness to cooperate with others in publishing his work and the root of his later decision to stop publishing at all (however, the fact is also that he was not able to write anything addressing strongly the public anymore).

In March 1944, Salinger was sent to England and in June he took a part in the D-Day invasion in Normandy.<sup>105</sup> The war influenced Salinger – he witnessed mass death and destruction and he knew that at any moment he could be killed as well. He was part of a team interrogating French locals and German prisoners to uncover Gestapo agents and he was one of the soldiers who came to Paris and liberated the city from Germans. Here he met Ernest Hemingway who worked in Paris as a newspaper correspondent. During the next months, Salinger was involved in some of the worst fighting of the war where he saw around ten or more deaths every day and this experience changed his attitude to war permanently. Still continuing in his duties, he published in 1945 a story called *A Boy in France* that represented a fundamental shift in his view of war and the military and also his tone and the mood of the previous story was replaced by a dark tone of anguish and despair.<sup>106</sup>

In June 1945 Salinger went to the Army general hospital where the doctors stated he was in good physical shape but he was going through nervous breakdown and found him unable to

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<sup>105</sup> This invasion was initiated by the Western Allies as an effort to liberate mainland Europe from Nazi occupation during the Second World War.

<sup>106</sup> Alexander, P. *Salinger*. Los Angeles : Renaissance Books. pp. 61-62, 65-70, 74-77, 79-105.

cope with the routine of an ordinary life. Salinger stayed in Europe for some time and he met a woman called Sylvia whom he soon married. He was released from the army and they lived for a short time in Germany where Salinger worked for the Department of Defense and, of course, he continued to write and publish (for example *This Sandwich Has No Mayonnaise*, *The Stranger* or *I'm crazy*). In May 1946 Salinger, together with Sylvia, returned to New York; however, very soon they both understood that the tie they shared in Europe was not there anymore and at the end Sylvia returned to France and they divorced. Salinger came back to live in his parent's home, not knowing what to do – it was in this period when he started to do things he had never done before (gym, study Zen Buddhism, nightlife<sup>107</sup>). There was just one clear thing to him and that was his conviction he was a writer and he would always be one.

In December 1946, the *New Yorker* finally published the *Slight Rebellion Off Madison* – for Salinger this success was the sign that he had finally made it as a writer. Salinger and his former professor Burnett started to think about publishing a collection of short-stories that would be called *The Young Folks* (as Salinger's first published story). Nevertheless, the book was rejected and Salinger blamed Burnett for the fiasco (something that changed forever their relationship). Moreover it was another bad experience with publisher's practices and Salinger became angrier with the whole publishing industry.

In 1947 Salinger finally moved out of his parents' house and rented an apartment. He continued to publish but what was more important, he took courage to write about his nervous breakdown. In 1948 he wrote a story that ensured him a contract with the *New Yorker*.<sup>108</sup> It was *The Perfect Day for Bananafish* with the main character of a young, disturbed man Seymour Glass.<sup>109</sup> The same year Salinger also published *A Girl I Knew*, important story dealing, for the first time, with his Jewish heritage.<sup>110</sup>

In 1950 one of the Salinger's dreams fulfilled when the story *Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut* was used for a movie *My Foolish Heart* in Hollywood. However, the result was unacceptable for Salinger – they added new characters and new plots and they completely changed

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<sup>107</sup> He was going mainly to Greenwich Village which is a largely residential neighborhood in New York but that was in the late 19<sup>th</sup> to mid-20<sup>th</sup> known as the bohemian capital of the East coast birthplace of the beat movement.

<sup>108</sup> The contract was so-called first-rejection contract – Salinger would get 700 dollars per year for submitting each new story to the magazine. Salinger was excited by this contract – it was also because his bad experience with other publishers – and he decided he would publish only in the *New Yorker*.

<sup>109</sup> The story described the feeling of being a soldier who is emotionally damaged by the war and who cannot function in the society anymore.

<sup>110</sup> [Http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Salinger.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Salinger.html); 18. 3. 2011, 14:43; [Http://www.biography.com/articles/J.D.-Salinger-9470070](http://www.biography.com/articles/J.D.-Salinger-9470070); 18. 3. 2011, 14:43; Alexander, P. *Salinger*. Los Angeles : Renaissance Books. pp. 107-115, 117-131.

the story. Moreover, the movie did not have good reviews and Salinger hated it from first viewing. He decided never to cooperate with movie industry again. Still, the year 1950 was an important one for Salinger because he published another touching story *For Esmé – With Love and Squalor* (again the war theme) and, above all, he finished his novel about Holden Caulfield – *The Catcher in the Rye*. Salinger sold the book to Little, Brown publishing house and he also sold the rights to England to Hamish Hamilton. He also wanted the *New Yorker* to publish some parts of it but they did not like it at all. Salinger decided he would not undergo almost any of the republication process such as reviews, biography or photo included in the book and he actually did no publicity for the book (with one exception of short interview for the small trade magazine Book-of-the-Month Club News). The book was published in July, 1951 and it invoked a lot of criticism, both positive and negative. Few months later the book was published in England as well, however the critics were harder and it did not become a best-seller as in America (where it stayed a best-seller for the rest of the 1950s). Still by 2009 the book sold 250 000 copies a year in English only.

After publishing *the Catcher*, Salinger started to think about publishing a book of his short-stories based on stories published by the *New Yorker*. He agreed on it with Little, Brown and with Hamilton despite the fact of less success in England. The book was published in 1953 under the title *Nine Stories*. The short-story collection obtained great reviews and it became a long time best-seller (almost in the same way as *Catcher*).

At the end of the 1952 Salinger was bored by living in the city (especially after publishing *the Catcher* when he got a lot of attention he did not care for) and he decided to move. He chose a property in New Hampshire with the view of the Connecticut River Valley. While he was moving to his new home, the *New Yorker* published another of Salinger's stories, *Teddy*. The story had tremendous success despite the fact the public was astonished by it. In the story Salinger tried to show that there is nothing more disturbing than the destruction of innocence and it had the effect he intended. In 1954 Salinger also published *Franny*, a very successful story about Seymour's younger sister (the Glass family will become the last project Salinger would work on and publish).<sup>111</sup>

At New Hampshire Salinger met a young lady, Clair Douglass, and despite the age difference (she was just nineteen and he was already thirty-four) they married in February 1955. Shortly after that Salinger got an offer from BBC radio drama to use one of his stories. As Salinger

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<sup>111</sup> Alexander, P. *Salinger*. Los Angeles : Renaissance Books. pp. 139-143, 146-147, 150-161, 164, 167-174, 182; [Http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Salinger.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Salinger.html); 18. 3. 2011, 14:43.

was still angry about what happened in Hollywood and he rejected this great offer. This rejection just proved that Salinger became again more restrictive about the future of his writing. However, Salinger continued to work on another story about the Glass family, this time about Buddy, the second of the seven children. The story was published under the name *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters*. Thereafter Salinger wrote more stories about Glass family – *Zooey* (1956) and *Seymour: An Introduction* (1958). As to Salinger's personal life (see appendix 9) in this period, in December 1955 Salinger's first daughter, Margaret Ann, was born, followed in 1960 by son Matthew Robert. Nevertheless, the relation with Claire worsened and it was just a question of time when it would end.<sup>112</sup>

In the beginning of the 1960s Salinger tried to disappear from public view completely and he became recluse. Despite this fact and his unconcern for publicity, the press became more interested in him. It was ironical; Salinger did not want to be written about but he became one of the few authors that have been written about more. In 1961 Salinger published a book called *Franny and Zooey* which again became a best-seller. However, the reviews were not very good. The problem was that Salinger was writing about the same subjects in the same way for almost ten years already. Still, the public was curious about whatever Salinger published and this provided him with success. More and more critics and journalists became interested in Salinger and his life and writings. It was journalist Mary McCarthy who called Salinger a narcissist who is actually writing about himself to attract attention to his person and that his avoiding of attention is a trick to provide him with a never ending attention. For this reason, the *Time magazine* came with a story about Salinger. Salinger hated the article because of invasion of his privacy. In 1963 Salinger published his last book (there was the last story in the *New Yorker* two years later<sup>113</sup>) and since then he did not publish anything else. The last book was again in connection with his two previous stories published by the *New Yorker*, *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters* and *Seymour: An Introduction*. The reviews were very bad; they were doubts if he did not publish the book just for financial reasons. Still, as in the last case, the book was on the best-seller list for almost six weeks. Afterwards, Salinger decided not to publish anymore but he never stopped writing (in contrary writing became an obsession for him more than before).<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> They divorced in 1967 and Salinger gave her everything: the custody of the children, the house and property, child support and promise he would pay for private schools and college tuition. He alone bought a new property where he built a house; Alexander, P. *Salinger*. Los Angeles : Renaissance Books. pp. 232-238.

<sup>113</sup> It was *Hapworth 17, 1924*, a story narrated by a seven-year-old Seymour, published in 1965.

<sup>114</sup> Alexander, P. *Salinger*. Los Angeles : Renaissance Books. pp. 179-185, 187-193, 202-210, 212-217, 220-227, 238-239; [Http://www.notablebiographies.com/Ro-Sc/Salinger-J-D.html](http://www.notablebiographies.com/Ro-Sc/Salinger-J-D.html); 18. 3. 2011, 14:43;

In 1972 Salinger had an affair with young Joyce Maynard (eighteen years-old), a talented writer attending Yale university. However, the relation ended when Joyce wanted to have a baby and Salinger refused. In 1974 Salinger gave an interview but only because some of his stories were stolen and published without his consent.<sup>115</sup> In 1975 there appeared one piece of Salinger work in *A Fiction Writer's Handbook* edited by Burnett's wife. She used an introduction written by Salinger few years ago for another book.<sup>116</sup> In mid-80s, Salinger found out that Ian Hamilton, a British poet, was going to write his biography. He opposed it very much and he even filled a law suit. The whole case was submitted to the Supreme Court that decided that Hamilton could not use excerpts of Salinger's private correspondence. Hamilton rewrote the book and published it in 1988 under the name *In Search of J. D. Salinger*. However, it got very bad reviews and the sales were poor. In 1988 Salinger married Colleen O'Neill, a young nurse from New Hampshire and they were living together in seclusion until Salinger death in 2010 at the age of 91. There have been speculations that there may be as many as ten finished novels in their house – the work Salinger made since he stopped to publish.<sup>117</sup>

### 3.1. The Catcher in the Rye

*“The Catcher in the Rye is among other things a serious critical mimesis of bourgeois life in the Eastern United States of snobbery, privilege, class injury, culture as badge of superiority, sexual exploitation, education subordinated to status, warped social feeling, competitiveness, stunted human possibility ...”*<sup>118</sup>

As was mentioned above, the book was published in July 1951 and it became a best-seller. Overnight, Holden Caulfield (see appendix 10) became a lasting symbol of restless American youth. The story presents a young neurotic boy and his strange odyssey to avoid confrontation with his parents during which he learns many elemental and important lessons about himself, the life around him and the loss that is connected with all of this. The book skillfully

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[Http://www.biography.com/articles/J.D.-Salinger-9470070?part=1](http://www.biography.com/articles/J.D.-Salinger-9470070?part=1); 18. 3. 2011, 14:43.

<sup>115</sup> It was John Greenberg who published *The Complete Uncollected Short Stories of J.D. Salinger*.

<sup>116</sup> It was called *Epilogue: A Salute to Whit Burnett, 1899-1972*.

<sup>117</sup> Alexander, P. *Salinger*. Los Angeles : Renaissance Books. pp. 241-246, 248-252, 279-286; [Http://www.notablebiographies.com/Ro-Sc/Salinger-J-D.html](http://www.notablebiographies.com/Ro-Sc/Salinger-J-D.html); 18. 3. 2011, 14:43;

[Http://www.biography.com/articles/J.D.-Salinger-9470070?part=2](http://www.biography.com/articles/J.D.-Salinger-9470070?part=2); 18. 3. 2011, 14:43;

[Http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/biography/Salinger.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/biography/Salinger.html); 18. 3. 2011, 14:43.

<sup>118</sup> OHMANN, C, OHMANN, R. *Reviewers, Critics, and “The Catcher in the Rye”*. *Critical Inquiry*. pp. 35.



demonstrates the adolescent experience and it contains spirit of rebellion.<sup>119</sup> During the story Holden has to face several features that were characteristic for the American society and life in the middle of twentieth century. He meets people who are innocently imperceptive and emotionally dead and who are possessed by the standards of conformity. What does Holden reject? There are many answers, for example the immoral world, the adult world, the inhumanity of the world, the predicament of modern world or simply the facts of life. But can we really talk about rebellion? According to Duane Edwards the answer is no – Holden’s rebellion is a fantasy: he tells off no one, he did not become loner or beatnik. He returns home, undergoes therapy and thinks about going back to school. He is adapting to the society – all this because he wants so badly to join the human race.<sup>120</sup>

The main topics and themes of the book are death, sexuality, suppressed rage, feeling of being an outsider, “phonies”, and innocence versus maturity. This all contains open, sometimes hidden criticism of the society Holden is living in. Since Holden’s image of the society and adult world as whole, he is caught between his wish to remain in his childhood but in the same time his need of being acknowledged by the world as an adult. He knows that he has lost that sense of absolute trust that is connected to childhood but he wants to find a way to carry these values with him into adulthood. The book also deals with the feelings of typical teenager – feeling of isolation and self-consciousness. Holden proclaims himself an outsider but on the other hand he is frightened that he may literally disappear if he stays in his isolation. Sexuality is another very important theme of the book when Holden unconsciously associates sex with perversion and for this reason he is not able to imagine violating anyone he loves in that manner (for example his friend Jane he spent one summer with). Nevertheless, he is able to enjoy less threatening forms of intimacy (kissing, holding hands) and he is able to imagine that sex, once, can be a meaningful event. At the end there is death that figures prominently in the book. Through the story it becomes clear that Holden is unable to cope with the death of his younger brother and moreover he has to live with the survival’s guilt.<sup>121</sup> Holden imagines dying himself but it is not sure how serious his suicidal attempts really are. Still this manifestation is important for understanding Salinger’s criticism of the

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<sup>119</sup> At various points in history the book was banned (especially by public libraries and schools but also some bookstores) because of the language, sexuality and rejection of traditional American values; <http://www.notablebiographies.com/Ro-Sc/Salinger-J-D.html>; 18. 3. 2011, 14:43.

<sup>120</sup> ALEXANDER, P. *Salinger*. Los Angeles : Renaissance Books. pp. XV; OHMANN, C, OHMANN, R. *Reviewers, Critics, and “The Catcher in the Rye”*. Critical Inquiry. pp. 25-27; EDWARDS, D. *Holden Caulfield: “Don’t Ever Tell Anybody Anything”*. ELH. pp. 554, 563.

<sup>121</sup> Literature online:

[http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN104&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303996219\\_24528&trailId=12F01BC7842&area=ref&forward=critref\\_ft](http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN104&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303996219_24528&trailId=12F01BC7842&area=ref&forward=critref_ft); 28. 4. 2011, 18:42.

society and its values that are not acceptable for Holden. He is afraid of becoming one of those he detests and to lose his innocence.

The book describes three days in the life of Holden Caulfield, who is currently in a psychiatric clinic. He presents the readers a story that happened to him one year ago when he was kicked out from school (not for the first time) and he went home, to New York, where he stayed in a hotel because he did not want to face his parents until the time he really had to. Holden does not offer the reader the final confrontation after he dares to come back home, stopping the story right before. Nevertheless, it is not necessary because the reader actually knows what followed after the inevitable nervous breakdown: hospitalization at the psychiatric clinic. Holden narrates his story with honesty and irreverence that shows his frustration not only with himself but with the world around him as well. Thanks to a series of interactions with various people (sometimes compassionate and funny, sometimes cruel) Salinger expresses his criticism of the contemporary society. Holden is presented as frustrated confused teenager confronted with a society that he finds alienated. He seeks to change his behavior through intersection and experience to understand and respond to the world around him but he is not successful. During the whole story Holden attempts to manage shaping and subsequently controlling his troubled past. He also feels literary impotent to change things important to him. It is the internal conflict Holden goes through Salinger uses for more general criticism of the conservative, class-conscious society that emerged after the war and its lack of honesty and compassion.<sup>122</sup>

As was mentioned above, Holden's adventures include many interactions with other people and stories connected with them. In the following text I would like to focus on scenes that provide Salinger's criticism and to analyze them more deeply. I will proceed chronologically while following the storyline of the book. Firstly I would like to focus on the meaning of Holden's description of the society around him. During his narration about Pencey prep school he was kicked out of Holden introduces himself as confused by his life, without a real prospect for his future, unable to understand or to find the purpose of being. The problem Holden has with the life around him is that he constantly runs into hypocritical people he

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<sup>122</sup> Literature online:

[Http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=R00791780&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1304691151\\_26428&trailId=12F2B2848AF&area=ref&forward=critref\\_ft](http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=R00791780&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1304691151_26428&trailId=12F2B2848AF&area=ref&forward=critref_ft); 6. 5. 2011, 16:14; BRYAN, J. *The Psychological Structure of The Catcher in the Rye*. PMLA. pp. 1065-1066; ROEMER, D. M. *The Personal Narrative and Salinger's "Catcher in the Rye"*. Western Folklore. pp. 6; EDWARDS, D. *Holden Caulfield: "Don't Ever Tell Anybody Anything"*. ELH. pp. 555.

cannot trust. He calls them “phonies”.<sup>123</sup> The base for Holden’s hatred of phonies is the fact that the surface does not reveal the underlying reality and Holden, as many others, was taught not to talk about what lies beneath. This he considers as hypocrisy he does not want to accept. Moreover, we have to keep in mind that Holden comes from the world of phonies he hates (he comes from a wealthy, upper-middle class family), he is actually familiar mainly with this world; facts that just strengthen his disregard for them. Holden’s conclusion about the society full of hypocrites is based on his own experience he got from the expensive schools he attended. As he concluded by himself: “*the more expensive the school, the more crooks are in it*”<sup>124</sup>. Salinger’s offers his criticism of middle-class society and its desire to provide their children with the best things. The fact that, according to Holden, most of the students are phonies and crooks shows the upbringing they obtained and the values and virtues they were led to. To consider people according to their social status, money and things they can buy for them; if someone does not conform to this pattern it will not stay unheeded. Of course, we are talking about teenagers; it is normal there is always someone others are making fun of. However, Holden has had the opportunity to compare more schools, more people, and to see more examples of such behavior to conclude the reality as he sees it and to show it to others. Here I would also like to note the connection with Holden’s poor performance at school. He has the capacity to study well but his problem is that he does not care and he even does not try. Holden opposes the belief of the society that better school means better future. It would mean that the concept of American dream is actually almost unattainable for those who cannot afford to send their children to better school. Then even the basis of American society, the promise that everyone has the possibility of improving his or her lot is hypocritical.

The lack of suitable models for Holden to follow on his way from childhood into adult world where he should accept role as a mature member of the society is another fact where Salinger express his criticism this time indirectly. We have already learnt that Holden considers most of the people surrounding him phonies. Therefore it is tremendously hard for him to choose a model he can follow and direct his life according to its example. The reader can wonder why Holden does not want to follow one of his parents or his older brother. However, Holden is a seventeen-year old teenager who is not interested almost in anything his parents can say.<sup>125</sup> He is not explicitly describing them as phonies, still he does not feel they would

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<sup>123</sup> The use of this word is really very frequent in the book – there is forty one references to it.

<sup>124</sup> SALINGER, J.D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. New York : Little, Brown and Company. pp. 4.

<sup>125</sup> We can consider that all teenagers think they parents are old-fashioned and they do not understand anything. But Salinger points out here on the change that occurred in the 1950s and that became a norm: that young people consider as decisive the opinion of their coevals.

provide him with the example he needs (the fact is they want just the best for him and I am sure Holden is aware of it as well; he just does not think their ideas are what he consider to be the best for him). As to his brother, a successful story writer in Hollywood, Holden is reluctant to choose him because he does not believe in what he is doing. The only family member Holden adores is his little sister Phoebe. Phoebe represents for Holden all the positive elements of childhood and in a way she helps him stay connected with his own innocence.<sup>126</sup> The character of Phoebe is probably the most important in the whole book – it is her who helps Holden to realize there are things to live for (she is one of them) and that she needs him. Phoebe is the one that saves Holden from his self-destructive path. However, she cannot provide Holden by the model he need as guidance. In this case it should be the exact opposite – Holden should be a model for Phoebe. He is full aware of it and he is afraid he will not manage it. The meaning of Salinger criticism at this point is that the society is not able to provide young people with right guidance and for this reason many of them are confused and they choose various way how to handle their confusion about the world around them and about the life itself.

Despite the open criticism and disdain of most people around him, Holden still tries to maintain good manners. I will try to explain it on two examples. The first one is Mr. Spencer, Holden's teacher of history at Pency. Mr. Spencer is actually someone Holden respects. For this reason while writing the final test, Holden knowing he will not succeed, he leaves a personal note under the essay: *"Dear Mr. Spencer. That is all I know about the Egyptians. I can't seem to get very interested in them although your lectures are very interesting. It is all right with me if you flunk me though as I am flunking everything else except English anyway. Respectfully yours, Holden Caulfield."*<sup>127</sup> This note presents Holden as a polite young man who wants others not to be sorry for him. He also does not want others to have bad feelings when doing what they have to do. The second example is a friend of his brother he meets in one club in New York. She is very excited about it, however Holden is restrained (she is definitely one of the phonies). Still, Holden tries to be polite, not to break the social rules. Hence when he tells her he is glad to meet her, he is not really glad. Holden just tries to maintain the appearance of propriety without which everything would be ruined (he thinks it would; he considers this innocent behavior a necessity if one wants to stay alive). In the end

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<sup>126</sup> Literature online:

[http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN104&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303996219\\_24528&trailId=12F01BC7842&area=ref&forward=critref\\_ft](http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN104&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303996219_24528&trailId=12F01BC7842&area=ref&forward=critref_ft); 28. 4. 2011, 18:42.

<sup>127</sup> SALINGER, J.D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. New York : Little, Brown and Company.pp.12.

this inner conflict between juvenile honesty and adult hypocrisy may be the reason of his breakdown. Why is Holden behaving like this? Why does he try to maintain good manners in a society he does not like? I would suggest that Salinger wants to show that Holden is still part of the society and the fact he disdains it does not change the fact he desperately wants to be part of it. For this reason he does not want to break the rules of good conduct despite the fact he consider them as hypocritical. Holden is convinced that this is the only way how to survive in the world of hypocrites and phonies and its violation would have horrible consequences. I think Salinger also wants to show that Holden is to a certain extent forced to protect the others because he is seeking protection for himself at the same time. For this reason he behaves in good way, sometimes even using lies to protect others from the ugly truth while protecting himself as well. Holden is able to see the innocence and sincerity in others but he also realizes how vulnerable the innocent are in a cynical and cruel world.<sup>128</sup> The problem with *The Catcher in the Rye* is that all the criticism is hidden when everything Holden does the reader has to take with reserve. We have to keep in mind that Holden is a teenager, therefore like many other teenagers he thinks all adults are morons and they do not understand young people (this shows itself in Holden's description of his view from the hotel room where he was watching other guests and he sees them as perverse while most of them were normal people behaving maybe little weirdly but hidden in the cloud of their privacy). However, in some moments Holden points out certain problems of the society and the reader has to distinguish for himself when this happen.

Hypocrisy, indirectly described already in the previous paragraphs, is another strong theme of the book and great example of criticism of the society and its values. There is a great scene where Holden describes the Saturday dinners at Pencey. They always have stakes; even they are not any good. There is a very simple reason for it: Sunday is the day of family visits and the school wants to maintain a good image. Salinger shows in this scene two important things: firstly the school as a hypocritical institution behaving in this way. However, such behavior is understandable in the end. For them this all is business and they need to prosper. And the only way to prosper is to have satisfied clients that will stay and maybe bring new ones. This is closely connected with the second thing Salinger presents by this scene. The school counts on the behavior of the parents. They know the parents will ask about the last meal and they try to impress them, to maintain the appearance that this is a typical meal at Pencey. Here come the parents and their hypocrisy. Most of them really focus just on these bagatelles, satisfied

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<sup>128</sup>ROSEN, G. *A Retrospective Look at the Catcher in the Rye*. American Quarterly, pp. 551.

with the answer to their first question, not asking anything else. Such behavior shows they do not care properly about their children and their needs; they blindly believe the system, reinforcing the image better school means better future for their children. However, this can lead to problems between them and their children who maybe have other opinions about their future life and also to the fact that if some changes are needed, it is really hard to enforce them. Another example of hypocrisy can be found among Holden's schoolmates. I would like to point out mainly Holden's roommate Stradlater, described by Holden ironically as the most handsome guy there for whom everything is a very big deal, who is always in a hurry and who is always asking others to do him favors. The character of Stradlater does not represent the typical "phony" (he is more the self-confident champion Holden cannot ever become); however, with his self-confidence, brand-name clothes and luggage, and his snobbish behavior he is surely one of them. In contrast to him Holden meets two sympathetic nuns who are collecting money for the poor. The contrast is so big and Holden is fully aware of it. He knows that most people around him would never stand on the street asking for money, even if it is for a good thing. He can see that people can live with less and they still can be happy and moreover contribute to the others who need it. There is also the scene with prostitute Sunny Holden refuses to have sex with at the end and who is coming next day to get more money that they had agreed on. Holden does not want to pay her from principle – there was an agreement and it should be kept. Here Salinger's points out the hypocrisy of people generally; they are always trying to get the most they can and they do not hesitate to change their settlements, opinions or values or to use the situation in their benefit if it is possible.

An interesting question is Holden and his relationship towards women. He describes himself not oversexed but actually quite sexy. What is he trying to say by this? Considering the fact Holden is a seventeen year-old teenager, the confusion concerning sexual things is absolutely normal. But is not there something more? We know that Holden actually has no significant sexual experience and we also know he is kind of shy to move ahead even if he is thinking about it. At the end Holden confesses that sex is something he does not understand. It can be considered that it is also something he is afraid of.<sup>129</sup> But other reason is also that Holden can be described as generally insecure, as a soft type, not good for sports, afraid of stronger male types. He is neurotic and afraid of death and also afraid he would fail the girl and she would laugh at him. All this suggests Holden's over sensitiveness. Moreover, having sex would mean leaving the world of childhood definitely and crossing the imaginary line to the adult's

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<sup>129</sup> According to James Bryan sex is one of three things Holden is afraid of. The two rest are old age and death; BRYAN, J. *The Psychological Structure of The Catcher in the Rye*. PMLA. pp. 1065.

world; something Holden is afraid of because it would change everything he knows and he does not know in which way. I think Salinger tries to call the attention to the fact that sex is still something mysterious (especially for those who have never tried it) and that it invokes many questions people are reluctant to answer. Sex was not an open topic discussed at schools and in households as a normal topic (something that was normal and was characteristic for 1940s and 1950). Here I would see the problem. This secrecy creates a false image of sex and it causes more problems than if people were able to speak openly and to approach it from other point of view.

Interesting is the part when Holden, wandering through New York City, tries to solve the mystery of gone ducks from the Central Park (if somebody moved them or they just flew away). This represents his anxiety about his own survival. Here comes, according to my opinion, the biggest criticism of the society Salinger provides through the book. Holden gets into deeper and deeper depression during his narration of the story that indicates that the breakdown (in whatever form) is near. Not once Holden thinks about death being a solution to his feeling of loneliness and confusion caused by his view of the society as hypocritical and full of pretense he cannot and does not want to bear. Although the reader cannot be sure how seriously ill Holden is (especially after the scene picturing his gory body on the street that would stay uncovered and all the phonies and morons would be able to see it), the only fact he considers is as a possibility is alarming: young man, losing all his ideals, feeling terribly alone, unable to find any suitable models he could follow and anything proper that would be worthy to live for. Salinger alerts the reader to the fact that the society failed to provide Holden with at least one thing he would appreciate and he would find himself in; a thing that would help Holden to overcome his feelings of depression that would provide him with some prospect for his future that would make sense of his existence.

Nevertheless, Holden is not considering suicide as the only solution of his problems. In presenting the other solutions I found a little similarity to beat generation and their visions of escape from society that was forming at the end of the 1940s. Holden presents his idea while meeting his friend (kind of girlfriend) Sally. Holden is again in a weird mood confessing to her that he hates everything and that he is depressed by the life he is living. He proposes to her to get out of their life, simply to run away.<sup>130</sup> He has some money and when they run out, they will find some work and they will live easy and quietly, alone. Sally does not seem to be enthusiastic about this idea and her answer is that Holden cannot do something

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<sup>130</sup> Here is clear reference to Huckleberry Finn who wants to do the same: to light out for the West.

like this. She is offering her idea: to finish college, get married and then they can leave somewhere. Holden is disappointed by her reaction and he starts to attack her idea: he does not want just to travel with the notion you have to return, he definitely does not want to work in an office, spending all his time on making money, and to spend his free time by reading newspapers, playing bridge or going to movies. This is a future that haunts him and it also represents the image Holden has about the society, the image he wants to avoid. There is one more solution Holden considers. However, this one is unrealistic and unrealizable. He wants to escape the hypocritical society full of pretense by becoming the catcher in the rye. The idea came to him when he observed a small child singing a song<sup>131</sup> for himself because his parents were not paying any attention to him. There would be no adults, just innocent children somebody has to take care of. Simply said this idea represents Holden's desire to protect the innocent and in the same time to be saved before he falls apart himself.<sup>132</sup> By providing these solutions Salinger tries to express that his critic is justified and that Holden has reasons for wanting to flee the society. As I said before, the society is not able to provide Holden with anything he would be interested in so it is up to Holden to create it for himself.

It is time for Holden to find his way, to find what he wants from life, what he really likes, if something. Holden has this discussion with his younger sister Phoebe when he sneaked home to visit her (he had a feeling he would not survive until next day and he wanted to see her for the last time). Phoebe understands the situation quickly and she gets very angry. She confronts Holden accusing him of hating everything. Holden is trying to defend himself but he is not able to find even one thing he likes (as Phoebe asked him for). At the end he named James Castle, a schoolmate from one school who committed suicide, his younger brother Allie, who is also dead (as Phoebe points out) or the moment he is living just now, something that is nothing real as Phoebe states. Holden is almost on the edge of his powers and the final nervous breakdown is not far away. From nothing, as it was too much for him, Holden starts to cry and he cannot stop. Phoebe is scared but she is trying to calm him down. Phoebe's behavior, trying to protect Holden, is in line with the whole pattern of the book.<sup>133</sup> Finally Holden is ready to leave but something was already broken in him. While leaving he is not as

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<sup>131</sup> The song is "*If a body catch a body coming through the rye.*"

<sup>132</sup> Literature online:

[http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN104&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303996219\\_24528&trailId=12F01BC7842&area=ref&forward=critref\\_ft](http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN104&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303996219_24528&trailId=12F01BC7842&area=ref&forward=critref_ft); 28. 4. 2011, 18:42.

<sup>133</sup> It is upside-down situation where the younger protects the older and give him advices. Gerald Rosen points out: "*It is the prescient portrait of an attempt to create a counterculture. The children, unable to connect with the prevailing culture, begin to separate from it and to attempt to care for each other.*" ROSEN, G. *A Retrospective Look at the Catcher in the Rye*. American Quarterly, pp. 561.



quiet as before; as if he wanted to be caught and to end this madness. But nothing happens and Holden is out of the flat, again alone with confused mind not actually knowing what to do. Salinger tries to describe the state Holden is in: he still does not decide if leaving the society is the best idea but he has no idea what to do else. There is just one thing sure: he wants to finish his misery because it starts to be too much for him. The problem with Holden also his, according to Edwards<sup>134</sup> that Holden lives by his unconscious need, not by the values he stands for, and rather than challenging personal relations, he withdraws from them.

Holden, undecided what to do, thinks of one last possibility: visiting his old teacher Mr. Antolini who always provided Holden with understanding and advices Holden needs. He is Holden's last chance to find some model to follow, to finally reach calmness for his depressed mind. Antolini is glad to see Holden and he provides Holden with arguments that in their result seems to Holden as the right one, the sincere one. Antolini explains to Holden: "*The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the mark of the mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one.*"<sup>135</sup>. There comes the important part when Antolini tells Holden that he is not the only one (or the first one) who was ever confused and frightened and even sickened by human behavior; actually many men have been just as troubled morally and spiritually as he is now. However, the solution from this state of mind is to learn from those who went through the same and someday possibly someone other can learn from him – it is a beautiful reciprocal arrangement. However, everything is damaged in one moment when Holden wakes up by Mr. Antolini stoking his head. The reader can look at the situation from many points of views but still, it is not for sure what really happened. However, one thing is clear: Holden feels that it was demonstration of Antolini's homosexual endearment. I am not quite sure what Salinger wants to express by this scene. I think he wants to show the reader one of the moments when Holden exaggerates in his reaction and where the critic is not really justified because is strongly influence by Holden's state of mind. Salinger wants to alert our attention to the fact that not everything in Holden's disdain of society is justified: the fact is that all bad things and justified critic accumulate and thereafter is very easy to overdrive and exaggerate in your judgment. Nevertheless, for Holden the outcome of this event is that the person he believed in most is probably a homosexual (and among Holden's coevals "bugger" is the worst label one can get) and he is terribly disappointed. He loses all his hopes into the society anymore, rejects the possibility he would ever find someone who really can help him and he decides to flee the society forever

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<sup>134</sup>EDWARDS, D. *Holden Caulfield: "Don't Ever Tell Anybody Anything"*. ELH. pp. 554, 563

<sup>135</sup>SALINGER, J.D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. New York : Little, Brown and Company. pp. 188.

and not to go through such situations any more. The criticism of the society and the feeling of anxiety staying a part of it prevail over Holden's need of being accepted by it and become its full member.

There is one last thing Holden thinks of: to say goodbye to Phoebe, the only important thing for him. However, Phoebe does not give up so easily and she again forces Holden to think twice about what he wants to do. Having a big argument, Holden finally realizes that actually there is a thing to live for, worthy to continue his life and to try to accept the society in some way. It is Phoebe, his little sister, the symbol of innocence, who desperately needs someone to take care of and to protect her. His connection with Phoebe and his love to her is stronger than his impulse to run away. Suddenly, Holden feels so happy, watching Phoebe going around and around on the carousel, he did not feel such happiness for a long time. According to James Bryan's suggestion there is more hidden behind the Holden's feelings towards Phoebe. He determines the character of Phoebe is both the catalyst of Holden's breakdown but also of his recovery which I agree with. However, Bryan also suggests that Holden is afraid he feels something improper towards Phoebe. This feeling passes away during the last scene in the park that signifies the end of their relationship of possible lovers but the love remains.<sup>136</sup> I do not agree with this statement – Holden is confused about sex and what it can bring, but I do not find any evidence connected to Phoebe. The problem Holden has is that he does not believe in himself and he is tremendously afraid he would fail; moreover, he is afraid that sex would mean to cross the line between the two worlds (the childhood and maturity). There is also the lack of any appropriate models to follow when Holden fears he would change into those he can see around (Strandlater, Mr. Antolini). It is during the last scene when he realizes that he does not have to become like the others and he is finally able to accept his maturity (he even knows there is still a long way to achieve it). Again, the same critic mentioned in the text above is presented in this statement. Society unable to provide suitable models and the secrecy around sex prolongs Holden's confusion unnecessarily.

The narration ends in the psychiatric clinic – the same where it started. Holden is not describing how he got there (there is just brief mentioning of his return home, becoming sick and ending in this place). It seems that everything is going better; Holden even plans to enroll for another school after his release from the clinic. He also promises, half-heartedly, to do his best to “apply himself” this time. But Holden does not want to think about the past and moreover he is sorry he talked about it to so many people. He is finishing by a sentence:

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<sup>136</sup> BRYAN, J. *The Psychological Structure of The Catcher in the Rye*. PMLA. pp. 1071-1074.

*"Don't ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody."*<sup>137</sup> This evokes two possible explanations that can offer some picture of Holden's future. He really wants to recover, but talking about the past is hurting him and he actually really misses all the people. The second possibility is that Holden is pretending to recover and the only effect of this experience will be to never tell anybody anything. The end of the book seems to be open and it gives the reader an opportunity to imagine and envision Holden's future. Will he recover and join the normal mature life<sup>138</sup> or will he stay a disturbed problematic young man? But there is also another possible question: has Holden ever been disturbed?

The end cannot be described as a direct criticism; still the reader can feel it. Salinger describes the usual unravelment many young people who suffered the same as Holden go through. Despite their disdain against the society they consider as characterless, unprincipled, insincere and hypocritical, they accept it at the end. They are not strong enough to oppose it and to maintain their values and views. Salinger's criticism is of double character: it criticizes the society itself for absorption of those who disdain it and on the other hand it criticizes all those who decided to disdain it for not persisting and achieving their goals. In the case of Holden, it is not society who provides him with the reason to remain; it is Phoebe. For this reason the possible outcome can be that Holden will remain part of the society until Phoebe will be able to take care of herself and then he would be free to realize his plans and to flee the society he, in my opinion, continues to disdain. On the other hand, the time before Phoebe grows up is long, and it is very possible that Holden will be already swallowed by the society and he will not be strong enough to stand up to it. At the end I cannot forbear one little remark: was he ever strong enough?

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<sup>137</sup> SALINGER, J.D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. New York : Little, Brown and Company. pp. 214.

<sup>138</sup> According to Carol and Richard Ohmnan the end is Holden's return to the society – he requires the help of psychoanalyst. He will change, the society not. But they suggest it is supposed to be like this. They suggests that the novel offers powerful longing for what-could be but on the other hand it interposes what-is as an unchanging and immovable reality; OHMANN, C, OHMANN, R. *Reviewers, Critics, and "The Catcher in the Rye"*. *Critical Inquiry*. pp. 34-35.

## 4. Jack Kerouac

Jack Kerouac (see appendix 11), the father of “beat generation”, was born on March 12, 1922, in Lowell, Massachusetts. He was the third child of Leo and Gabriele Kerouac. The family was French-Canadian who settled in New England. In 1926 the family was shaken by tragedy when the oldest son Gerald died of rheumatic heart disease, a traumatic experience for four-years-old Jack that influenced him a lot. As he said himself: “*I have this subconscious will to failure, a sort of death-wish, stems from something I did before I was five years old and which stamped upon me a neurotic and horrible feeling of guilt.*”<sup>139</sup> During the Jack’s childhood, the family moved from place to place through the Lowell town<sup>140</sup>. Young Jack loved reading and his dream was to become a writer. In 1933 Jack started to attend public middle school where he began to learn to read, write and speak in English. He was not speaking English until he was five years old and he used a combination of both languages before speaking English on native level. However, he mastered the English language very fast and soon English became his primary language for rest of his life. With his new language he started to express himself through writing when he wrote about things that encompass him (for example horse races, football or baseball).<sup>141</sup>

At the age of eleven, Jack wrote his first novel and he also started to write a journal; he actually never stopped writing it and many of his books and other publications were based on his journals. At Bartlett Junior School Jack joined the football team. He continued his writing, urged to create new characters and story lines. From his early writings we can observe his ability to understand social problems and his awareness of suffering. Jack was good in expressing empathy for other people and he was able to recognize and describe what others feel. At high school Jack was devoted to two things: his writing and football. However, he did not have luck as a professional player. This was an obstacle for Jack’s future because he hoped for football scholarship at some university where he planned to study journalism. At high school Jack also attempted first serious writing based on reading of the classics. In 1939 Kerouac graduated with mediocre grades and he got the opportunity to visit a prep school in New York City to improve his results. In New York Kerouac found new friends and

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<sup>139</sup> MAHER, P. *Kerouac. The definitive biography*. Lanham : Taylor Trade Publishing. p. 21.

<sup>140</sup> This moving from place to place can possibly explain Jack’s easiness for travelling and changing places without bigger problem. In my opinion, owing to this early instability Jack was unable to find a place he would call home.

<sup>141</sup> TYTELL, J. *Naked Angels: the lives & literature of the Beat Generation*. New York : McGraw-Hill Book Company. pp. 54; [Http://www.notablebiographies.com/Jo-Ki/Kerouac-Jack.html](http://www.notablebiographies.com/Jo-Ki/Kerouac-Jack.html); 24. 4. 2011; 10:05. [Http://www.biography.com/articles/Kerouac-Jack-9363719](http://www.biography.com/articles/Kerouac-Jack-9363719); 24. 4. 2011, 10:07.

he started to discover the city, especially Greenwich Village, Harlem and everything connected to it (even whores and drugs). He improved his grades to required level and he received the scholarship. In 1940 Kerouac entered the University of Columbia in New York. The studies were not the easiest ones, especially in combination with his football training and other activities. However, Kerouac still found time to go regularly to the library, to read and to continue writing (he studied the style of famous writers he admired, especially Thomas Wolfe). Soon his feeling of being an artist prevailed over his academic results. Kerouac gave up journalistic aspirations and he described himself as a poet. He started to send some of his stories to big magazines (for example Harper's Magazine) but they were rejected.<sup>142</sup>

After the United States entered World War II, Kerouac spent a short period in the army (where he sought to expand his little universe and draw some inspiration) but he was soon discharged and he spent the rest of the war hanging around Columbia University where he met Lucien Carr, Allen Ginsberg and William Seward Burroughs. He met them thanks to his girlfriend Edie Parker, a Columbia student. Kerouac started to pay increasingly more attention to his new friends than to Edie. Nevertheless, Edie helped him a lot when he was entangled in a murder committed by Carr and ended up in jail. After his release Jack decided to marry her. Kerouac was writing a lot of letters to his new friends and he also deepened his drug experience. At that time Kerouac described his life as one that operates in cycles: *"my aimlessness and laziness are not just ingrained in my personality – they were put there by the hard nature of life when I was just four or five, and can be extracted again, like a bad appendix. .... But then I realize that, well anyway, get operated on for the hell of it – because if I start to exercise my so-called will on my own again, it will blindly lead me back along the rounded rut of that circle I'm in. ... I'm sick of that circle."*<sup>143</sup> This all signifies Kerouac's inability to succeed in his life: he cannot find any proper job and he is living from hand to mouth, dependent on others; he is not able to establish himself as a writer; and moreover, it is in this period we can trace his problems with dependence on alcohol. It also led Eddie to file a decree requesting an annulment of their marriage late in 1946.

Kerouac returned to live with his parents in New York. Leo Kerouac was already very ill and he died soon. Kerouac found another meaningless job and he continued to write. He also

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<sup>142</sup> MAHER, P. *Kerouac. The definitive biography*. Lanham : Taylor Trade Publishing. p. 10, 13-14, 18-21, 24-27, 29-33, 36, 40-42, 44, 48-56, 63-67; TYTELL, J. *Naked Angels: the lives & literature of the Beat Generation*. New York : McGraw-Hill Book Company. pp. 56; [Http://www.biography.com/articles/Kerouac-Jack-9363719](http://www.biography.com/articles/Kerouac-Jack-9363719); 24. 4. 2011, 10:07; [Http://www.notablebiographies.com/Jo-Ki/Kerouac-Jack.html](http://www.notablebiographies.com/Jo-Ki/Kerouac-Jack.html); 24. 4. 2011; 10:05; [Http://www.beatmuseum.org/kerouac/jackkerouac.html](http://www.beatmuseum.org/kerouac/jackkerouac.html); 24. 4. 2011, 10:08

<sup>143</sup> MAHER, P. *Kerouac. The definitive biography*. Lanham : Taylor Trade Publishing. p. 133.

made more experiments with drugs, in this case benzedrine, which led to his hospitalization with thrombophlebitis.<sup>144</sup> After release from hospital, Kerouac started to work on a novel based on his chaotic past and he really tried to concentrate on his career as a writer. During this period first notion of Neal Cassady came to Kerouac (from his friend Ed White). Cassady could be described as a sociopath, car thief and relentless womanizer who refused to conform to society's conventions. Kerouac and even Ginsberg were eager to meet him. This happened in December 1946 when Cassady came to New York but he left very soon. They had plans to travel across the States but first of all, Kerouac had to join him in Denver. This trip is the opening of *On the Road*. On July 17 Kerouac left New York and traveled to Chicago, Denver (where he met Cassady and Ginsberg), and West Coast to San Francisco where he tried scriptwriting (unsuccessfully). When he finally came back to New York, he started to work on *The Town and the City* and he also started his earliest draft of *On the Road* (this version was imitative of Theodor Dreiser's naturalism).<sup>145</sup>

The draft was based on two men who hitchhike to California in search for something they do not really find. At the end they return home hoping to find there something else. However, Kerouac was not much clear about what the something else should be. Still, the concept was clear; he saw the post-war society succumbing to consumerism: "*In Russia they slave for the State, here they slave for Expenses. People rush off to meaningless jobs day after day, you see them coughing in subways at dawn. They squander their souls on things like "rent," "decent clothes," "gas and electricity," "insurance," behaving like peasants who have just come out of the fields and are so dreadful tickled because they can buy baubles and doodads in stores.*"<sup>146</sup>

Kerouac desperately needed to make it as a writer because he needed to pay rent and to afford at least the basic things such as food. Nevertheless, he undertook another trip with Neal during winter 1948. When he returned to New York he started serious work on *On the Road*. He had new perception of experience that he lacked in the first draft. At the same time he finally found a publisher for *The Town and the City* – Robert Giroux from Harcourt. The book was published in 1950 and despite the fact that it was reviewed favorably, the sales were poor. Moreover, Giroux refused to publish *On the Road* and Kerouac found himself again on

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<sup>144</sup> Thrombophlebitis is an inflammation of a vein that is usually caused by the formation of a blood clot; <http://www.answers.com/topic/thrombophlebitis>, 24. 4. 2011, 18:02.

<sup>145</sup> MAHER, P. *Kerouac. The definitive biography*. Lanham : Taylor Trade Publishing. p. 93, 96-104, 113-114, 119-122, 125, 132-138-145, 148-153; TYTELL, J. *Naked Angels: the lives & literature of the Beat Generation*. New York : McGraw-Hill Book Company. pp. 58-61; <http://www.notablebiographies.com/Jo-Ki/Kerouac-Jack.html>; 24.4.2011;10:05. <http://www.beatmuseum.org/kerouac/jackkerouac.html>; 24.4.2011, 10:08.

<sup>146</sup> MAHER, P. *Kerouac. The definitive biography*. Lanham : Taylor Trade Publishing. p. 160.

the road. This time Kerouac went to Mexico to visit Burroughs. Here he started revising *On the Road* and he actually decided to start it all over again.<sup>147</sup> In this period Kerouac used the term “beat generation” for the first time. This was later defined by novelist John C. Holmes: “*Beat*” metamorphosed into a conscious objection to straight but spirit-killing jobs, with its adherents preferring to eke out their existence on that dividing line between material comfort and bohemian squalor, at best, or in outright indigence, at worst. This struggle to survive often encompassed selling or using narcotics, promiscuity, a kind of restlessness, and sometimes a sense of spiritual bankruptcy.<sup>148</sup>

In autumn 1950 Kerouac married for the second time, to Joan Haverty. In 1950 Kerouac met John C. Holmes who helped him with the new version of *On the Road*. This first draft of *On the Road* was an experiment with freer form of writing when Kerouac tried to write about his trips across the country exactly as they had happened, without pausing to edit or fictionalize. He used a huge roll of paper and wrote the single paragraph that became the book (see appendix 13). He wrote it in about three weeks and he took the scroll to the publisher. It took another six years before they edited and published the book. At that time they decided that the original scroll version could not be published. Nevertheless, new facts appeared some years ago. Some editors were in favor of the original scroll and they considered it as better form than the edited version (which they believed actually damaged the original text).<sup>149</sup> At that time Joan announced to Kerouac that she was pregnant (she gave birth to Janet Michelle Kerouac in February 1952) but he denied paternity; something that speeded up their split. In 1952 Kerouac lived for a while in San Francisco with Cassady and his wife Caroline with whom he had an affair. The relations with Cassady started to worsen and at the end Kerouac left for Mexico where he began work on *Doctor Sax* and *Maggie Cassady*. Very soon he ran out of money<sup>150</sup> and he had to return to New York where he began writing *The Subterraneans*.

In 1953 Kerouac found Buddhism and it had a great influence over his further work. He also studied Freud’s interpretation of dreams and this all he expressed in his *Book of Dreams* he started to work on in this period. In 1955 he wrote a short prose piece *Jazz of the Beat Generation* that was published in edition of New World Writing and it had very good reviews.

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<sup>147</sup> MAHER, P. *Kerouac. The definitive biography*. Lanham : Taylor Trade Publishing. p. 162-166, 172, 176, 179, 189-191, 197-199, 207-212, 216; [Http://www.beatmuseum.org/kerouac/jackkerouac.html](http://www.beatmuseum.org/kerouac/jackkerouac.html); 24.4.2011, 10:08.

<sup>148</sup> MAHER, P. *Kerouac. The definitive biography*. Lanham : Taylor Trade Publishing. p. 176.

<sup>149</sup>For this reasons the original scroll was finally published ten years ago.

<sup>150</sup>“*I am starving to death. I have no more money, not one red cent. I weight 158 lbs. instead of 170.*”; MAHER, P. *Kerouac. The definitive biography*. Lanham : Taylor Trade Publishing. p. 254.

With this success Kerouac wanted to stop drinking and start to live normal life; however it did not last long. The problem was that despite this success, other books were still being rejected. In August 1955 Kerouac went again to Mexico and he started to write *Mexico City Blues*. Soon after he moved to California where he commenced with *Visions of Gerard* and later he wrote *The Dharma Bums* about this period. However, there were still problems with *On the Road*. Kerouac began to be anxious and nervous and he wanted to withdraw it from Viking publishing house and publish it just as a cheap paperback. However, the book was already under consideration and the publishing house was interested in other Kerouac's works as well. In the same time, Ginsberg finished his collection of poetry called *Howl and Other Poems* that was published in 1956 and its publication and the following trial that finally acquitted the publisher, brought the beatniks into the limelight and brought them success. Adding to this wave of popularity, *On the Road* (see appendix 12) was finally edited and released in the fall of 1957. The reviews were positive (see appendix 14) and Kerouac became instantly famous; he was seen as the spokesman of the "beat generation" on behalf of young people who condemn the "square" values of the middle-class society.<sup>151</sup>

However, Kerouac's health deteriorated because of the usage of many drugs and alcohol and he suffered several nervous breakdowns. In 1958 he moved with his mother to Northport (near to New York) and he continued his writing. In this year *The Subterraneans* and *The Dharma Bums* were published. One year later *Doctor Sax*, *Maggie Cassidy* and *Mexico City Blues* followed. Despite his medical problems Kerouac continued to experiment with drugs (for example Mescaline or LSD) and he wrote notes about their effects. At the end of 1959 Kerouac went to Hollywood where *The Subterraneans* were filmed. There was more and more negative publicity around Kerouac when the literary critics started to ridicule his work (they criticized his writing that became more difficult to read; they pointed out the fact that Kerouac did not know anything about the African American culture; and they dismantled his reputation as a serious postmodern novelist and poet); this was something that hurt Kerouac tremendously and he felt more and more depressed. It was more than obvious the fame and his sudden celebrity had ruinous effect on his mental and physical health and they proved as the worst thing that could have happened to him. Kerouac moral and spiritual decline over the next few years was shocking and it could lead just to one thing – his

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<sup>151</sup> MAHER, P. *Kerouac. The definitive biography*. Lanham : Taylor Trade Publishing. p. 221-227, 233-248, 252-264, 276, 284, 291, 297, 304, 312-316, 322, 329-332, 353; TYTELL, J. *Naked Angels: the lives & literature of the Beat Generation*. New York : McGraw-Hill Book Company. pp. 69, 73-74; [Http://www.notablebiographies.com/Jo-Ki/Kerouac-Jack.html](http://www.notablebiographies.com/Jo-Ki/Kerouac-Jack.html); 24. 4. 2011, 10:05; [Http://www.beatmuseum.org/kerouac/jackkerouac.html](http://www.beatmuseum.org/kerouac/jackkerouac.html); 24. 4. 2011, 10:08.



premature death. In 1960 the *Lonesome Traveler* was published, with very good reviews that did not bring Kerouac a financial triumph but at least artistic one. He continued in his work on *Books of Dreams* that was published in 1961 but did not get any reviews and the sales were poor. Moreover, Joan Haverty sued Kerouac for money for the children and he was ordered to pay her 52 dollars a month. In 1962 *Big Sur* was published while Kerouac tried to break his drinking habit and rediscover his writing talent. But at the end the book just showed his disconnected soul and his looseness in his illusion. Moreover, the book did not have good reviews and soon Kerouac slid back to the old way.

During the following years, Kerouac continued to drink heavily but he was still writing. In 1963 *Visions of Gerald* was followed by *Desolation Angles* in 1965 and *Vanity of Duluo* in 1968. In 1965 Kerouac took a trip to France on which he based his novel *Satori in Paris*. In 1966 Kerouac left for Italy to help publicize the Italian edition of *Big Sur*. During that time Kerouac's mother started to have health problems and he took care of her. He also married Stella Sampas, a girl from Lowell that had loved him for a long time. At the end she had to take care of both of them: mother-in law crippled by a stroke and husband destroyed by alcohol. On October 21, 1969 Jack was declared dead after short hospitalization. The cause of his death was massive stomach bleeding due to cirrhosis of liver. After Kerouac death Stella forbade publishing anything from his archive. This was again possible in the 1990s after she died, for example *Old Angel Midnight* (1993), *Selected Letters: 1940-1956* (1995), *Some of the Dharma* (1997), *Orpheus Emerged* (2002), *Book of Blues*(1995) or *Book of Haikus* (2003). In 2001 John Sampas placed the entire archive under the Berg Collection to New York Public Library (that Jack loved much).<sup>152</sup>

#### 4.1. On the Road

*On the Road* is the most widely recognized work of beat literature and it contains new, distinct style created by Kerouac, spontaneous prose. However, it still recognizes many of the elements of the conventional novel forms. The book can be also described as a picaresque novel (an old form of writing using episodic fashion). Moreover, Kerouac tried to use and

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<sup>152</sup> MAHER, P. *Kerouac. The definitive biography*. Lanham : Taylor Trade Publishing. p. 358, 370-372, 379, 389, 394-401, 406, 409, 416, 425, 428, 450-459, 464, 472-479, 482, 522; TYTELL, J. *Naked Angels: the lives & literature of the Beat Generation*. New York : McGraw-Hill Book Company. pp. 53; [Http://www.notablebiographies.com/Jo-Ki/Kerouac-Jack.html](http://www.notablebiographies.com/Jo-Ki/Kerouac-Jack.html); 24. 4. 2011; 10:05; [Http://www.beatmuseum.org/kerouac/jackkerouac.html](http://www.beatmuseum.org/kerouac/jackkerouac.html); 24. 4. 2011, 10:08.

apply for his writing the forms he saw and transferred from expressionism and jazz music. The novel focuses on Kerouac's life and his experiences with friends who wander across America during the late 1940s and early 1950s. In the post-war society the novel touches on adventures that most people could only dream about but beats really experienced them. The road offers numerous experience and incredible memories and the reader can feel the passion for movement the book contains. The novel invites the reader to become part of the "beat generation", to experience things that sounds crazy but on the other hand also exciting and that introduce the reader new, less reserved, more vigorous America.

The novel's main themes are pilgrimage and quest when each journey that Sal Paradise, the main protagonist, took was a self-contained adventure. Each journey also represents search for a holy place (in this case American West because the West symbolizes freedom and expanse; it is a place where you can do what you want without the interference of others<sup>153</sup>), a search for a new America. Freedom is another important motif of the book. It is their freedom on the road that allows them to reject the mundane rituals of most Americans and mainly to exhibit their wish to free themselves from conventional morality. Another theme is also the appropriation of African American culture that beats idolized and that was in opposition to mainstream American culture (not only the post-war one). The novel represents a search for spirituality as well as freedom; something that was uncommon in the post-war America. The "beat generation" could be described as the underworld of the American society; the white, capitalistic, and materialistic society as the beats perceived it. In the age when the ideology and the American dream were in blow, the beats saw just one way out of it: the road (= escape). They believed that there is no point in conforming to the materialism of the American dream they condemned. With such principles, the "beat generation" was free from the danger of ambition and materialism and they were looking for some greater truth they could adhere to.<sup>154</sup> What does it means to be beat? Kerouac expresses it on the character of Dean who was the root of beatnik; "*Bitterness, recriminations, advice, morality, sadness – everything was behind him, and ahead of him was the ragged and ecstatic joy of pure being.*"<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Moreover, the more west you get, the better looking girls you can see and the better pies and richer ice-creams you can get.

<sup>154</sup> [Http://bookreviews.nabou.com/reviews/ontheroad.html](http://bookreviews.nabou.com/reviews/ontheroad.html); 28. 4. 2011, 9:34;

[Http://www.suite101.com/content/review-on-the-road-a99163](http://www.suite101.com/content/review-on-the-road-a99163); 28. 4. 2011, 9:49. Online Literature:

[Http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN117&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303977209\\_7707&trailId=12F009A678F&area=ref&forward=critref\\_ft](http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN117&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303977209_7707&trailId=12F009A678F&area=ref&forward=critref_ft); 28. 4. 2011, 19:25;

<sup>155</sup> KEROUAC, J. *On the Road*. Penguin Books : London. pp. 178.

The novel<sup>156</sup> is actually a narration of Sal Paradise (Jack Kerouac), a young novelist, describing his experience with his friend Dean Moriarty (Neal Cassady) while travelling through the whole American continent (from New York to Denver, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Texas or Mexico; from urban jungles and small sleepy cities, rural wilderness and endless roads). Sal is not traveling just with Dean; sometimes he is accompanied by other beats. The novel is divided into five parts each of them dealing with one of the trips and the experience Sal gained from the road. While searching for his personal freedom and liberation from any higher belief or ideology, he feels the only thing to do is to go on the road and enjoy the life through sex, drugs and jazz. At the beginning Sal is presented as an innocent writer, war veteran, living with his aunt (in reality his mother) and studying under GI Bill when he meets Dean for the first time. Dean is a crazy youth excited by life, testing the limits of the society. He has just been released from reform school where he was serving time for stealing cars. Dean and his craziness are glorified by Sal who admires his ability to do whatever he pleases. Through the book is more than clear that Dean is no one you should trust and rely on because he is able to leave his friends even if they need him, as he proves on several occasions. Still, Sal always forgives Dean because he sees him as a window into a different world, no matter what he does and how crazy it is.<sup>157</sup>

Before starting the story and focusing on criticism it provides, it is necessary to say that the whole book is one big criticism of the life of contemporary society the beats disdain. It opposes everything: all the values, principles, norms and standards set by society. Sal tells the reader that he is surrounded by people who despise society but he makes a distinction between his old friends and his new, beat friends (especially Dean): *Besides, all my New York friends were in the negative, nightmare position of putting down society and giving their bookish or political or psychoanalytical reasons, but Dean just raced in society, eager for bread and love; ...*<sup>158</sup> For this reason I consider the whole book as one big criticism; Kerouac makes it clear from the beginning that he is part of the group of people who are not satisfied with the norms society set up on its members and they want to go beyond them, to experience things that are considered improper in the post-war society that has recently achieved a living standard unique in the whole world at the time. But under the surface of this

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<sup>156</sup> Here I have to point out that I am using the edited version of the book and not the original scroll, described in the previous part.

<sup>157</sup> [Http://bookreviews.nabou.com/reviews/ontheroad.html](http://bookreviews.nabou.com/reviews/ontheroad.html); 28. 4. 2011, 9:34;

[Http://www.amazon.com/review/R2VWGBV15FBOYW/ref=cm\\_cr\\_pr\\_viewpnt#R2VWGBV15FBOYW](http://www.amazon.com/review/R2VWGBV15FBOYW/ref=cm_cr_pr_viewpnt#R2VWGBV15FBOYW); 28. 4. 2011, 9:41; [Http://partners.nytimes.com/books/97/09/07/home/kerouac-roadglowing.html](http://partners.nytimes.com/books/97/09/07/home/kerouac-roadglowing.html); 28. 4. 2011, 9:44

<sup>158</sup> KEROUAC, J. *On the Road*. Penguin Books : London. pp. 10.

largely affluent society, a new movement starts to arise. Sal describes it very eloquently while he is at one party in Denver with other friends: *"I wished Dean and Carlo were there -then I realized they'd be out of place and unhappy. They were like the man with the dungeon stone and the gloom, rising from the underground, the sordid hipsters of American, a new beat generation that I was slowly joining."*<sup>159</sup> The particular criticism comes out during the story and I would like to mention the main critical themes. However, first of all I will describe briefly the story and then I will point out the criticism using particular moments from the book.

The novel starts in 1947 when Sal first meets Dean who comes to New York to learn how to write. In this part Sal actually sums up nicely his life when he states that: *"the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes 'Awww!'"*<sup>160</sup> By this statement Sal expresses his reflection of the beats who divide people into two camps: the majority of people who can be described as boring (squares) and those who are mad and interesting (hip or beat). Sal also describes his first meeting with Dean and his experience hitchhiking across the country. Stopping in Denver where he meets Dean, Sal continues to San Francisco where he stays for some time with his friend Remi Boncouer and even finds a work. The first part ends describing Sal's romance with a Mexican girl named Terry and his departure back to New York, to his aunt's home. Second part is a description of another crazy trip Sal undertakes with Dean one year later, in 1948. Sal has just finished his book and he has started to attend school through GI Bill. For Sal this is his first road trip across America going from New York to New Orleans and San Francisco together with Neal and his mistress Marylou. At the end, when arriving to San Francisco, Dean leaves both Sal and Marylou alone to go back to his wife Camille. Marylou summarizes the scene very well: *"You see what a bastard he is? Dean will leave you out in the cold any time it's in his interest."*<sup>161</sup> In the end even Marylou leaves Sal and he returns back to New York, not sure if he will see Dean any more, but not really caring about it (it was this year, Sal later confessed, he almost lost his faith in Dean). Part Three, spring 1949, describes Sal and his stay in Denver (thinking about settling down) and his reunion with Dean in California where he stays at his home with him and his

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<sup>159</sup>KEROUAC, J. *On the Road*. Penguin Books : London. pp. 48.

<sup>160</sup>KEROUAC, J. *On the Road*. Penguin Books : London. pp. 7.

<sup>161</sup>KEROUAC, J. *On the Road*. Penguin Books : London. pp. 154.

wife Camille. Due to many events (Dean is thrown out of home by Camille, steals a car and runs away from the city) the two men come together to New York where Sal is back at home and Dean meets a girl named Inez he fell in love with and who he decides to stay with. He has left Camille in San Francisco, pregnant, and with one already born child alone. Back in New York Inez gives birth to Dean's third child. The fourth part is tremendously interesting because it describes Sal (who has finally got some money for his book, 1950), Deans and Stan Shepard's trip to Mexico. Dean is going there just to get quick divorce from Camille so he can marry Inez. The feeling after entering Mexico all of them describe as entering a magic land and for Sal this can finally represent the end of the road (he feels like driving across the world into places where he will finally get to know himself). After very "juicy" events in a small town of Gregoria, they finally reach Mexico City where Sal gets sick. Dean does not take any care about him and after receiving his divorce papers he leaves Mexico, leaving Sal and Stan alone. Sal gets better in few days and even though he is disappointed in Dean's behavior he again forgives him. The last, fifth part, is very short and it focuses on Dean's decision to leave New York for San Francisco again (he married Inez but the same night he decided to be with Camille; still, he wants Inez to move with him and stay on the other side of the city). Sal helps Dean with moving back. The last time Sal sees Dean is when Sal together with Remi and their girlfriends are going to a concert and Dean asks them if they can take him uptown with them. Remi refuses because he knows Dean and this is an important evening for him; he does not want anyone to spoil it. Sal can see the last image of Dean walking alone into the New York City night. The fact that the book is autobiographical just confirms the notion that it provides us with an authentic picture of Kerouac. Always without a proper job, without any constructive idea about his future, behaving immaturely and irresponsibly; this is the image of a beatnik. Nevertheless, at the end of every part Sal always finds himself back in New York, surrounded by domestic comfort of his aunt's flat. The book gives an impression that Sal is only Dean's chronicler and witness of his ruffled life but Sal does not act as "real beat"; he feels huge thirst for experience that inspires him in his writing but on the other hand he needs a safe place to return, a place to put his feet up, and think over the experience he gained. This fact requires an answer to the question if Sal's alias Kerouac's criticism of the society is not hypocritical at its base as well (that does not mean that it is not justified and real).

What are the particular things beats oppose? How do they express their disdain? There are several themes in the book that can provide us with the answer. I will try to go one by one and to discuss them more deeply (while going chronologically through the story). First of all there

is the theme of generosity. Using the scene where Sal gives away his shirt to one hitchhiker seeing he is cold<sup>162</sup>, Kerouac wants to illustrate Sal's attempt to break away from the materialism of the newly emerged society that was based on it (society that has a problem to share or even to abandon the material things). It is important to point out that Sal does it with a true sense of generosity; he is not expecting anything in return. Beats consider all commodities and belongings to be used and shared and the things have no intrinsic value: they are interesting just in case they can be used; the rest is not important. And after they are used up, they are discarded (this refers to women as well).

The concept of responsibility versus freedom is another strong theme of the book and one of the criticisms beats use against the society. This topic actually goes along the whole story and it can be found almost everywhere. One example can be Sal's narration about his work as a guard in the barracks in San Francisco. He is supposed to keep the order among the men waiting there for their ship. These men represent the bottom of the society, most of them fleeing from law. Here Kerouac for the first time expresses the desire of beats to be in contact with people who are considered losers and outsiders of the society because they feel the same about themselves. Sal is not an exceptional guard; he is spending more time with those he should calm down than looking after order in the barracks. Very soon he gets a lecture from other guards about how the law and order has to be kept or anarchy will break out. Sal agrees with it but he cannot help himself and the only thing he thinks of is to sneak out into the night to find out what other people are doing and to join them. The problem with Sal and his work is that he does not believe in what he is doing. His only mission is to become a writer; nothing else suits him. On the other hand he is still not able to earn his living by writing and for this reason he can be considered irresponsible, not corresponding to the social demands about being a beneficial member of the society. Sal finishes his thought about the current job by stating that the story of America is that everybody is doing what they think they are supposed to. Here Kerouac points out the fact that more people dissatisfied with their life and work probably exist in the society. But they continue without any protest because of the pressure of society to have a job and not being useless, wasting their time and joining the outsiders.<sup>163</sup>

The attitude toward sex and family life in general, another theme, actually presents beats disdain of the norms set by the society that makes it conservative, narrow-minded and

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<sup>162</sup> Here can be seen connection with the fact that Kerouac is a Catholic; his reference to St. Martin, the saint known for sharing his cloak with a beggar.

<sup>163</sup> Literature Online:

[Http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN117&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303977209\\_7707&trailId=12F009A678F&area=ref&forward=critref\\_ft](http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN117&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303977209_7707&trailId=12F009A678F&area=ref&forward=critref_ft)

creating problems because of its secrecy over sensitive topics. Kerouac calls attention to the fact that what the society is doing is to limit others' freedom by imposing its value system on them and trying to control them. Whoever opposes the system is rate as an outsider who cannot stay part of it anymore. The question of sex is one of the leading themes of the book. Kerouac is talking about sex issues very openly; something unusual for 1950s when the society was highly conservative and such topics were still considered taboo. But it is not only the talk about sex, but the attitude to women and the institution of family that is not actually so important for beats as for the rest of the society. Even if the beats (who are considered bohemian) start their family, it is not the prototype we know from post-war America – they do not crave for material things, for better houses or faster and more fashionable cars. They just want to enjoy the life, to live it, to be free and not bound by the conventions of society. The thing Kerouac points out is that despite the fact that sex is one of the taboo topics in the society, it does not stop people from cheating, from experimenting before the marriage and from expressing their desires and urges. He sees the hypocrisy of the society that is unable to capture more opened position towards sex, which is something natural, but pretends that everything is as it should be, most marriages are happy and there is no need to speak openly about sex; something that was not true and never will be.<sup>164</sup>

The admiration for African American culture (expressed mainly through great scenes full of black music, namely jazz), connected closely with the status of the outsider, is a very strong theme permeating the whole book. The criticism is aimed at the fact that the society continues (almost after a century) being prejudicial towards African Americans, something that will not change much for the decades to follow. In fact, in late 1940s and 1950s the attitude to minorities by the majority of Americans was as to outsiders of the social norm; something the beats consider as an oppressive behavior on the part of American society and culture generally. To the contrary, beats identify themselves with blacks and other minorities because they are also outsiders (with their criminal records, economic statues and sexual orientation) and they could not fit into mainstream America; they feel unwelcome and set apart because of their inability to conform to societal expectations. However, there is one big difference. For beats it would be very easy to join the herd again; it was them who chose to stay apart from it voluntarily but blacks and other minorities were pushed to the edges because of race. Sal describes his feeling, exactly expressing why he cannot live in the white, middle-class society.

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<sup>164</sup> Nevertheless, the fact is that all this openness and liberal attitude toward sex did not help Kerouac's life; he was still unable to find woman to stay with and sex was more an expression of needs than manifestation of something bigger.

He has the feeling “*that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night.*”<sup>165</sup> Sal is continuing that it actually does not matter to which outsiders he is connected to, just not to be what he is: a disillusioned white man. This is a strong criticism that shows that beats prefer to become real outsiders, developing some of their characters to enrich own sense of identity. According to some scholars, Kerouac was searching for the truth by studying the outsiders but as well as by attempting to become one of them for a time to understand them properly. Kerouac also draws the attention to the status of blacks that is still not good owing to the segregation. In the scene where Sal lives for a while with Terry Sal decides to pick cotton to earn some money for the bus to New York. But the work is hard and slow and he is not able to earn more than for food. During the work Sal makes obvious references to slave work that the blacks were submitted for a long time.<sup>166</sup>

Continuing the story new themes (combined with the old one) emerge. Very important part of the book, showing the reader the life of the beats, is connected with the usage of drugs. The drugs were another taboo of the society, prohibited, showing lower status of people who use them. During the story, Dean and Sal are remembering the old times (around 1910) when you could buy morphine in a drugstore even without prescription and how all the Chinese but also others were smoking opium.<sup>167</sup> However, this is post-war America, with many new rules, and with new attitude to drugs: only outsiders of the society use drugs that cannot bring anything good.<sup>168</sup> Kerouac wants to point out that society is not providing its members with freedom to choose and to decide without undertaking serious consequences. He points out that it is everyone personal responsibility and people should be let free to make their own decisions. But the attitude toward drugs differentiates from normal users. For beats drugs mean freedom and in some cases also inspiration (as many of them are artists). They do not turn to drugs for a release or to fight the pressures of the world; it is their search for meaning.<sup>169</sup> For this reason I do not see such criticism as justified: most people addicted to drugs try to fight their dependence and it is the society who has to help them. For this reason the society should have right to control the drug use and beats are not justify to criticize it.

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<sup>165</sup> KEROUAC, J. *On the Road*. Penguin Books : London. pp. 163.

<sup>166</sup> Literature Online:

[http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN117&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303977209\\_7707&trailId=12F009A678F&area=ref&forward=critref\\_ft](http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN117&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303977209_7707&trailId=12F009A678F&area=ref&forward=critref_ft)

<sup>167</sup> But drugs started to be repressed already in 1920s with the rising taste people had for them.

<sup>168</sup> This was actually hypocritical attitude because drugs became common thing and a privilege of rich people.

<sup>169</sup> Literature Online:

[http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN117&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303977209\\_7707&trailId=12F009A678F&area=ref&forward=critref\\_ft](http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN117&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303977209_7707&trailId=12F009A678F&area=ref&forward=critref_ft)



Criticism of state apparatus is presented in two parts of the book and in both cases it deals with the same theme. First one is the police and its attitude towards the citizens. Sal provides the story when they were stopped in going to West and request to pay fine for no reason. Sal summarizes his feeling perfectly in the following statement: *“They knew we were broke and had no relatives on the road or to wire to for money. The American police are involved in psychological warfare against those Americans who don’t frighten them with imposing papers and threats.”*<sup>170</sup> On the other hand there is the police Sal meets in Mexico that is absolutely different: no suspicion, no fuss, no bother. I do not think that Kerouac wants to say that having a police force is generally a bad thing. On the other hand the police apparatus becomes stronger and more influential and sometimes (according to Kerouac often) can happen that policemen abuse their power.<sup>171</sup> It also points to the fact that the society, with so many rules and norms needs protection not to come apart and police is the one that can provide it. The second theme of this particular criticism is the post-war policy. We have to keep in mind that the world is facing other serious threat – the Cold War. Moreover, both countries of the conflict are in possession of nuclear weapons. By scene with Sal’s friend Old Bull Lee (in New Orleans) Kerouac express his anxiety about this situation. Bull presents his idea that if people pay more attention to visions they would be able to foresee the future. However, the scientists, instead of focusing on this, the only thing they are interested in is to find a way how to blow up the world. Of course, reader can consider the first part as ridiculous but it does not matter on what the scientist should focus; the main message is they should stop creating weapons that can endanger the whole world and its civilization. There is another note to this in the fourth part as well when Sal describes the people of little villages outside Mexico City. He points out to the fact that they are not aware of the fact that one bomb can damage all their life and that in the case of its usage it can be Americans once who will stay along the road with their hands outstretched in the same way as they are doing now.

There is also a little hint at the illusoriness of the American dream expressed in the book. While going south to the Mexico, Stan needs to stop in hospital to treat some wound. The hospital is full of poor Mexicans, mainly pregnant women, and it provides the reader with a really sad image. Kerouac wants to point out that the American dream is really just a dream that can be possible to fulfill for few desirables but the majority has no chance to reach it. He draws our attention to the fact that a lot of people in America (mainly minorities) are living in

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<sup>170</sup>KEROUAC, J. *On the Road*. Penguin Books : London. pp. 123.

<sup>171</sup> This, however, is nothing new. The police abuse is omnipresent; moreover, beats were suspicious thanks to their look and police was, and still is, cautious about every unorthodox individual.

horrible conditions and there is nobody to take care of them. The era of social security and health care is still a future but these people need help now. Despite this fact, the middle-class society continues to dream its dream about upward mobility, better work and greater opportunities for their children the society they are part of can, they believe, provide them.

The last theme I would like to mention in this text is the theme of maturity. On the character of Dean, Kerouac tries to show that despite the criticism of the society, most of the people around him and Sal become more mature and less anti-social. They start to avoid Dean and his adolescent behavior that they reject (or maybe envy). This is clearer through the story but it is expressed mainly in the last scene of the book. It is in this scene where it seems that even Sal is going in the same way but at the end he confesses he had to think about Dean all the time during the concert he is not interested in at all. Sal is living half way – he is not beat<sup>172</sup> in real meaning of the word, but he is not a member of the middle-class society as well. He cannot decide which way to choose because he needs both. The question if he will ever accept his mature role and some kind of responsibility is not answered in the book itself but because this is an autobiographical book we know that he will continue to live on the crossroad, continuing in his writing, killing himself with alcohol.

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<sup>172</sup> An interesting question is if even Dean can be considered as beat. Beats were mainly creative individuals, they wrote poetry, drew paintings, played jazz or they tried to express themselves through other artistic manifestation. However, there is no notion Dean expressed himself in this way as well. On the other hand it was maybe his life he tries to spend creatively that can include him among beats.

## Conclusion

The post-war period in the United States of America represented a transformation of society in a way that was unprecedented until this time. The society, deeply hurt by the Great Depression, recovered dramatically after the war and new values started to dominate it: consumerism and materialism that suddenly decided about people's status (the more the better). It seemed that the American dream was available to more people (speaking mainly about the middle class) and that only better times were coming. The post-war period provided the society with many booms that helped its development. We could witness the economic boom, the baby boom, the car boom, the roots of the sexual revolution, the new type of family life, the new style of living, of eating, of travelling or of spending leisure time. Even though some scholars tried to call the attention to the fact that such affluence would necessarily have its limits, people did not want to listen; they continued to believe in permanent prosperity. Those who understood that the situation was untenable continued to express their anxiety through various means; mainly through fine arts, music or literature. This thesis chose one of these means to consider how much this criticism was justified.

Here comes the part of three critical voices that disdain the society and its new values and that foreshadow that there is more problems within its structure that will resurface later. The three critical voices also should represent three generations within the society; to get better picture and to compare the criticism and solutions the characters decided for. Willy Loman (in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*), an unsuccessful salesman expressing the point of view of the older generation choosing as solution to escape the society by committing suicide. Holden Caulfield (in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*), a teenager revolting against the society around him he sees as spoiled and hypocritical, eventually conforming to it (even though the extent of the compromise is uncertain). Sal Paradise (in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*), the representative of new generation known as the beats, never accepting the society and its values he disdains but that he is not able to abandon them for good. All these voices point out that there is something wrong with the society and its values and principles and people should think about it. However, all of them choose other way how to express their view. In the following text I would like to summarize the main themes that appeared in the books and to find some common points among them. Then will be time to answer the question of the thesis itself: was their criticism justified?

There are various common points among the books, from criticism of particulars to criticism of society in general. I focused on the most important and I tried to explain the differences in their comprehension. Firstly, there is the theme of maturity and responsibility. Salinger expresses this theme by presenting Holden as someone who is afraid to become mature because he does not like what he sees. The society does not provide him with suitable models to follow or values to appreciate. He does not see any reward the society can offer him if he became its part. Kerouac's image of responsibility and maturity is something absolutely else. The disdain and dismissal of the society is an expression of dismissal of responsibility. Moreover, even Kerouac is not able to find reasons why to stay part of society that cannot provide him with anything he would be interested in (the things he is interested in – sex, drugs, freedom – are usually restricted in some way). In the case of Miller, there is not much criticism of the society that would force his character to refuse maturity or to deny it as Kerouac did. Here it is more a question of Biff's criticism of Willy who unwillingly raised both Biff and Happy with the notion that there are more important things than doing an honest job and to be responsible; the secret of success is to know people and be popular, that is the way all doors will open to you. He also taught them to value material success above all. Such upbringing led to failure of both sons who use even lying and stealing to achieve the success they were taught to prioritize.<sup>173</sup>

The common point can be also found in their attitude toward sex and the secrecy society spread around it. Both Salinger and Kerouac point out to the fact that it is not wise to close eyes against sex because at the end the secrecy actually creates more problems. They express the need for open and more liberal attitude toward sex that would become something natural (and that will satisfy needs both of men and women) and that would not scare young people who are already confused by many other things and it is hard for them to cope. In the case of Miller, the book does not imply explicitly the demand for more liberal attitude, however, by creating Willy's mistress Miller shows that the secrecy serves to maintain the image of the society that pretends to be perfect and to deny basic facts about privacy of its members who are not so innocent as they should be (according to the rules, principles and values set by the society).

Another topic that runs through the books is the American dream. In case of Salinger there is the overall view: Holden is simply fed up with everyone who has already made it, all

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<sup>173</sup> Literature Online:

[Http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN046&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1304079997\\_23413&trailId=12F06BAD3CA&area=ref&forward=critref\\_ft](http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN046&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1304079997_23413&trailId=12F06BAD3CA&area=ref&forward=critref_ft); 28. 4. 2011, 18:22.

the upper-class snobbery and self-satisfaction; however as to Kerouac and Miller, there are clear hints. In Kerouac's *On the Road* he shows the illusion of the American dream that is really just a dream possible to come true for narrow number of people; however, the majority has not much chance to touch it. It is mainly the middle class who maintains the dream alive, continuing to believe in it; all this despite the fact that most of Americans are living in poor conditions. Above all, the criticism of the American dream is closely connected with Miller's work. Miller proves that the American dream is impossible to reach (for the majority of people) and he alerts the audience to the fact that it can be even dangerous to adhere it too much and believe in it blindly. Miller is actually going to the extreme by letting Willy create a fantasy world in order to cope with his inability to achieve material success and at the end to kill himself because his dream cannot become true.<sup>174</sup> It is understandable that Willy wants to be successful. His problem is that he believes that the success is available almost without any effort to those who deserve it. Despite his loving family and supportive friends Willy cannot see the value in these things and the only definition of success is to earn money and be liked by the others. Miller does not condemn dreams; it is very important for everyone to believe in something. However, there is the need for limits and Miller shows us that just believing is not the way how to live.<sup>175</sup> It is good to have a dream but it is not possible to subordinate our whole life to it. Everybody has to realize for himself that there are things which are worth living for and one has to learn how to appreciate them.

There is also theme of the revolt against society. This theme represents the solution the books provide for their disdain of the society. Here, every character – every generation takes different choice how to cope with its anxiety. In *Death of a Salesman* we are actually dealing with more answers: the three main characters, Willy, Biff and Happy, decide for different solutions. Willy chooses the worst one: he decides to end his life, to commit suicide because the society is not able to provide him with any other possibility. Happy chooses the saddest one: he decided to continue in his father's dream he considers as the right and only one (here we cannot talk about revolt at all). Only Biff seems to escape: he knows he will never become "true" member of the society but he does not care. He has finally found out what he wants to do with his life and he does not need to succeed and gain material things – he just wants to live according to his ideas and to be happy. Salinger's revolt is not finished. Holden opposes

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<sup>174</sup> Literature Online:

[Http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN046&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1304079997\\_23413&trailId=12F06BAD3CA&area=ref&forward=critref\\_ft](http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN046&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1304079997_23413&trailId=12F06BAD3CA&area=ref&forward=critref_ft); 28. 4. 2011, 18:22.

<sup>175</sup> BERKOWITZ, G. M. *American drama of the twentieth century*. London : Longman. pp. 79 – 82; JACOBSON, I. *Family Dreams in Death of a Salesman*. American Literature, pp. 247-258.

the society as it is full of hypocrisy and “phony” people; he has dreams about leaving it and to create his own world with his own rules and values (however, he also considers the possibility of suicide as a solution). But at the end he is still able to find a reason why to stay a part of the society (Phoebe) and he accepts it and returns. Still, the persistent feeling of Holden’s sacrifice stays with us and the image of Holden’s future stay uncertain. Sal Paradise expresses his solution in three words: on the road. Beats already left the society and they started to create their own. But this is nothing easy and they still have to stay its part in some ways (law, health service, etc.). Moreover in case of Sal, there is strong doubt to what extent he is beat and to what extent he is part of the society.

I left the criticism of society in general for the end because it is the main theme permeating all the stories. Miller’s criticism mainly deals with the pressure society puts on people in order to succeed or at least to sustain the image of success. He points out that such pressure can lead to tragedy, especially when society is not able to provide with support those who need it and who do not have any other possibility (this can create the notion that one person is more valuable dead than alive). At the end, Willy’s decision presents him as a victim of his social class and his unsuccessful chase for success. In the case of Salinger, he shows the inability of the society to provide youth with suitable models, to provide them with reason to stay as a part of it even when they already realize its rottenness. Moreover the hypocrisy of people and society in general just serves as an example how to hurt and embarrass those less fortunate. Thanks to this, Holden consider society’s values system to be utterly lacking, missing mainly values such as kindness or integrity.<sup>176</sup> Kerouac’s vision of society is not providing him with any reasons to stay as a part of it. He expresses his desire for some truth or certainty beyond the meaningless surface of everyday life in post-war America.<sup>177</sup> In Kerouac’s work we can feel most the criticism or maybe the ignorance of materialism that was created by the new consumer society. Beats do not need material things, just the basic one to stay alive and to enjoy the life according to their rules. For this reason we can see here the denial of material things more than in the case of Salinger and Miller.

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<sup>176</sup> Literature Online:

[Http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN104&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303996219\\_24528&trailId=12F01BC7842&area=ref&forward=critref\\_ft](http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN104&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303996219_24528&trailId=12F01BC7842&area=ref&forward=critref_ft); 28. 4. 2011, 18:42.

<sup>177</sup> Literature Online:

[Http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN117&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303977209\\_7707&trailId=12F009A678F&area=ref&forward=critref\\_ft](http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/searchFulltext.do?id=EALKN117&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1303977209_7707&trailId=12F009A678F&area=ref&forward=critref_ft); 28. 4. 2011, 19:25.

The answer to the question if the criticism was justified is not easy one. The books, in a variety of ways, provide us with reasonable and strong criticism. They point out the bad aspects of society, its mistakes and problems, its hypocrisy, selfishness, unfairness (for example towards minorities), and they also show us the new form of society presented by consumer culture, materialism and the desire to succeed, to fulfill the American dream. It would be unfair not to mention that every society in every time has its problems and defects; it is natural. However the society that emerged in post-war America was so different from any previous one, based on things that were not accessible to everybody and for this reason it invoked such remonstrance. Despite the fact that occasionally some of the authors went too far in criticizing the society, I consider their criticism justified. Moreover, the only thing they did was to present their opinion and their view of the world around them; their concept based on other values and principles than the society advocated and this should be allowed to everyone. However, there is another aspect I would like to pay attention to: the books also present the way how to cope with the society they disdain (already mentioned above; death, refusal, accommodation). But any of these solutions cannot be described as reasonable; for me all of them are extreme and I cannot find any balance among them.<sup>178</sup> For this reason I see the solutions presented by each book as literary fiction, not actually providing the reader (or audience) with a model to follow. I do not criticize these solutions; on the other hand I take them for a great conclusion of a story with powerful message. I consider them as a warning, as an illustration of consequences that can happen in society adjusted to such a form we witnessed in the post-war America. It should make people open their eyes and reevaluate their values and aims to see if they live in harmony with their inner voice that tells them what is the right way to live.

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<sup>178</sup> There is maybe the character of Biff who can represent the best way how to escape a society you disdain – to continue having dreams that are realizable, to possess some material things but just the necessary (not two cars, bigger house, the newest fridge) and to create your own values, principles and goals that would not be based on the expectation of the society; to live for yourself, not for fulfilling others expectation or picture and to learn to live with what you have, be satisfied and happy just about the fact you are living.

## Resumé

Diplomová práce se zabývá třemi literárními díly, které poskytují kritický pohled na poválečnou americkou společnost: Arthur Miller, *Smrt obchodního cestujícího*, J.D. Salinger, *Kdo chytá v žitě* a Jack Kerouac, *Na cestě*. Každý autor je zástupcem jedné generace (Miller reprezentuje starší generaci, Salinger mladší a Kerouac novou, tzv. beat generaci), aby tak byla pokryta kritika téměř všech skupin společnosti. Cílem práce je zodpovědět otázku, zdali kritika, kterou autoři ve svých knihách nastínili, byla opodstatněná a oprávněná.

Práce je rozčleněna do čtyř hlavních částí. První z nich má stručně představit padesátá léta ve Spojených státech a změny, ke kterým v tomto období došlo. Americká společnost se v tomto období stala charakteristickou příklonem ke konzumerismu a materialismu, který dominoval zejména střední vrstvě. S tímto obdobím je také spjata oživení víry v americký sen, který se najednou stal dosažitelným pro mnoho lidí. První část se tedy stručně zabývá jak poválečnou politickou situací, společností tak i kulturou, která je vždy odrazem své doby. Části dvě, tři a čtyři se poté zaměřují na jednotlivé knihy a autory (kteří jsou zde stručně představeni). Na pozadí děje se práce snaží zachytit hlavní momenty, kde autoři kritizují společnost a její nedostatky. Každý autor se samozřejmě soustředí na jiné problémy, nicméně je možné najít některé společné body, které jsou prezentovány v závěru práce. Mezi tyto patří zejména pokrytectví poválečné americké společnosti, která podle autorů žije v přetvářce. Dalším důležitým bodem je i to, že tato společnost nedokáže svým členům poskytnout vhodné modely, které by bylo možno následovat (týká se zejména mladé generace); že tato společnost není schopná postarat se o ty, kteří to potřebují (týká se zejména starší generace); a že tato společnost nedokáže nabídnout žádné hodnoty či principy, které by stály za to přijmout (týká se nové, beat generace). Každý autor také nabízí svoji variantu, jak takovéto společnosti čelit: Miller volí smrt, Salinger přizpůsobení a Kerouac odmítnutí.

Práce nakonec dochází k závěru, že kritika autorů prezentovaných děl oprávněná byla. Přesto práce nepovažuje za oprávněná východiska autorů, tedy jejich řešení, jak společnosti, se kterou nesouhlasili a proti které se bouřili, čelit. Samotný závěr je více komplikovaný a je třeba přečíst práci celou k pochopení všech důvodů, které k takovému závěru vedly a k zamyšlení se nad poskytnutými vývody.



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<http://www.ibiblio.org/miller/life.html>; 21. 3. 2011, 11:51.

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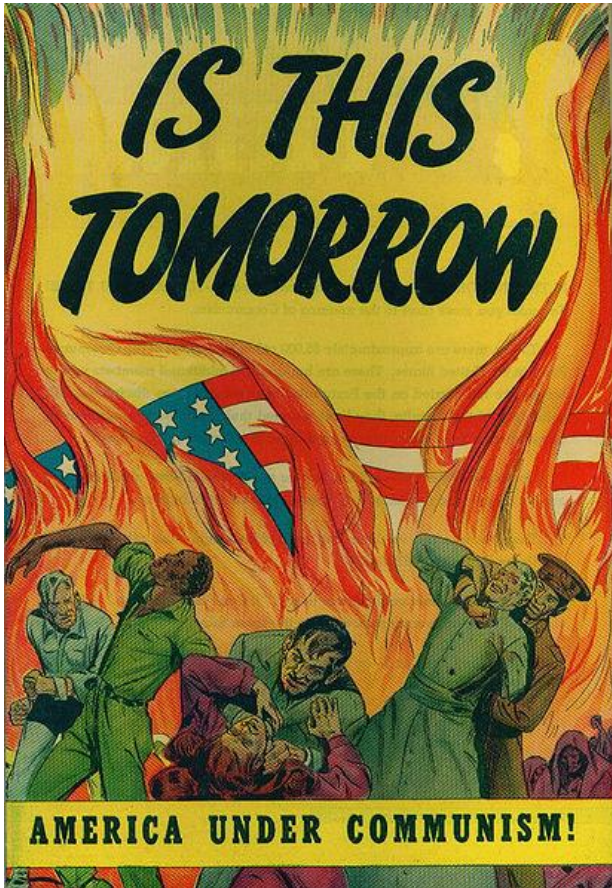
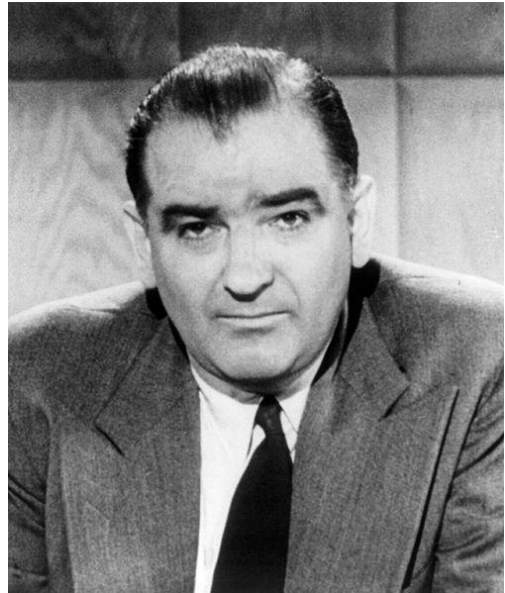
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## **List of appendixes**

- Appendix 1: Joseph McCarthy (picture)
- Appendix 2: The threat of communism (picture)
- Appendix 3: Guide for TV (picture)
- Appendix 4: Arthur Miller (picture)
- Appendix 5: Arthur Miller and Marilyn Monroe (picture)
- Appendix 6: Arthur Miller and Igne Morath (picture)
- Appendix 7: *Death of a Salesman* (picture)
- Appendix 8: J.D. Salinger and *The Catcher in the Rye* (picture)
- Appendix 9: J.D. Salinger and his daughter Margaret Ann (picture)
- Appendix 10: Holden Caulfield (picture)
- Appendix 11: Jack Kerouac (picture)
- Appendix 12: *On the Road* (picture)
- Appendix 13: The original scroll (picture)
- Appendix 14: Book of the Times (picture)

## Appendixes

Appendix 1 – Joseph McCarthy<sup>179</sup>



Appendix 2 – The threat of communism<sup>180</sup>

<sup>179</sup> [Http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph\\_McCarthy.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph_McCarthy.jpg); 18. 9. 2010, 19:43.

<sup>180</sup> [Http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Is\\_this\\_tomorrow.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Is_this_tomorrow.jpg); 18. 9. 2010, 19:44.



Appendix 3 – Guide for TV<sup>181</sup>

**1.** SHOULD THE ROOM IN WHICH YOU ARE VIEWING TELEVISION BE DARKENED TO RESEMBLE A MOVIE-THEATER ?

YOU WON'T LIKE ME THIS WAY.

**ANSWER :**  
**DEFINITELY NOT !**  
 WATCHING TELEVISION IS ENTIRELY DIFFERENT FROM WATCHING A MOVIE. A TELEVISION SET OPERATING NORMALLY - PRODUCES A PICTURE MANY TIMES BRIGHTER THAN THE MOVIES. THEREFORE, WHEN YOU VIEW THE TELEVISION PICTURE IN A DARKENED ROOM FOR AN ENTIRE EVENING, YOU WILL USUALLY HAVE THE FEELING THAT THE PICTURE IS TOO BRIGHT AND GLARY.

**THE GLARING EFFECT -**  
 IS PRODUCED BY THE SHARP CONTRAST BETWEEN THE VERY BRIGHT SCREEN AND THE DARKENED ROOM AND WILL USUALLY CAUSE **EYE FATIGUE**

**3** SHOULD DIRECT LIGHTING OF THE PICTURE TUBE BE AVOIDED ?

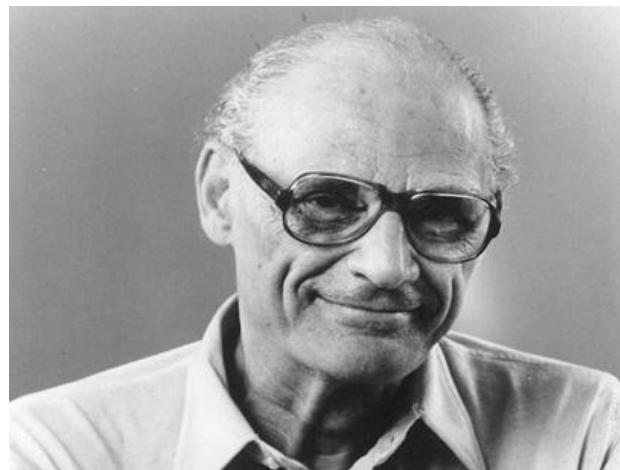
YES! DON'T DO THIS TO ME!

**ANSWER :**  
**YES... DIRECT LIGHTING WILL DESTROY THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE LIGHT AND DARK AREAS OF THE SCREEN AND PREVENT YOU FROM OBTAINING A SHARP AND CLEAR PICTURE. HOWEVER LIGHT WHICH FALLS ON THE FACE OF THE PICTURE TUBE FROM PROPERLY ARRANGED LIGHTING WILL NOT IMPAIR THE EFFECTIVE VIEWING OF THE PICTURE.**

**BAD... DIRECT LIGHTING OF TUBE DESTROYS CONTRAST.**

**GOOD... LIGHT FALLING ON THE PICTURE TUBE FROM PROPERLY ARRANGED LIGHTING IS NOT HARMFUL.**

Appendix 4 – Arthur Miller<sup>182</sup>

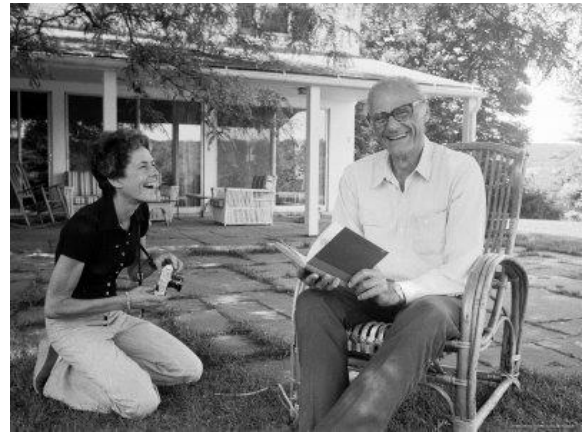


<sup>181</sup> [http://www.tvhistory.tv/What\\_a\\_TV\\_Thinks\\_P1.JPG](http://www.tvhistory.tv/What_a_TV_Thinks_P1.JPG); [http://www.tvhistory.tv/What\\_a\\_TV\\_ThinksP3.JPG](http://www.tvhistory.tv/What_a_TV_ThinksP3.JPG); 18. 9. 2010, 19:05.

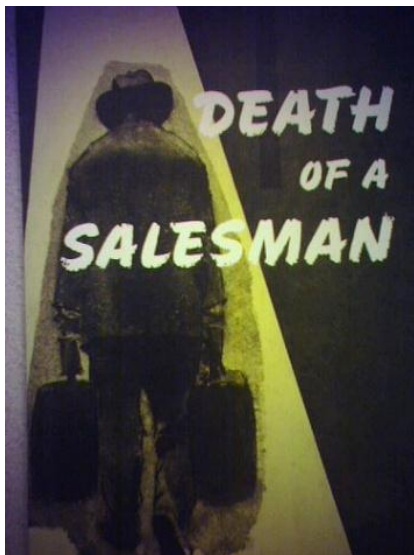
<sup>182</sup> <http://www.shmoop.com/death-of-a-salesman/teaching.html>; 7. 5. 2011, 19:36.



Appendix 5 – Arthur Miller and Marilyn Monroe<sup>183</sup>



Appendix 6 – Arthur Miller and Ignite Morath<sup>184</sup>



Appendix 7 – *Death of a Salesman*<sup>185</sup>

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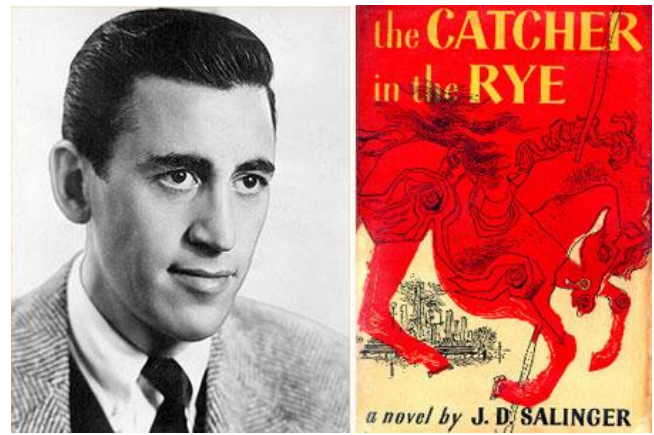
<sup>183</sup> [Http://www.barewalls.com/pv-451218\\_Marilyn-Monroe-and-Arthur-Miller-1956.html](http://www.barewalls.com/pv-451218_Marilyn-Monroe-and-Arthur-Miller-1956.html); 7. 5. 2011, 19:39.

<sup>184</sup> [Http://eu.art.com/products/p14032389-sa-i2827693/posters.htm](http://eu.art.com/products/p14032389-sa-i2827693/posters.htm); 7. 5. 2011, 19:40.

<sup>185</sup> [Http://ypsgroup.com/blog/e-rep/death-of-all-sales-reps/](http://ypsgroup.com/blog/e-rep/death-of-all-sales-reps/); 7. 5. 2011, 19:44.

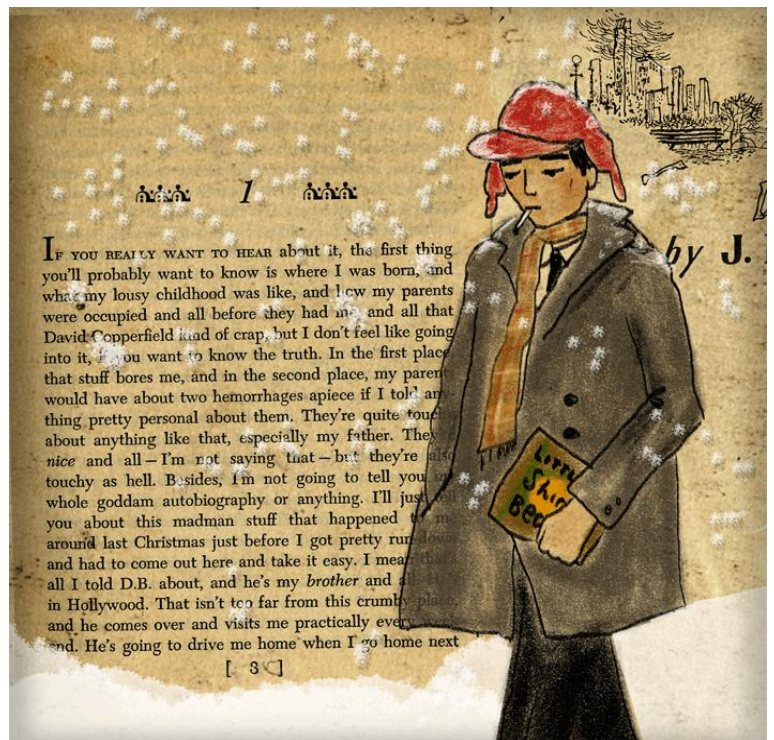


Appendix 8 – J.D. Salinger and *The Catcher in the Rye*<sup>186</sup>



Appendix 9 – J.D. Salinger and his daughter Margaret Ann<sup>187</sup>

Appendix 10 – Holden Caulfield<sup>188</sup>

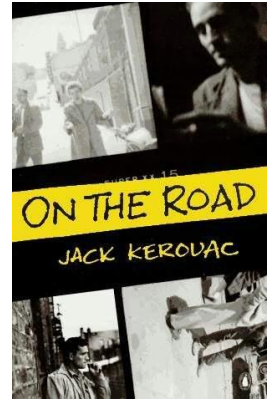


<sup>186</sup> <http://ramascreen.com/the-catcher-in-the-rye-the-movie-is-now-possible/>; 7. 5. 2011, 19:21.  
<sup>187</sup> <http://aktualne.centrum.cz/kultura/umeni/clanek.phtml?id=659247>; 7. 5. 2011, 19:41.  
<sup>188</sup> <http://lsjzz0220.wordpress.com/2010/05/06/portfolio-no-9-theme/>; 7. 5. 2011, 19:20.



Appendix 11 – Jack Kerouac<sup>189</sup>

Appendix 12 – *On the Road*<sup>190</sup>



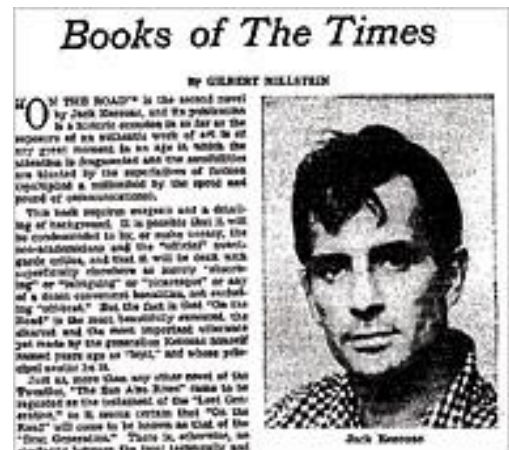
Appendix 13 – The original scroll<sup>191</sup>



Courtesy of Gerry Nicosis



Appendix 14 – Book of the Times<sup>192</sup>



<sup>189</sup> <http://www.flickr.com/photos/tompalumbo/2191166628/>; 7. 5. 20:49

<sup>190</sup> [http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/70401.On\\_the\\_Road](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/70401.On_the_Road); 7. 5. 2011, 19:23.

<sup>191</sup> <http://waxekphrastic.wordpress.com/2007/09/12/kerouac/>; 7. 5. 2011, 19:26;

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog/2007/sep/03/offtheroadkerouac>; 7. 5. 2011, 19:27.

<sup>192</sup> <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/08/07/hey-jack-kerouac/>; 7. 5. 2011, 19:30.