

THE MORAL CODES OF THE ADOLESCENTS
OF CLEMENS, ANDERSON, AND SALINGER

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PREFACE

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Winesburg, Ohio, and The Catcher in the Rye are books I discovered in adolescence. They left a deep impression upon me because they showed a sympathetic understanding for and a profound insight into the adolescent's viewpoint. Later consideration of the three novels suggested that their appeal to youth was due primarily to their accurate portrayal of youth's moral idealism. This study has sought to reveal the moral codes of the most prominent male adolescents of Mark Twain, Sherwood Anderson, and J. D. Salinger and to examine the similarities and differences in these codes, seeing whether or not these authors write in a similar moral tradition.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND FOR THE MORAL CODES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN, GEORGE WILLARD, AND HOLDEN CAULFIELD

The adolescent in fiction has a strong appeal to Americans not only because of a residual strain of adolescence in most people but also because there seems to be a strong, adolescent-like strain of dreams and dilemmas almost peculiar to Americans. In some respects, as critics of our society point out, our culture bears pronounced adolescent-like traits, notably manifested in cinema-star cults, garish advertising, and jejune television programs. Unquestionably the apotheosis of adolescent immaturity is bad, yet in the hands of a mature, serious writer the viewpoint of adolescence can provide great insight into the moral deficiency of America. And, too,

...the life of the adolescent or youth in his teens mirrors clearly the ambiguities of rejection and affirmation, revolt and conformity, hope and disenchantment, observed in the culture at large. In his life as in our history, the fallacies of innocence and the new slate are exemplified. His predicament reflects the predicament of the self in America. The image he presents¹ foreshadows the new image of man in contemporary fiction.

Inherent in fiction of the adolescent is conflict, and the conflict of the sensitive adolescent as he brings his heritage of Puritan idealism and pioneer individualism into a world both ruthlessly materialistic and callously conventional provides the battlefield of the soul in Mark

Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio, and J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye, the principal works to be considered in this study. This thesis will attempt to reveal the moral patterns of these three authors' most prominent male adolescents and to see if a significant relationship exists among them. The relationship of these patterns with structural elements of the novels will also be examined.

The salient impression one receives about Huck Finn, George Willard, and Holden Caulfield is their rebellion against the status quo of the society about them. They are not by any means a vicious, juvenile-delinquent breed, but rather their rebellion grows from a perceptiveness into the evils of society which their peers and parents blindly accept. Most men take on the codes of the society around them as an unconscious birthright; for them life reduces itself to the struggle for necessities, but for others such as Huck, George, and Holden, life is a harder proposition, an eternal quest of self-analysis and a testing of all values. In these three boys this quest is a hungry, compelling thing whose pain gives birth to self-awareness, understanding, and finally, love.

The boys' nonconformity to society is not done without a psychological price. Their sensitive childhood innocence, which rejects compromise with a tainted world, is exposed to too much too soon. Fourteen-year-old Huck finds himself aiding the escape of a runaway slave; George Willard, with the limited experience of his nineteen years in a small town, attempts to absorb the essences distilled from the lifetimes of people who tell him their stories; and sixteen-year-old Holden Caulfield, unable to mesh in the stereotyped life of prep schools, finds himself looking at the raw, vicious falsity of a big city.

Although the boys are aware enough to see the contradictions in people and institutions, they do not yet have the maturity to accept philosophically these contradictions without feeling that their integrity is compromised. They are caught in a dilemma because they see too much to be comfortable but not enough to be reconciled. Thus, they are inevitable rebels.

A statement of the background of Huck, George, and Holden must include something about their families. Huck Finn, who grows up in a little Mississippi River town in Missouri during the 1840's, is the town pariah. His mother is dead and his father, Pap, is a drunkard who lets Huck raise himself. Huck enjoys considerable admiration for his freedom from the "respectable" boys in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer because he comes and goes as he pleases, does not wear starched clothes, freely associates with Negroes, smokes, swears, and does not attend church or school. But despite his apparent bliss, his character is marked with loneliness; his association with Tom Sawyer grows from his need to feel that he is a part of society, and again and again he acquiesces with Tom so that their friendship will continue. The "hidings" he gets at school, he says, "cheer him up," possibly because they give him a kind of recognition in the eyes of his classmates. Eric Solomon emphasizes Huck's social need when he says that "the novel is about a boy's search to find a satisfying family life."² Huck's sensitivity about his lack of family is shown at the beginning of Huck Finn when Tom is organizing the outlaw band. The boys decide to kill the family of any boy who reveals the club's secrets, and this makes Huck "most ready to cry" because he has no family to offer.

The only living remnant of Huck's family is Pap, who, though a minor figure in the novel, nevertheless is a memorable portrayal of the

town drunk which Twain so vividly remembered from his boyhood. , Pap leaves to Huck as his patrimony an utter absence of the "sivilization" which Huck so detests. Ironically, but not filling him with "sivilization," (a spelling Twain uses to connote its odious quality), Pap has given his son the blessing of being able to look clearly and frankly at the world without being blinded by the "official culture's" prejudices. If Huck at the end of the novel achieves a sort of sainthood, as critics like to attribute to him, it is a sainthood tempered with an earthy, pragmatic hardiness that comes from Pap's influence.

Huck is quite aware of the kind of man his father really is. (He says that Pap "warn't no more quality than a mudcat.") Yet despite Pap's attempts to get his money and even to kill him, Huck does not hold grudges against him. He shows his contempt for Pap by going to school in defiance of his command, yet he still can enjoy his life with Pap after Pap has kidnapped him away from the widow's. One priceless lesson Huck learns from his father later proves useful many times in his dealings with reprobates such as the Duke and Dauphin. "If I never learnt nothing else out of Pap," he says, "I learnt that the best way to get along with his kind is to let them have their own way."³

George Willard, young reporter for the Winesburg Eagle, grows up in an Ohio town forty or fifty years after Huck and Jim's adventures on the Mississippi. His father, owner of the decaying and unprofitable New Willard House, fancies himself a successful businessman. His values are practical and monetary, and he discourages George's literary ambitions. George's mother, a half tragic figure whose health is broken, lives on the smoldering ashes of a life of unfulfilled dreams. When young she fancied for herself a gay, romantic life and sought to escape Winesburg's

drabness by going out with traveling businessmen who stopped at her father's hotel. She married one of these businessmen, George's father, not so much for love but simply from a desire to be married. Little understanding grew between father and mother, but between mother and son there is a strong, though hardly expressed bond. "In the boyish figure she [George's mother] yearned to see something half forgotten that had once been a part of herself recreated."⁴ She prays "that George will not become a meaningless drab figure like myself," for she wants him "to express something for us both."⁵ To his mother George owes his sensitivity to the pathetic lives of Winesburg and his desire to somehow speak for them.

With Holden Caulfield the family setting moves to an upper middle-class, metropolitan apartment. On the book's first page Holden tells us that his parents are "nice" but "touchy as hell...[they] would have about two hemorrhages apiece if I told anything pretty personal about them."⁶ His father is a corporation lawyer and "...make[s] a lot of dough and play[s] golf and play[s] bridge and buy[s] cars and drink[s] Martinis and look[s] like a hot-shot."⁷ His mother is "nervous as hell" and "half the time she's up all night smoking cigarettes."⁸ There is practically no evidence of close family feeling between the parents and the Caulfield children. Holden's relations with his younger brother and sister, however, are more intimate. An older brother, D. B., is a writer who won Holden's early admiration but largely lost it when he became a movie script writer. Holden dismisses him with a sweeping condemnation: "Now he's out in Hollywood...being a prostitute."⁹ His younger brother Allie is dead, but for him Holden feels as deeply as a boy can for a brother. The night Allie died Holden smashed the windows out of the

garage with his fist, a climax to the bitter frustration that is the hallmark of his character. Throughout the book the tender, nostalgic memory of bright little Allie haunts Holden. With both him and his sister Phoebe, who is nine, he feels intense empathy and affection. His feeling of protection for them is consonant with his self-image as the protector of innocence. However, examination of the scenes with Holden and Phoebe reveals that while the precocious Phoebe is quite affectionate toward Holden, she does not need him the way his neurotic temperament needs her, and to some degree she rebuffs him. Much of Holden's restlessness, loneliness, and inability to "fit in" is due directly to his lack of a strong family life.

Almost inevitably a discussion of the juveniles of Twain, Anderson, and Salinger leads to the subject of innocence and evil. From a context of innocence the boys make the moral evaluations which define their codes, and indeed, the real theme of the books and stories discussed in this study can be called the initiation of innocence into a world of evil. The viability of this theme is suggested by Leslie Fiedler's comment that America is the only place where the encounter between innocence and guilt is still a meaningful reality.¹⁰ Ihab Hassan in his book length study of innocence in the American novel asserts that "...innocence has not come to an end in America--it has become more radical--nor has guilt ever been absent from it."¹¹ Edgar Branch writes that Huck's and Holden's

...perception of innocence is radical: from their mouths come pessimistic judgements damning the social forms that help make men less than fully human. ...Moreover, although Holden keeps his innocent heart, his adolescence has riddled the innocence of his mind, that naivete, which Huck in good measure still possesses.¹²

Radical innocence is not found in George Willard to the degree that it is in Huck and Holden. George's transition from an innocence to an awareness of men's flaws is a gradual ripening brought about largely by the vicarious experiences of the stories that he hears from the grotesques. But in Anderson's short stories of adolescence, which many critics think represent his finest work, extreme innocence is plentiful. The end of a twisted kind of innocence is portrayed in "The Man Who Became a Woman," a story about a sixteen-year-old stable boy who is unduly attached to an older, literarily ambitious hand. The boy dreams of beautiful, idealized girls and wishes he had the boldness of the other stable hands who grab the attentions of the loose town girls. Going to a bar to try to forget his loneliness, he looks into a mirror and suddenly perceives himself as a woman. Horrified, he flees back to the deserted stable and undresses for bed. While he is sleeping two drunken Negroes come in and mistake his young, white body for a woman's. Naked, he runs from them in terror. Running in the dark and unable to speak, he falls on the bleached skeleton of a dead horse and cuts himself. This fall, which symbolizes the end of an almost perverted innocence, breaks the spell of his thinking himself a woman and also ends his attachment to the older hand.

But it is in the story "I Want to Know Why" that Anderson deals most profoundly with the theme of adolescent innocence; this time the variation is the feeling of puzzled innocence exposed to the ambiguity of adult behavior. The sixteen-year-old protagonist is a lover of race horses. One particular horse, Sunstreak, is to him a symbol of power and purity. Before a race while he and Jerry Tillford, the trainer, are looking at Sunstreak, the boy becomes aware that Jerry has the same,

almost sacred veneration for the horse that he does, and suddenly he feels a joyful kinship with him. Later, in an idolizing mood, he follows the trainer outside of town to a shack where he sees him and some of his cronies embracing disreputable women. The boy's affronted innocence becomes rage: "Then, all of a sudden, I began to hate that man. I wanted to scream and rush in the room and kill him. I never had such a feeling before."¹³ After this experience he describes the price of his knowledge of evil:

...things are different. At the tracks the air don't taste as good or smell as good. It's because a man like Jerry Tillford, who knows what he does, could see a horse like Sunstreak run, and kiss a woman like that the same day. I can't make it out. Darn him, what did he want to do that for?¹⁴

Into what kind of worlds is the innocence of the three boys initiated? Superficially, Huck Finn's initiation is his gradual awareness of a Negro's dignity and right to freedom in a society whose every institution sanctions slavery. But in a deeper sense his real initiation involves his knowledge that "human beings can be awful cruel to each other."¹⁵ Though Huck can hardly be said to have a conscious notion of objective evil in the world, he intuitively senses evil at every point in his "adventures" where ignorance, prejudice, fraud, cruelty, and murder manifest themselves and impel him to flee the "sivilization" which threatens his integrity. With Jim as his mentor, Huck realizes a code of straight thinking and natural goodness which transcends society's traditional responses.

The world of Winesburg that opens itself to George Willard is captured by Irving Howe's description:

...the book conveys a vision of American life as a depressed landscape cluttered with dead stumps, twisted oddities, grotesque and pitiful wrecks; a landscape in which ghosts fumble erratically and romance is reduced to mere fugitive brushings

at night; a landscape eerie with the cracked echoes of village queers rambling in their lonely eccentricity....And Winesburg echoes with American loneliness....[It] is a book largely set in twilight and darkness....From Anderson's instinctively right placement of the book's central actions at twilight and night comes some of its aura of "lostness"--as if the most sustaining and fruitful human activities can no longer be performed in public communion but must be grasped in secret.¹⁶

What George is initiated into are the broken promises of life--the frustrated dreams of people misshapen by cruel circumstances. Throughout the book he more and more senses in the people of Winesburg the "sweetness of the twisted apples,"¹⁷ a metaphor which expresses his compassionate appreciation for their gnarled lives. George's world is the anatomy of the hungry soul, stripped of its outward pretensions, and seen in its lonely, imperfect starkness.

Holden's world is the complex metropolis which is, in its own way, more vicious and cruel than Huck's or George's. It does not offer the escape of the river but rather drives Holden down crowded streets and narrowing alleys. Neither does it offer the utter sincerity of the grotesques who struggle to communicate their love and pathos. The myriad of blank, egoistic phonies in Holden's world negate genuine feeling and meaning, and they give his environment a ring of falsity and irrationality.

The things in Holden's world are always jumping up and down or bouncing like 'madmen.' Holden always lets us know when he has insight into the endless absurd situations which make up the life of a sixteen-year-old by exclaiming, "It killed me." In a phony world Holden feels compelled to reinforce his sincerity and truthfulness constantly with, "It really is" or "It really did."¹⁸

Holden perhaps will never be able to live comfortably in his world. He may always remain, like Zooey and Seymour his older prototypes, exposed to harsh "sivilization" to which he cannot accommodate himself. The Holdens of the world, Salinger seems to suggest, are the sad, inevitable displaced persons of a materialistic society whose values are basically

misdirected.

I now wish to examine briefly the ethos in which American authors write in an effort to determine what motivated Twain, Anderson, and Salinger to write about adolescence. This examination will perhaps provide a key to understanding the radical innocence of their adolescents.

An impressive number of our best writers treat the adolescent in a serious major work. To list a few of these titles is to list some of America's greatest literature. Besides the three novels dealt with in this study, there are James' Daisy Miller and What Maisie Knew, Crane's Red Badge of Courage, Dreiser's An American Tragedy, Farrell's Studs Lonigan, Fitzgerald's This Side of Paradise, Wolfe's Look Homeward Angel, Hemingway's In Our Time, Steinbeck's East of Eden, and Faulkner's The Bear and Intruder in the Dust. In addition to these are works of more recent writers. Among these are Vardis Fisher's In Tragic Life, Carson McCuller's The Heart Is A Lonely Hunter, Shirley Jackson's Hangsaman, Saul Bellows' The Adventures of Augie March, William Goldman's The Temple of Gold, and Truman Capote's Other Voices, Other Rooms and The Grass Harp. This list is only suggestive, not exhaustive.

Why does an author turn away from his own frontier of exploring adult reality to return to the years of youth and its incipient understandings? The answer I believe lies in a sort of national arrestment at adolescence which causes people to place an extreme emphasis on youth. Although the factors behind this arrestment are complex, the chief factor, I believe, is a materialistic value system which places importance on the acquisition of material as opposed to spiritual things. Since the delight in material things is sharpest in youth when pride and sensual enjoyment are keenest, people from a materialistic society naturally tend to look

back to their youthful years and try to re-create again the dreams there, and, insofar as possible, they try to live within the false framework of these dreams.

Our literature naturally reflects this arrestment. Leslie Fiedler, in criticizing the tendency of American letters for remaining puerile, says that we need to build on the tradition of authors such as Melville and James to give us the possibility of development and fulfillment and a way out of adolescence.¹⁹ Hawthorne, Poe, and Melville, says Hassan, "hardly ever succumbed to the vision of adolescence."²⁰ It would seem, then, that many of our best writers, sensing in themselves a strain of adolescent-like arrestment and a fear of maturity, turn back to youth and glorify the adolescent as a sort of self-justification. But deeper than this reason is another; American authors are fascinated with the idea of innocence, a fascination which perhaps implies a degree of immaturity. Since children and adolescents most strikingly manifest innocence, it is but natural that our authors should write of them. Ultimately, though, the interest in adolescence "is a property of the mythic American Self" that "...refuses to accept the immitigable rule of reality, including death...."²¹

Twain, Anderson, and Salinger, like their culture, display adolescent-like traits which aid in understanding the viewpoints of Huck, George, and Holden.

"It would seem," says T. S. Eliot, "that Mark Twain was a man...who never became in all respects mature. We might even say that the adult side of him was boyish, and that only the boy in him that was Huck Finn was adult."²² Eric Solomon has a similar idea: "Huck's story, like Mark Twain's own, tells of the effort to remain a boy despite external

conditions that force adulthood."²³ Edgar Branch, noting that Livy's pet name for Mark was "Youth," says that "Mark Twain's spontaneity of emotion, in both his personal relations and his literary method, was a youthful trait that remained unencumbered by the incrustations of age."²⁴ Twain's almost complete avoidance of the subject of sexual love also perhaps suggests something about his incapacity to deal with material requiring consummate maturity.

In Anderson, too, there are adolescent-like qualities in both his life and his art. Anderson's greatest influence, comments Lionel Trilling,

...was probably upon those who read him in adolescence, the age when we find the books we give up but do not get over. ...It is not surprising that Anderson should have made his strongest appeal, although by no means his only one, to adolescents. ...But adolescence must not continue beyond its natural term, and as we read through Anderson's canon what exasperates us is his stubborn, satisfied continuance in his earliest attitudes.²⁵

Malcolm Cowley makes a similar comment on Anderson's arrestment at adolescence: "All the drama of growth was confined to his early years. After finding his proper voice...Anderson didn't change as much as other serious writers...."²⁶ Floyd Dell, Anderson's personal friend, wrote after his death:

He wanted to be in life what he managed to be in his writing-- a child more than ordinarily self-centered. He wanted to be loved and believed in and encouraged, and allowed to love only his dreams and the words he put on paper.... He gave us his childhood; it was the best he had to give to American literature--perhaps it is all he ever had to give anyone on earth.²⁷

Hassan also writes of Anderson checked at adolescence:

'When in speaking of Winesburg you used the word adolescence you struck more nearly than you thought,' Anderson wrote to Van Wyck Brooks. 'I am immature, will live and die immature.' The immaturity of Anderson...derives from an obsession with the uncreated: innocence lost, wasted desire, youth licked before it starts, truth misshapen into a grotesque parody of itself. All is arrest, as the grotesque is frozen in its shapelessness.²⁸

Salinger, for whom there is yet no substantial body of criticism, shows his penchant for juvenility in his preoccupation with innocence and children. A majority of his better known short stories deal at least to some degree with the theme of adult evil in the world of childhood innocence. In The Catcher in the Rye the adolescent carries his radical innocence into a phony world that has little room for the child's vision of simple goodness. As noted earlier, Holden does not adjust his vision to realities; more than likely he will become in his early twenties a lot like the intelligent, kindly, but socially inept Zooey. Indeed, Franny and Zooey presents the same tradition of radical innocence extended to young adulthood. Probably we shall hear more of this same type of frail, innocent masculinity in Salinger's future chronology of the Glass family. Seymour, Franny and Zooey's older brother, who commits suicide in the story "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," promises to carry on the tradition.

While it is dangerous to generalize on the identity of an author with his characters, the resemblance between the few known facts about Salinger (the best biographical sketch is in Time, September 15, 1961) and the characters of Holden, Zooey, and Seymour are rather striking. One can also sense in the care-worn, ascetic face of Salinger's later photographs that the author's expression resembles our imagined idea of what the anxious, world-sick faces of Holden, Zooey, and Seymour must look like. But it is in Salinger's almost complete withdrawal from society that he most resembles his characters. His retreat from the world--like his characters' retreat--is another manifestation of a desire to preserve the dream of innocence in an insensitive, guilty world.

CHAPTER II

ATTITUDES OF THE ADOLESCENTS TOWARD THEMSELVES AND OTHERS

Since the adolescents in this study are not articulate enough to state explicitly their moral opinions, this chapter will try to arrive at some of their moral assumptions by examining their attitudes both toward themselves and others.

Huck Finn frankly accepts the lowly rank society assigns him and turns it into a virtue:

His real selflessness can be easily seen in the readiness with which he accepts himself as 'low down and ornery,' without, however, making this an excuse for bitterness or irresponsibility, and in the fine natural courtesy toward others which he invariably has.¹

This humility of Huck's manifests itself many times. Helping Jim to escape makes him feel that he will be condemned to hell anyway; so he vows to "take up wickedness again...being brung up to it."² Yet he does not try to make excuses to Providence. He considers himself unworthy of prayer, for when the grateful Mary Jane Wilkes vows she will pray for him, he comments: "Pray for me! I reckoned if she knowed me she'd take a job that was nearer her size. But I bet she done it just the same.... She had the grit to pray for Judas...."³

Huck's humility, however, does not always come from the happiest of motives. He is sensitive to the shame of his outcast state when around Tom, who is "respectable and well brung up; and had a character

to lose."⁴ He also has inferiority feelings about his upbringing that are deterministic:

...I got aboard the raft feeling bad and low because I knowed very well I had done wrong, and I see it warn't no use for me to try to learn to do right; a body that don't get started right when he's little ain't got no show--when the punch comes there ain't nothing to back him up and keep him to his work, and so he gets beat.⁵

Allied with his feelings of inferiority is an irrational sense of guilt that helps explain why so many things continually keep him "all in a sweat." After arriving too late to warn the Duke and Dauphin that they are in danger, Huck sees the angry townsmen riding the tarred-and-feathered frauds on a rail and he says:

...I warn't feeling so brash as I was before, but kind of ornery and humble, and to blame, somehow--though I hadn't done nothing. But that's always the way; it don't make no difference whether you do right or wrong, a person's conscience ain't got no sense, and just goes for him anyway. If I had a yaller dog that didn't know no more than a person's conscience does, I would pison him.⁶

Both his sense of inferiority about his upbringing and his irrational sense of guilt thus combine to give him a low opinion of himself.

Anderson's adolescents have feelings of inferiority because of their inability to deal realistically with sex. With the possible exception of George Willard, they consider themselves unworthy of girls, a dilemma which grows out of their idealizing womanhood too much. In the Winesburg story "Drink," Tom Foster gets drunk to forget his desire for Helen White, the beautiful banker's daughter whom he feels he cannot approach. In "I'm a Fool" a boy invents a story of his family's affluence to impress a wealthy girl only to discover that the girl is interested in him for himself. The friendship between the two is destroyed because he cannot own up to his lies. "The Man Who Became a Woman" shows a boy dreaming of an imaginary, idealized girl because he is too shy to even talk to girls.

But it is in "An Ohio Pagan" that this sense of unworthiness of girls reaches an extreme. The boy in this story imagines that he sees women's forms in everything around him--clouds, streams, the contour of the land. He becomes obsessed with the idea that the only way he will ever be worthy of being a husband is to leave the farm work he loves and return to school.

Like Huck, Salinger's Holden has a humility which in part grows out of his sense of inferiority and guilt. His feelings of inferiority grow partly from his physical condition (he is skinny, tall, and physically weak) and partly from his passive, gentle attitude toward life which is a target for derision from the harsh, insensitive people around him. His guilt feelings are caused by the almost inevitable compromising of his ideals with the "phonies" of the "official culture." Like Huck, Holden has a rather low opinion of himself and underrates his real worth, as is shown in the following:

"I'm a very weak guy."⁷

"I'm quite a nervous guy."⁸

"As a matter of fact, I'm the only dumb one in the family."⁹

"I'm not too tough."¹⁰

"...I have a lousy vocabulary...."¹¹

"I act quite young for my age sometimes."¹²

"I'm one of these very yellow guys. I try not to show it, but I am."¹³

"I knew this one girl...that was even crumbier than I was."¹⁴

"I'm quite illiterate."¹⁵

Commenting on his weakened hand he says, "I mean I'm not going to be a goddam surgeon or violinist or anything anyway."¹⁶

Though Huck, George, and Holden do not have parents whom they can

look up to, they nevertheless have mentors who provide for them a powerful moral influence.

For Huck, of course, the mentor is Jim, the chief priest of the "community of saints."

Indeed, Jim is the conscience of the novel, the spiritual yardstick by which all men are measured. As the two fugitives move down the river, Huck's whole moral sense grows out of and revolves around the presence of Jim, and his ability to measure up signifies his worth. Huck's whole sense of wrong, his feeling of guilt are products of his intimate association with Jim--his companionship with the runaway slave makes possible his moral growth.¹⁷

The growth of Jim's dignity and humanness in Huck's consciousness is very gradual. Huck, like most Southern whites of the 1840's, believed that Negroes were inferior to whites and that they lacked the capacity for feeling deeply. The first time Jim is seen in the novel he is asleep, and Tom and Huck hang his hat on a limb, giving rise to Jim's fantastic and amusing witch story. A few pages later in another humorous scene, Huck consults Jim and his prophetic hair-ball oracle. Both of these incidents suggest that Huck regards Jim as little more than a source of amusement, a sort of a comic minstrel. On Jackson's Island Huck at first shows a naive indifference at finding the runaway Jim there. Only gradually does he realize the import of the black man's presence and his own implication in Jim's flight. Huck enjoys the adventure of camping on the island much as Tom Sawyer would have enjoyed it. He even tries a Tom Sawyer type joke by putting a dead rattlesnake in Jim's blankets to scare him. The trick backfires, however, and Huck's first serious reflection about Jim comes when he witnesses the black man's suffering after the dead snake's mate coils in the blankets and bites him.

Little things slowly increase Huck's respect for Jim. Jim is right

about the rain being presaged by the birds and in moving the equipment into a dry cavern. His superstition about bad luck following the handling of snakeskin seems confirmed in his being bitten, and his idea of disguising Huck in girl's clothes also impresses the boy. "One of the grand ideas of the book," comments Daniel Hoffman, "is that while it seems to show Huck protecting Jim, Jim is taking care of Huck all along."¹⁸

When Huck breathlessly returns from his reconnaissance ashore and chillingly announces "They're after us!" it is apparent that there has been, during the few days on the island, a decided change in his earlier comic minstrel image of Jim. It is significant that Huck's commitment to Jim's escape is without premeditation; he acts intuitively. His humane values already outweigh the values of a society which demands that he turn Jim in.

The second and last prank Huck plays on Jim brings a still further change in his regard for the Negro. Huck and Jim become separated in a fog. When Huck in his canoe finally finds the raft, Jim awakens and rejoices that his companion is back safely. But Huck, desiring to have fun with Jim's superstitious nature, convinces him that the separation was a dream, which Jim then tries to "interpret." This fantastic interpretation stops when Jim realizes that the litter on the raft must only have come from bumping the sand bars in the fog. The rebuke he sadly gives Huck shocks the boy into an awareness of Jim's feelings, for he says "I wouldn't done that [trick]...if I'd knowed it would make him feel that way."¹⁹ Hoffman, pointing out the significance of the incident, says that "...Huck now realizes he is bound to Jim by ties too strong for mischievous trifling, ties so strong that he must break the strongest mores of the society he was raised in to acknowledge them."²⁰

In little ways Huck and Jim grow closer. In the opening paragraphs of Chapter XIX we see the idyllic life on the river which captures their happiest moments in the novel. They equally divide forty dollars received from the slave hunters Huck has tricked. At night Jim often stands Huck's watches so the boy can sleep, and when a big wave accidentally washes Huck off the raft, the Negro can good-naturedly laugh. Huck's comment that Jim was "the easiest nigger to laugh"²¹ suggests the amiability of their comradeship. Huck recognizes Jim's "blues" as homesickness for his family, and when Jim tells how he unintentionally hurt his daughter, Huck reflects: "...I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks do for their'n. It don't seem natural, but I reckon it's so."²²

With the arrival of the Duke and Dauphin aboard the raft, Huck and Jim's relationship is set somewhat in the background. Yet they maintain their closeness with each other after the two frauds are asleep and agree to have nothing to do with any more serious crimes the two may contrive.²³

At the Phelps farm, too, Huck and Jim's relationship is in the background because of Tom's presence. But Huck's determination to see Jim a free man continues. This determination is shown in his new tone of authority when he speaks to Tom: "You'll say it's [stealing Jim] dirty, low-down business; but what if it is?--I'm low down; and I'm going to steal him, and I want you to keep mum and not let on."²⁴

The loyal friendship between Jim and Huck is probably the most memorable quality about the book. However, Jim is hardly Huck's "Black Savior," as some have claimed. A more plausible estimation of their relationship is that of older and younger brothers; yet there is a stronger bond between them than exists in mere blood relations, for each is an

outcast who must turn to the other for support, and their friendship basically rests on this reciprocal need.

George Willard has no one mentor such as Jim to look to, and in fact he himself is looked up to by the lonely people of Winesburg. However, as he listens to these people's stories, he broadens his sympathies and understanding just as Huck does. Some of the stories that he hears have a point that the teller wishes to impress upon him personally. Wings Biddlebaum, the silent, frustrated ex-teacher tells George that he is too much influenced by the people around him. "You have the inclination to be alone and to dream," he says, "but you are afraid of dreams."²⁵ The strange Dr. Parcival tells George that he wants to fill him with hatred and contempt "so that you will be a superior being."²⁶ Wash Williams, who has a malignant hate for all women because he has been deceived by his wife, tells George that he wants to destroy any romantic dreams of girls that the boy may have.²⁷ But the soundest advice George received is from his former teacher, Kate Swift, who thought she had "recognized the spark of genius" in George. Aware of his desire to be a writer, she has "a passionate desire to have him understand the import of life, to learn to interpret it truly and honestly."²⁸ She tells George that he

...will have to know life.... If you are to become a writer, you'll have to stop fooling with words.... It would be better to give up the notion of writing until you are better prepared. Now it's time to be living. I don't want to frighten you, but I would like to make you understand the import of what you are attempting. You must not become a mere peddler of words. The thing to learn is to know what people are thinking, not what they say.²⁹

One of Holden's former English teachers, Mr. Antolini, has an interest in Holden similar to Kate Swift's interest in George. Holden says that

Antolini is "about the best teacher I ever had.... ...you could kid around him without losing your respect for him."³⁰ Talking to Antolini about Holden's future, he says that he has the feeling the boy is riding for a terrible kind of fall "designed for men who...were looking for something their own environment couldn't supply them with."³¹ He says that Holden gives up too easily, and, as an example, points to his failure in school. Antolini tells Holden that when Holden has a fair idea of what he wants to do in life, he will begin by applying himself in school. "You're a student whether the idea appeals to you or not. You're in love with knowledge."³² Antolini also sees that Holden's pessimistic, self-destructive tendencies may lead to an unworthy martyrdom: "...I can very clearly see you dying nobly, one way or another, for some highly unworthy cause."³³ He consoles Holden by telling him that among the things he will learn if he pursues an academic education is that he will find that he is not "the first person who was ever confused and frightened and even sickened by human behavior."³⁴ And finally he challenges Holden's idealism by pointing out that the scholarly thinker has more to offer the world than the unscholarly thinker, and urges him to make a success of his schoolwork.³⁵

For George and Holden the advice of their former teachers can be fully comprehended only in the future; this advice does not immediately affect them as Huck is affected by being continually in Jim's presence. Nevertheless, these mentors provide a vision of maturity which helps create a climate for the adolescent's moral development. Perhaps it could be argued that each of these mentors expresses an ultimate truth the author wishes to give to youth. From Jim comes the truth of human dignity; from Kate Swift and the grotesques of Winesburg comes the truth

of the necessity for deeply understanding people; and from Mr. Antolini comes the truth of living humbly for a cause. Each of these truths is ultimately a great moral truth.

Perhaps the most significant trait the three boys have in common is their intuitive, compassionate kindness which arises spontaneously out of their natures. Their kindness is to be sharply distinguished from the animal good-naturedness of a character such as Tom Jones. As suggested earlier, the boys' kindness derives partly from their sense of inferiority, a sense that makes them particularly sympathetic with others who are also somewhat outside the pale of conventional society.

Huck shows many times his capacity to recognize, respond to, and mete out kindness. He recognizes the kindly character of the old doctor who puts in a good word for Jim: "I thought he had a good heart in him and was a good man the first time I see him."³⁶ Early in the book he gets a "good going over" from Miss Watson because of the dirt on his new clothes; but the widow, who does not scold him and only "looked so sorry," captures his regard by her kindness and he resolves to "behave a while if I could."³⁷ Similar to this is Huck's reaction to Aunt Sally, who "mothered me so good I felt mean." Her kindness makes him resolve to "never do nothing to grieve her anymore."³⁸

When the Duke and Dauphin are fleeing an angry town they ask Huck to rescue them on the raft, and he shows his kindness by helping them without question. He even has the presence of mind to suggest a way to throw the pursuing dogs off their scent to give them more time for escape. Huck's kindness is also shown in his reactions to cruelty. When a mob is threatening to lynch Colonel Sherburn, he does not delight in the spectacle as Tom Sawyer might have; he only comments that "it was awful to see."³⁹

At a circus a seemingly drunk spectator begs, and is finally permitted, to ride a fast horse. The crowd laughs at his struggles to keep from falling off, but Huck (whose reaction foreshadows Holden's observation that "people always laugh at the wrong things") says that "It warn't funny to me, though; I was all of a tremble to see his danger."⁴⁰

But Huck's finest moment of sympathetic kindness comes during the Wilkes episode. The consideration he receives from the Wilkes girls, whose money the frauds plan to steal, makes him feel "so ornery and low down and mean that I say to myself...I'll hive that money for them or bust."⁴¹ It is significant that this risky resolve comes not so much from his sense of justice as from his sense of guilt at repaying their kindness with deceit. He even shows a kind tact when, upon Mary Jane's asking him where the money is hidden, he writes the place on paper for her to read later. He knows that telling her then that it is on dead Peter's chest would only unnecessarily "set her to worrying about her troubles."

Huck also shows that he is no sentimentalist in the kindness that he extends. When he has done all he can to save the looters on the Walter Scott from drowning, but fails, he remains unruffled: "I felt a little bit heavy-hearted about the gang, but not much, for I reckoned if they could stand it, I could."⁴²

With George Willard there is a power of sympathetic kindness in his nature that makes the grotesques want to tell him their stories. But George is more than merely sympathetic, he is empathetic, and in those moments of truth that Anderson loves to describe he reaches into the very core of the buried lives of Winesburg. In the book's first story we learn that George is the only person in town who is a friend to the

strange, haunted Wings Biddlebaum and the last medium in the world through which Wings can express himself. He listens to the story of the ugly, ill-shaped Wash William's story of his wife's deceit and "felt ill and weak. In imagination he also became old and shapeless."⁴³ The pathetic "loneliness" shows George at the height of his empathy as he listens to the story of old Enoch Robinson, whose life as a sad, lonely, frustrated artist finds release in George's companionship:

As the man talked George Willard began to feel that he would like to get out of the chair and sit on the cot (where Enoch sat) also. He wanted to put his arms about the little old man. In the half darkness the man talked and the boy listened, filled with sadness.⁴⁴

Holden also demonstrates an acute sympathetic kindness, yet sometimes it seems that his sympathy extends beyond a mere healthy concern for others. Frequently he projects his own neurotic sufferings into his ideas of how others must feel, and the result is a pathos that continually depresses him. Examples of this neurotic, super-sensitive kind of sympathy include an unusual apology at the end of an exam paper so that his kindly history teacher will not feel so bad about failing him. His pity for extremely ugly girls depresses him; they "have it tough. I feel so sorry for them sometimes. Sometimes I can't even look at them...."⁴⁵ He is depressed by thinking that most girls will end up marrying "dopey guys." He is also depressed because he can afford a better breakfast than two nuns sitting next to him, and he even is depressed because his roommate has cheap suitcases while he has expensive ones.

But if there is an element of "neurotic sympathy" in Holden, there is also a more wholesome, Huck Finn blend of pure kindness. Holden invites the pimply-faced, social outcast Ackley to go to the movies with him solely out of a compassion for Ackley's isolation. When a waiter

refuses to serve alcohol to Holden, he is magnanimous: "I didn't hold it against him though. They lose their jobs if they get caught selling to a minor."⁴⁶ His biggest concern at getting kicked out of Pencey is the effect it will have on his high-strung mother's nerves. And finally, his unsolicited contribution to the nuns is a mark of his unalloyed generosity.

Though Holden has an acute sympathy for others, most of whom are the lonely outsiders of society like himself, he is too immature to sense the tragedy of and sympathize with the "phonies," the noisy ostentatious "hollow men" he so vehemently criticizes. Peter Seng, who is to date Holden's most adverse critic, succinctly sums up his immaturity:

He must acquire a sense of proportion, a sense of humor. He must learn compassion for the human, the pompous, the phoney, the perverse, such people are the fellow inhabitants of his world, and behind their pitiful masks are the faces of the children in the rye.⁴⁷

A particularly interesting phase of the adolescents' lives which provides insight into their moral values is their attitudes toward girls and sex. Growing out of the "American Dream" is the somewhat unrealistic apotheosis of womanhood, a vision of the woman as pure, noble, and innocent, like an unapproachable goddess. This concept of womanhood, which grew from chivalric ideals extended and modified by the sentimentalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, retains even today a tenacious hold on American culture, and its influence can be seen in all three of the boys.

Fiedler gets at the heart of the lack of sexuality in Huck:

One of the reasons it is so hard to tell Huck Finn's age (Twain says he's fourteen!) is Twain's unwillingness to confess that, capable as he is of shifting for himself, he is also sexually mature. Huck is permitted, it is true, to move in the world of the raree show; but he is not allowed to respond to the sexuality of such spectacles with

the same awareness he brings to the world of lynchings and cruelty which is its twin.⁴⁸

Twain does not even arrange for Huck to have any little grammar school love affairs, as Tom Sawyer and Becky Thatcher have in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. By putting Huck in predominantly masculine situations, he avoids ticklish sexual problems. The nearest Huck comes to an admission of sexual feeling is his praise for Mary Jane Wilkes, his idea of the perfection of womanhood. In his admiration of her he displays an almost worshipful attitude for her, which is another example of the American's idealization of womanhood:

You may say what you want to, but in my opinion she had more sand in her than any girl I ever see; in my opinion she was just full of sand. It sounds like flattery, but it ain't no flattery. And when it comes to beauty--and goodness too--she lays over them all. I hain't ever seen her since that time... but I reckon I've thought of her a many and a many million times, and of her saying she would pray for me; and if ever I'd a thought it would do any good for me to pray for her, blamed if I wouldn't a done it or bust.⁴⁹

With Anderson, however, the adolescent comes to grips with the problem of sexuality in the ambiguous, uncertain way that Anderson himself seemed to have perceived the subject. George and the other adolescents in Anderson's stories are torn by the dilemma of being unable to reconcile the image of woman idealized with the woman as object of sexual desire, and the outcome of this strife is a deep sense of guilt. In Surbeck's Poolroom George asserts the poolroom code that "women should look out for themselves, that the fellow who went out with a girl was not responsible for what happened,"⁵⁰ and he apparently endorses this thinking in his furtive affair of lust in "Nobody Knows." But his guilt-haunted feeling is shown as he steals home:

[He]...stopped whistling and stood perfectly still in the darkness, attentive, listening as though for a voice calling his name. Then again he laughed nervously. "She hasn't got anything

on me. Nobody knows," he muttered doggedly and went on his way.⁵¹

For his former teacher Kate Swift he also has a desire. In one of those private scenes Anderson is master of, George is looking about to see if he is alone and pretending to be talking to Kate. "Oh, you're just letting on, you know you are," he declares. "I'm going to find out about you." Later in a scene that epitomizes Winesburg's theme of isolated frustration, George is seen alone in his room lying down:

He began to have lustful thoughts and pulling down the shade of the window closed his eyes and turned his face to the wall. He took a pillow into his arms and embraced it thinking first of the school teacher, who by her words had stirred something within him, and later of Helen White...with whom he had been for a long time half in love.⁵²

Despite his desire for Helen, George idealizes her, and he tries to express his inchoate emotion to her when he tells her, "I want you to be different from other women.... I want you to be a beautiful woman."⁵³ Their communion in the moment of pure understanding in "Sophistication" is something derived from yet transcending sex. It is the only instance of one of Anderson's adolescents fulfilling the author's vision of mature love.

With Holden the dilemma between the idealized woman and what he calls the "crummy" woman is brought to a sharper focus. While Anderson's adolescents never get beyond highly emotionally-colored impressions about the problem of sex, Holden has a clear, rational conception of the problem. He has even tried to come to grips with it by making some "sex rules" for himself. Despite his clearer perception, however, Holden has come no nearer a resolution of the dilemma than have Anderson's adolescents. Sexuality, which frankly baffles him, is somehow tied up in his mind with the "phoniness" he so detests. His self-image as the protector of child-

hood innocence reveals a desire to retreat from the enigma of sex by "protecting" children, whom he assumes are innocent, possibly because sex has not yet been manifest in them. David Leitch, an English critic, comments perceptively on this retreat from sex:

Unlike the uninhibited Stradlaters, Holden and his literary family sheer away from sex. They are at their happiest with family affection, the love of brother and sister. Although this family love often carries a strong erotic charge (to me it always seems that Holden comes nearer to having a sexual relationship with Phoebe than he does with anyone else), on the face of it, at least, it is pure, innocent, and child-like.⁵⁴

Holden is preoccupied with the problem of sex. "In my mind," he says, "I'm probably the biggest sex maniac you ever saw."⁵⁵ "Sex is something I really don't understand too hot. You never know where the hell you are."⁵⁶ Like George, he feels guilty about his promiscuity:

I keep making up these sex rules for myself, and then I break them right away. Last year I made a rule that I was going to quit horsing around with girls that deep down, gave me a pain.... I broke it though, the same week I made it--the same night, as a matter of fact.⁵⁷

Holden shows his dilemma in the conflict between the Stradlater morality of the "official culture" and his own idealistic beliefs when he tells his friend Luce that his trouble is that he can "never get really sexy...with a girl I don't like a lot.... Boy, it really screws up my sex life something awful. My sex life stinks."⁵⁸ This idealistic attitude is confirmed in his experience with Sunny, the adolescent prostitute. When Sunny removes her dress he says, "Sexy was about the last thing I was feeling;"⁵⁹ instead the pathetic teenager depresses him. His sympathetic character again shows itself as he explains his virginity.

The trouble with me is, I stop.... I get to feeling sorry for them. I mean most girls are so dumb and all. ...You take a girl when she really gets passionate, she just hasn't any brains. ...They tell me to stop, so I stop. I always wish I hadn't after I take them home, but I keep doing it anyway.⁶⁰

He confesses a weakness for girls when he says that "Every time they do something pretty, even if they're not much to look at, or even if they're sort of stupid, you half fall in love with them."⁶¹ This weakness for girls leads him into doing some of the phony things that he criticizes in others. His adoption of the "slick" name Jim Steele when trying to impress three girls from Seattle parallels his own criticism of magazine stories which always have super-masculine "lean jawed Davids." In phoning the promiscuous Faith Cavendish, Holden assumes the suave technique that he earlier condemned in his roommate, Ward Stradlater. Especially phony (and especially revealing about his own inner conflicts) is his amorous "horsing around" with Sally Hayes, whom he calls the "Queen of the Phonies." He tells her that he loves her but confesses later that "It was a lie, of course, but the thing is, I meant it when I said it. I'm crazy, I swear to God I am."⁶²

But if Holden struggles with guilty feelings that he has about his behavior around some girls, he at least has a clear vision of what he thinks love should be. He expresses this in his conversation with Luce; "So do I regard it [sex] as a...physical and spiritual experience and all. I really do. But it depends on who the hell I'm doing it with."⁶³ The girl Holden pictures as he talks about an ideal is Jane Gallagher, a character whom we never see but who weaves herself into our consciousness by Holden's continually saying that he will "give her a buzz" on the phone. Jane is the only adolescent girl Holden knows who fulfills his ideal, and the fact that he does not come right out and say that he is in love with her is that he does not quite feel worthy of her. There is a strong resemblance between Holden's description of his friendship with Jane and George Willard's with Helen White:

I really got to know her quite intimately. I don't mean it was anything physical or anything--it wasn't--but we saw each other all the time. You don't always have to get sexy to get to know a girl.⁶⁴

He says that Jane is not beautiful, but he thinks she is pretty and some of her habits "knocked me out." When playing checkers, she would not move her kings, a habit that becomes in Holden's mind a symbol of her inviolability. Holden's fight with his roommate Stradlater grows from his fear that the unscrupulous Stradlater, who takes Jane out, has no concern with the fact that she is this kind of girl. For Holden himself, despite his wandering from his "rules," believes that love should be reserved, like the kings in the back row, only for the time and the person worthy of its sacred character. Though Holden thinks of calling Jane many times during his two days in New York City, he never actually talks with her. His perennial excuse is "You have to be in the mood for those things," and since he is never in the mood (partly because he feels unworthy of her and partly perhaps because he is afraid that Jane has changed), he never experiences the understanding that George Willard reaches with Helen White.

Associated with the problem of sex is the charge that a taint of perversion exists in the adolescents of all three authors. Leslie Fiedler, in an article that perhaps is more provocative than tenable, argues that there is a homosexual character not only in Jim and Huck's relationship, but also in the white-colored relationships in other great American novels, notably those of Cooper and Melville.⁶⁵ Though it is quite true that Jim continually addresses Huck affectionately, he does this partly because he looks on Huck as his child (he is quite homesick for his own family), but principally because such terms are natural to his warm Negro nature. Certainly Jim and Huck experience more than just a jolly camaraderie

aboard the raft, but their experiences, for all Fiedler's mythic analysis, cannot rationally be considered sexual.

Though George Willard and the boys in Anderson's short stories all have strong heterosexual impulses, these impulses, as noted earlier, are largely frustrated by their concept of the idealized woman. This frustration leads frequently to both erotic fantasies and a transfer of eros to love-objects such as Negroes, racehorses, and older boys. However, though this transferred affection stems from erotic origins, the erotic quality is highly subdued in these love-objects.

In the story "I Want to Know Why" the sixteen-year-old boy's feelings for the racehorse stallion Sunstreak and his trainer have at least some element of transferred eroticism. After saying that "Sunstreak is like a girl you think about but never see," he says that he looked into the trainer's eyes and

Something happened to me. I guess I loved that man as much as I did the horse because he knew what I knew. Seemed to me that there wasn't anything in the world but that man and the horse and me. I cried and Jerry Tillford had a shine in his eyes.⁶⁶

In "The Man Who Became a Woman" there seems to be a latent homosexuality in young Herman Dudley's hero worship for the older Tom Means. Herman, telling the story himself in his maturity, offers a reasonable refutation which explains not only his own feeling about Tom Means but which also may be applied to the feelings of Anderson's other adolescents.

To tell the truth, I suppose I got to love Tom Means, who was five years older than me, although I wouldn't have dared say so then. Americans are shy and timid about saying things like that, and a man here don't dare own up he loves another man, I've found out, and they are afraid to admit such feelings to themselves even. I guess they're afraid it may be taken to mean something it don't need to at all.⁶⁷

Holden has an experience which he interprets as being "perverty"

that shatters his faith in one of the few adults he genuinely respects. After being put up for the night at the Antolini's apartment, where the heavily drinking Antolini has been giving him advice, he awakens suddenly to discover that the man has been sitting on the floor next to the couch and has patted him on the head. Unable to understand the intoxicated Antolini's affectionate, paternal feeling for him, he is utterly confused and hurriedly leaves after making up a weak excuse. Later he says that he knows "more damn perverts, at school and all, than anybody you ever met, and they're always being perverty when I'm around."⁶⁸ What makes these "perverts" act thus around Holden is probably no more than the fact that Holden's sympathetic nature, which is especially sensitive to the outsiders of society, causes them to drop their guard and relax into their proclivities. Though Holden is not physically nor psychologically the image of tough masculinity represented by his roommate Stradlater, he nevertheless has nothing effeminate or weak about his character; he demonstrates this by standing up to Stradlater and Maurice in fights that he knows he can only lose.

Running through the three novels and linking them together in a bond of greatness is the demonstration of the adolescent's capacity for love. Love for others is the boys' basic virtue, and all their other virtues spring from it. Of the three boys, Huck Finn emerges as the most mature lover in the agape sense. One cannot think of his feelings toward the Duke and Dauphin, as well as for the Wilkes girls and Buck Grangerford, without feeling the force of Trilling's encomium:

Not the least remarkable thing about Huck's feelings for people is that his tenderness goes along with his assumption that his fellow men are likely to be dangerous and wicked. ...Yet his profound and bitter knowledge of human depravity never prevents him from being a friend to man.⁶⁹

Huck's love, too, seems purer and more natural. Anderson's and Salinger's adolescents, while having a more conscious realization of love for others, are weakened to some degree because of their neurotic tendencies, which keep them from the more natural character of Huck's love. Put in simpler terms, Huck's love is noble and unmixed, but Anderson's and Salinger's adolescents show a love blended with the pathetic.

CHAPTER III

CONFLICT WITH THE "OFFICIAL CULTURE"

As pointed out in the first chapter, the three principal adolescents being dealt with in this study are sensitive rebels. In the second chapter an attempt was made to reveal some of their moral assumptions by examining their relations with themselves and others. Both of these chapters have tried to demonstrate that theirs is a transcendent morality, a moral vision which reaches above the widely accepted beliefs held by the mass of the population which Henry Nash Smith has termed the "official culture." At many junctions the beliefs of this "official culture" conflict with the boys' views, and inevitably this leads to a tension which helps clarify the boys' moral values. This chapter will attempt to examine the more important of these conflicts and to study the boys' moral behavior under the consequent stress. Thus the theme of all three books--Huckleberry Finn, Winesburg, Ohio, and The Catcher in the Rye--can be defined broadly as a quest for a higher moral vision, a greater truth than is seen by the "official culture."

Although Huckleberry Finn grows out of the earlier book for boys, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, it has, as Lionel Trilling notes,

...a more intense truth, fiercer and more complex. Tom Sawyer has the truth of honesty--what it says about things and feelings is never false and always both adequate and beautiful. Huck Finn has this kind of truth, too, but it also has the

truth of moral passion; it deals directly with the virtue and depravity of man's heart.¹

In Tom Sawyer, Huck is the outcast befriended by Tom, who, through his lucky association with him in the finding of Injun Joe's loot, is "saved" back to respectability in a happily-ever-after-ending. In Huck Finn the relationship with Tom continues, but the significance of it deepens.

Huck and Tom's relationship is used to develop one of the book's main themes, viz., how the "official culture" is permeated with a romantic sentimentality that blinds people to real moral issues. There is plenty of evidence in the novel to support this; Emmaline Grangerford, for instance, paints sorrowful pictures of dead birds yet is blind, as is the rest of her family, to the murderous feuding being done in the name of honor. Miss Watson, despite her appearance of piety, is blind to Jim's feelings when she considers selling him to the slave trader. The new judge is blind to Pap's rascally nature and is taken in by his sentimental pledge to reform. Twain implicates all society in this blindness when he shows the blubbering Dauphin reaping a windfall at a camp revival meeting by parading as a pirate who has just found salvation. In the chapter "All Full of Tears and Flapdoodle" he draws a particularly detailed portrait of a whole town blinded by the pseudo-lamentations of the Duke and Dauphin, who are impostors for the real Wilkes heirs.

But the chief illustrator of romantic sentimentality is Tom Sawyer, the boy hero of the "official culture." Even his misbehavior is adored by adults and peers, Huck included. Opposed to Tom is Jim, the epitome of the humble, unaffected realist. Because Jim is a Negro he can never enjoy any insider privileges in the white society, and his condition as an outcast is intensified by his being hunted. But Huck, though basically

an outsider himself, can belong to a group such as Tom's robber gang, subject, of course, to the condition that he go back to the widow's and be respectable. Huck thus finds himself with a foot in each of two worlds--the world of Tom's "official culture" and the world of the outsider Jim. Because of his own "neutral" upbringing (discussed in Chapter II), he is in a uniquely objective position to judge between the two.

But before we can understand why he commits himself to one of these worlds in the last pages of the novel, a review of his actions prior to the Phelps episode is necessary. Early in the book he shows he is being assimilated into "respectable" society at the widow's. "I was getting sort of used to the widow's ways....I liked the old ways best, but I was getting so I liked the new ones, too, a little bit."² Indeed, this assimilation of the widow's ways and the need for approval from Tom indicates that Huck is well on his way to being a quasi-Tom Sawyer himself. It is ironic, therefore, that the reprehensible Pap, who kidnaps him away from "sivilization," indirectly is the agent by which Huck comes to develop his great moral insights on the river. Huck's moral development during his "adventures" along the Mississippi takes place, of course, in the presence of his mentor Jim, the outsider of society. The freedom of the raft thus allows these two to work out a relationship that is removed from and not dictated by a society which has fixed prejudices based on tradition rather than on humane ideals. After the freedom of the raft and Huck's morally formative river episodes, the last fifth of the novel returns again to a "sivilized" setting at the Phelps farm. This return provides a balance with the book's opening. Jim again is back in slavery and imprisoned, and Huck is once more apparently acquiescing to Tom's romantic inanities. Huck's seeming return to a position of subordination

to Tom after his river experiences is construed by most critics, led by Leo Marx,³ not only as a structural flaw but as Huck Finn's tragedy. However, I wish to show, by examining his relationship with Tom, that the lessons of the river interim have not been forgotten; rather they enable him to show not only the superiority of his character over Tom's but also give the moral principles he unconsciously holds a clear triumph over the romantic sentimentality of the "official culture."

Early in the novel Tom shows the blind, illogical quality of his romanticism when he says that the prisoners in his robber gang must be ransomed, and Ben Rogers asks what "ransom" means.

I don't know. But that's what they do. I've seen it in books; and so of course that's what we got to do.

But how can we do it if we don't know what it is?

Why blame it all, we've got to do it. Don't I tell you it's in the books? Do you want to go doing different from what's in the books, and get things all muddled up?⁴

In organizing the gang, Tom's concern for romantic form over reality is innocuous and even humorous, just as it is in Tom Sawyer. Tom's spirit is manifest in Huck when Huck consciously imitates Tom's passion for "style" in his "murder" at the shack. "I did wish Tom Sawyer was there, I knowed he would take an interest in this kind of business, and throw in such a thing as that."⁵ Tom's influence also is apparent in Huck's first "adventure" after meeting Jim, the encounter with the wrecked steamboat. Huck, feeling "just the way any other boy would a felt," wants to go aboard despite Jim's protest. Trying to change Jim's mind, he says that they might "borrow" such things as "seegars" and cash, and as his final argument cites his hero Tom:

Do you reckon Tom Sawyer would ever go by this thing? Not for pie he wouldn't. He'd call it an adventure--that's what he'd call it; and he land on that wreck if it was his last act. And wouldn't he throw style into it?--wouldn't he spread him-

self, nor nothing? Why, you'd think it was Christopher C'lumbus discovering Kingdom-Come. I wish Tom Sawyer was here.⁶

But Huck's attempt at being romantically adventurous and his ignoring Jim's advice of "better let blame well alone" has a melancholy outcome, for indirectly he is the cause of the three looters on board drowning. This is his first result of imposing Tom's "playlike" world of children on the real world of men.

In setting up the complex plot in the Wilkes episode (which, incidentally, has a moral motive and is in that respect quite different from Tom's plot to free Jim), Huck again muses on his hero; "...I reckon Tom Sawyer couldn't a done it no neater himself. Of course he would a throwed more style into it, but I can't do that very handy, not being brung up to it."⁷ Huck shows here that he is still preoccupied with style, a distinctively Tom Sawyer trait, yet "...deeper than his amoral admiration for technique is Huck's instinctive alignment with those rare persons who are incapable of style--the Jims and Mary Janes of the world, who are too good and feel too deeply to deceive others."⁸ But despite his style, Huck's plan fails because of the arrival of the real Wilkes heirs, and he is in the "most awful and most dangersome I was ever in...everything was going so different from what I had allowed for...."⁹ The failure of his consciously stylized attempts at romantic adventure--the pranks on Jim, the boarding of the Walter Scott, the plan for returning the Wilkes money--subtly prepare us for his later disenchantment with Tom.

When Tom meets Huck at the Phelps farm practically the first thing he wants to know is how Huck executed his own "murder," because, as Huck puts it, "...it was a grand adventure, and mysterious, and so it hit him where he lived."¹⁰ Huck soon shows he is again vastly impressed with

Tom's style when, detective fashion, Tom figures out where Jim is imprisoned and says, "What a head for just a boy to have! If I had Tom Sawyer's head, I wouldn't trade it off to be a duke, nor a mate of a steamboat, nor clown in a circus, nor nothing I can think of."¹¹ It is perhaps significant that the things Huck would not trade to lose an intellect like Tom's are pursuits whose appeal usually diminishes as one matures. Yet later Huck has cause to wonder about the quality of Tom's head when Tom, trying to enter the house by climbing up the lightning-rod instead of going in the front door, "nearly busted his brains out."

Tom's notion of honor is distorted, too. He says that in freeing Jim

...there is more honor in getting him out through a lot of difficulties and dangers, where there warn't one furnished to you by the people who it was their duty to furnish them, and you had to contrive them all out of your own head.¹²

The misery that Tom makes Jim submit to illustrates less innocuously than the ransoming incident the blindness of Tom's romanticism.

...when Tom insists on gratifying his longings for the strange, the exotic, the dangerous, at whatever cost to his friends, we realize that he is not only selfish but perhaps, concealed from us by his boyish charms, he is cruel too.¹³

Tom momentarily even thinks about cutting Jim's leg off (to Tom, Jim is still the unfeeling comic minstrel) because "some of the best authorities has done it," but he dismisses the idea because "there ain't necessity enough for it."

Huck, though, gradually comes to mildly disagree with Tom. He points out to Tom the uselessness of making a rope ladder, writing on the stolen shirt and plates, and digging Jim out with case-knives. But his protests are swept aside by the precedents from Tom's romantic reading. Even when Tom must face reality, as in the passage below, he blinds himself by

rationalization and hypocrisy; furthermore, we also see his distorted view of morality. Huck has just asked Tom what they will do when they realize that it is obviously futile to try to dig Jim out with knives.

I'll tell you. It ain't right, and it ain't moral, and I wouldn't like it to get out--but there ain't only just the one way; we got to dig him out with the picks, and let on it's case-knives.¹⁴

Huck's classic rejoinder to this sharpens the contrast between the two: "Now you're talking!" I says; 'Picks is the thing, moral or no moral; and as for me, I don't care shucks for the morality of it nohow.'¹⁵ Huck here shows a change in his attitude toward Tom's style; he is beginning to grow tired of the aimless caprice. Two pages later he gets more openly critical when Tom plans to send things secretly to Jim by way of Uncle Silas and Aunt Sally. "Don't do nothing of the kind," he says, "it's one of the most jackass ideas I ever struck."¹⁶ Tom, however, pays no attention to this opinion. Huck and Jim, though, continue to play Tom's games without protesting too vehemently because, after all, if they refuse to cooperate Tom could conceivably expose the whole escape plot to his aunt and uncle. Thus, Huck and Jim are forced into an unfortunate alliance with Tom.

At the outset of the escape proceedings, Huck is glad to receive Tom's help because he is then unaware to what lengths Tom's "style" would carry them. But his cooperation with Tom ends suddenly when the situation demands realistic valor unclouded by romantic heroism. Tom's wound after the escape requires immediate medical attention, and Jim, at risk of his own freedom, says that he and Huck will not leave until a doctor sees Tom. Tom, blind to his own situation and the significance of what is being done for him, "raised considerable row" in protest and is restrained from crawling out and setting the raft loose. When he finally

realizes that he cannot stop Huck from bringing a doctor, he prescribes elaborate plans for secretly getting him there. Though Huck tells Tom that he will carry out these plans, he completely ignores them and works out his own scheme to get the doctor there as quickly as possible.

But the most convincing scene which confirms Huck's allegiance to Jim occurs when the wounded Tom suddenly appears, carried on a mattress and somewhat delirious. At the same time Jim is brought, tied and buffeted by his captors. Huck makes his choice; instead of seeing about Tom he follows the men "to see what they was going to do about Jim." We cannot help approving his decision; Tom's explanation later of the strange events at the Phelps house shows the height of his infantile romanticism, and we, and probably Huck also, are embarrassed for him. This last choice of Huck's marks his final moral posture, the rejection of Tom and the values of romantic sentimentality and the affirmation of Jim and the values of truth, reality, and human dignity.

For George Willard, who does not have intense conflicts with his society as Huck and Holden do, the principal problem is the inarticulateness of the people around him. George has, in sharing the experiences of the people of Winesburg, become a means of partially breaking down the walls that separate men and that keep them from truly expressing themselves. But as Irving Howe points out, "...salvation of the grotesque is beyond George's capabilities";¹⁷ he can only distill the essences of their lives, and some day, when he has matured his talent, perhaps he can use them in books which will further break these walls. For Anderson, as well as D. H. Lawrence, sex is a key to articulation, and it is interesting to note that the majority of the Winesburg stories have, to some degree, a theme of sexual yearning which has somehow been frustrated by

the taboos of the "official culture." Even George Willard, despite his greater insight, has his own conflicts with sexual problems, which were examined in Chapter II.

Yet in a way, the "official culture" concept in Winesburg is somewhat irrelevant, for Anderson anatomizes society into its separate individuals; and the conflict within each individual whom he deals with is his basic unit. This inarticulate society Anderson may deplore, but the individuals in it are not directly blamed; they can only be pitied, sympathized with, and loved, and this is the great lesson George learns about society.

For Holden Caulfield the conflict with the "official culture" is the conflict between sincerity and artificiality which he terms "phoniness." Holden's world is full of phonies and phony institutions; there is something in his sweeping condemnation of the shallowness in our affluent society which resembles the old prophet Amos' judgments against Israel during one of her prosperous moments. "The yardstick Holden applies to the world," writes Charles Kaplan, "is a simple one--too simple, perhaps, too rigorous, too uncompromising for anyone but an adolescent or a prophet...to attempt to apply to a complex world: it is the test of truth."¹⁸

Holden, except for a handful of exceptions, sees only the bad things in his environment; he does not have the satirist's capacity to laugh at folly and vice, nor can he compromise himself by "adjusting." But though there is a prophetic ring to some of his criticisms of society, there are also the petty complaints, the ennui, which show him truly as a child of the empty culture he condemns. Typical of the way he frequently looks on things is his description of Central Park: "...there didn't look like

there was anything in the park except dog crap and gobs of spit and cigar butts from old men..."¹⁹

The institutions and people Holden condemns are legion. He attacks the hypocritical Ossenberger, who claims that he talks to Jesus all the time, even while driving. He sees the sham sentimentality of the woman who cries at the movies but refuses to take her uncomfortable child to the restroom. He criticizes the Pencey Prep magazine ads which show polo ponies, because he says he never saw a horse near the campus. He quit Elkton Hills, another prep school, not only because the ponies were "coming in the goddam window" but also because the parents of the students were given unequal treatment. He unmasks his roommate Stradlater as a "secret slob" who looks good when he goes out but who leaves behind a rusty razor which is full of "lather and hairs and crap." He attacks Ivy League collegians ("All those Ivy League bastards look alike") and the way they talk ("...those very phony, Ivy League voices...those very tired, snobby voices").²⁰ At a hotel ballroom he criticizes the band ("corny brassy") and people who do "a lot of show-off tricky stuff on the dance floor." At a bar where a pair of French girls do a show he comments: "If you sat around there long enough and heard all the phonies applauding and all, you got to hate everybody in the world."²¹

A particular anathema to Holden is the movies. He once almost was in a movie short to demonstrate his golfing ability, but he says he turned the offer down because he thought it would be phony for anyone who hated the movies as much as he did to be in one. He blames some of his fantasies on the movies and says "they can ruin you."²² He also hates actors because "...they never act like people."²³ Sir Laurence Olivier's role as Hamlet does not please him because "...he was too much like a

goddam general, instead of a sad, screwed-up type guy."²⁴ He says he must read a play before he can enjoy it because if an actor acts it out, he keeps "worrying about whether he's going to do something phony every minute."²⁵

Thus to Holden the opposite of truth is phoniness, a word whose connotation suggests the sham which permeates his world. The phonies are shallow in every phase of their lives--they are too shallow even to have a depth of evil that could perhaps give them a tragic dimension.

Holden, at an age when most boys are looking to the opportunities of young manhood, instead looks back into his childhood because, as Arthur Heiserman and James Miller put it, he "...refuses to compromise with adulthood and its necessary adulteries...."²⁶ He recalls the museum that he visited as a child and says that the best thing about it was that everything always stayed the same. Once he walks all the way through Central Park to visit the museum, but he suddenly does not want to go in. Unconsciously he realizes that he has changed too much, that the childhood memories associated with the place would be destroyed by a revisit. This sacredness of the museum is broken later when he does enter and is enjoying the "nice and quiet" of an Egyptian tomb. Suddenly he sees a profane epithet written in red crayon on the wall. His reaction to this scene epitomizes his conflict with society:

You can't ever find a place that's nice, because there isn't any. You may think there is, but once you get there, when you're not looking, somebody'll sneak up and write "F--- you" right under your nose.²⁷

This comment comes shortly after he has seen two such epithets at the grade school that his sister Phoebe attends. After he had rubbed the first one out with his hand, he thinks he would like to kill the "perverty bum" who had put them there, for he never admits the most probable suspicion

that the matter was done by some child. He tries to rub out the second inscription but finds that it has been scratched on with a knife, and he concludes that half of the world's "F--- you's" could not be eliminated if "you had a million years to do it in."²⁸

But these epithets have more than a debased sexual meaning; they depress Holden because they represent a negation of all he values. They negate his ideal of love between sexes and his ideal of childhood innocence. They are also an open affront to the dignity of the sensitive people he loves, such as children, the nuns, the serious kettle drummer, and Jane Gallagher. In short, these epithets represent the voices of those who are incapable of love and who try to fill the void with their enmity. From behind these inscriptions is the leering, baleful, and bitter laughter of a world that knows the Holden Caulfields are somehow superior, but that will never admit it. Symbolically, these inscriptions represent the ubiquity of evil, even in the citadels of childhood innocence. Holden's whole conflict with himself--his tragic flaw, perhaps--stems from his inability to see that good operates in a context of evil and that evil itself makes the good both puissant and noble.

We have noted that each of the three novels is a quest, in its own way, for values and truth which reach beyond the limited view of the "official culture." But ironically, in two of these novels the protagonists are adept prevaricators. It will be profitable perhaps to explore why Huck and Holden lie and to attempt to show that their lying grows from a conflict with society.

Huck shows concern for the truth in the book's very first paragraph. He says there are some "stretchers" in the novel but that in the main the truth is told. He notes here, too, in a sort of prefatory apology,

that he "...never seen anybody but lied, one time or another, without it was Aunt Polly, or the widow, or maybe Mary."²⁹ But these three exceptions do not live, as does Huck through most of the novel, along the unsheltered banks of the Mississippi. Huck's lies, says A.E. Dyson, are "...a technique for surviving in a largely immoral world with as little unpleasantness for himself and for everyone else as possible."³⁰ Because Huck can trust so few people, he continually tells different stories about who he is and why he and Jim are floating down the river. Only once, early in the book when he still regards Jim merely as a comic minstrel, does he tell a lie which cannot be morally justified. This is the incident of the fog-dream, and Huck is humiliated by the lie's effect.

Huck, however, despite his talent for telling believable fictions, cannot lie convincingly when the lie goes against his natural goodness. When the Duke gives him a "left-handed look" during the investigation in the Wilkes episode, he knows that he must lie to Lawyer Bell. But he lies so unconvincingly that Bell tells him, ironically, that he needs practice. At another point Huck finds he cannot successfully lie. This occurs when he is trying to pray for strength to turn Jim in, but the prayer does not come because his "heart warn't right." He concludes that "you can't pray a lie,"³¹ and shows again how his own code of personal integrity and loyalty to Jim triumphs, though not without pain, over the "official culture."

Only twice in the book does he consider he might "resk the truth," a phrase which suggests not only his use of the lie as a protective device but also his distrust of the "official culture." Huck feels that the truth is not safe in the hands of the great majority of the people he knows. His lies, therefore, are not so much distortions of truth as

they are means of protecting and preserving his higher values.

With Holden, lying is more complex. One feels that the compulsive lying he says he is guilty of ("I'm the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life") grows principally from his unconscious desire to conceal his bitter, socially unpleasant opinions from others. He tells Spencer his teacher that he has to go to the gym to get his equipment in order to leave because the man nauseates him. On the train to New York City he meets the mother of "doubtless the biggest bastard that ever went to Pencey" and amuses himself by inventing elaborate stories of her son's virtues to avoid showing his bitter dislike for the boy. He tells a Navy officer that he is glad to have met him when he really despises him. "I'm always saying 'Glad to have met you' to somebody I'm not at all glad to have met. If you want to stay alive, you have to say that stuff, though."³² Holden recognizes that to avoid complete social ostracism he must tell the polite lie in the phony society about him. Yet there is another aspect of Holden's lying that makes it less justifiable than Huck's. Holden on occasions not only tells the "polite" lie but also becomes a lie himself. He invents names for himself and assumes a phony suavity in his acquaintance with Morrow's mother, his phone call to Faith Cavendish, and in his flirtation with the three girls from Seattle. Holden's lying, then, reflects both his struggle and his compromise with his "official culture."

The adolescent boys also reveal their moral codes through their conflicts with the religion of the "official culture."

Huck's "religious" awareness is governed by the things he knows--the mysterious grandeur of the river, the stars in the night sky, the age old folklore of good and bad omens, which fit in with his sense of the splendours and uncertainties of life....³³

But Huck is not completely the pagan, for blended in with his awe of nature and superstitious belief is a rather thorough grounding in fundamentalist Christian doctrine that he has learned during his stay at the widow's house. Here he encounters two types of religious thinking represented respectively by the widow's sister, Miss Watson, and the widow herself. Miss Watson, who makes herself unpopular with her continual "pecking," tells him about the "bad place" and the "good place" where all a person does is "...to go around all day long with a harp and sing forever and ever."³⁴ This kind of heaven does not appeal to Huck, especially when Miss Watson says there is little chance that Tom Sawyer will ever be there. Later she takes him into a closet to pray, but, as Huck put it, "nothing come of it." She tells him that whatever he asks for in prayer will be given him, so he tries praying for fish hooks but "somehow...couldn't make it work." When he asks the widow why he failed, she explains that prayer brings "spiritual gifts." She says Huck must "...help other people, and do everything I could for other people, and look out for them all the time and never think about myself."³⁵ He thinks her words over and concludes that there is no advantage in obeying them "except for the other people." Yet despite his conscious rejection of the widow's counsel, he unconsciously aligns himself with the widow's advice in his treatment of Jim later on the river.

Huck's greatest conflict with the "official culture," which is also the dramatic high point of the novel, is both a moral and religious crisis. After the Duke has sold Jim, Huck's conscience "grinds" him and he feels "low down and ornery" because he believes that Providence is punishing him for helping Jim's escape. This frightens him, for he retains a genuine fear for the anger of Miss Watson's Providence. He tries

to rationalize his "wickedness" by blaming his upbringing, but his guilty conscience tells him that "...people as acts as I'd been acting about that nigger goes to everlasting fire."³⁶ He then tries to pray, but as noted earlier, the words do not come because his heart is not right. He writes a letter to Miss Watson, telling her where Jim is, to see if he then can pray. But as he thinks of Jim after finishing it, he remembers how good Jim always was to him and he can "strike no places to harden me against him." Then as he picks up the letter he realizes that he must decide forever between two things, and he says, "All right, I'll to to hell...."³⁷ and tears the letter. Huck therefore condemns himself unquestioningly, to Miss Watson's hell because he judges himself by her creed while he acts by the widow's. After this decision he says that he never thought again of reforming and vows to "take up wickedness again," beginning by stealing Jim out of slavery, "...because as long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog."³⁸ Here is an example of Huck's making a moral decision on the basis of the circumstances of the situation and his own sense of what he must do. He is not governed by the conscience of the "official culture." Thus he shows that his morality is fundamentally pragmatic.

In Winesburg the nearest approach to a conflict with the "official culture" comes when fifteen-year-old David Hardy in "Godliness" shoots his grandfather with a slingshot so that the religiously obsessed old man will not mark him with lamb's blood, as in biblical times. There is no mention of George's conflicting with the religion of the "official culture." Indeed, one reason why this study has a smaller amount of space devoted to Winesburg than to Huck Finn and The Catcher in the Rye is that George Willard, the principal adolescent in the book, is not a main

character as are Huck and Holden. George is the central character in only about five of the book's twenty-five stories. He is a minor character in nine others, and in the remainder of the stories he is not even mentioned. In only one of the stories, "Sophistication," does Anderson probe George's character in great depth. George's function in Winesburg is largely structural; by being the sensitive listener to many of the people's stories, he provides a measure of unity for the book. Gradually, though, George's characterization does develop depth. He becomes more and more sensitive and sympathetic to people as the book progresses, and his growth is climaxed in the story "Sophistication." What makes Winesburg have an affinity with Huck Finn and The Catcher is not so much George's similarity to Huck and Holden--although this is important--but is rather the similarity of the adolescent-like outlook and of the moral tone of the three books.

Holden, like Huck, is deeply concerned with the doctrine of Protestant teaching, and, like Huck, shows evidence of having rejected most of it after finding it conflicting with his own code. Like Huck, he tries to pray but cannot; after his depressing experience with Sunny he fails in his prayer attempt because he says "I'm sort of an atheist." Like Huck, who is not interested in Moses and the bulrushes, Holden says that though he likes Jesus, he does not "care too much for most of the other stuff in the Bible."³⁹ He even confesses that he cannot stand ministers because of their "Holy Joe" voices. Though he cannot fulfill his religious need in the religion of the "official culture," he is able to partially satisfy this need through an identification with his own conception of Jesus. He tells of a Christmas pageant at Radio City where actors dressed as angels swarm over the stage singing "Come All Ye

Faithful!" and feels that there is nothing religious about it because the actors "could hardly wait to get a cigarette or something."⁴⁰ "Old Jesus," he says, "probably would've puked if he could see it."⁴¹ He also tells of arguing with his schoolmates his belief that Jesus never sent Judas "to Hell and all." "I think that any of the Disciples would've sent him...but I'll bet Jesus didn't do it."⁴² Branch catalogues many instances in which Holden unconsciously imitates Jesus' actions, and he builds a case for Holden as a Christ-like figure,⁴³ which succeeds after a fashion if one interprets the historical Christ like the protagonist of The Idiot. But Holden, unlike Jesus, is confused and sees only "through a glass darkly." He confuses "Blessed are the Meek" with the weak. Holden's spirit lacks the strength which takes the whip to the moneychangers. Nor, as pointed out in Chapter II, does his love and understanding extend to all people. His comparison with Jesus, then, is hardly appropriate and is only a superficial one.

The conflict the adolescents have with their culture is not carried on without a great personal price. Each boy experiences the pain of incommunicability with people about him, loneliness, feelings of guilt, and depression. Each boy feels a compulsion to flee the society of the "official culture," and for Holden, at least, there is a clear urge for release through death.

Huck's pain from his conflict with society is not as intense as is George's or Holden's. He suffers less not because he has any less cause for anguish than the others, but because he is made of a tougher psychological fiber. Incommunicability, while not so pronounced a problem for him is, nevertheless, strongly manifested in his continual necessity to conceal his identity by lying. Through most of the novel he is

officially dead, and not even in the familial atmosphere of the Phelps farm is he Huck Finn, his real self. The lie, as noted before, is his necessary defense, and it is only with a very few people--Mary Jane, the Widow Douglas, and Jim--that he can dare to express himself honestly.

Loneliness, guilt feelings, and depression are also a part of his experience. He refers to his loneliness eight times--twice at the widow's and once on Jackson's Island; but after he meets Jim he no longer is lonesome, for his only other references to loneliness come when he is separated from Jim in the fog and when he is searching for Jim after the Dauphin has sold him. His feelings of guilt, which darken and deepen his characterization above that of the boyish Tom, spring from his tendency to judge himself by the standards of the "official culture" while acting by his own code, and his torments of conscience for helping Jim give him a genuine tragic quality. Though he has seen humanity at its worst and even confesses to dreaming about Buck Grangerford's murder, the strain he has undergone never makes him succumb to the depths of depression so typical of Holden. Huck is fundamentally committed to life, and though trouble continually hangs over him, he is not oppressed by a sense of approaching doom.

Huck's escape down the river, though superficially an idyllic adventure, is both an actual physical flight from Pap and the slave hunters and a symbolic flight from the evils of "sivilization." Even while on the river he spends a good deal of his time trying to escape from the Duke and Dauphin, two "phonies" of an American earlier than Holden's. Huck's last statement in the book shows his determination to flee again, for he says he is going to the Territory to escape Aunt Sally's plan to adopt and "sivilize" him.

Malcolm Cowley, in his introduction to the Viking edition of Winesburg, says that the people of Winesburg have not been destroyed, as Anderson suggests, by their each having seized on a single truth, "... but rather by their inability to express themselves,"⁴⁴ which makes them emotionally crippled. Even George and his mother, who have a special feeling for each other, cannot really tell each other what is really in their hearts; when he is torn with a problem he tells her, "I suppose I can't make you understand, but oh, I wish I could. I can't even talk to father about it. I don't try. There isn't any use."⁴⁵ What is true about Enoch Robinson in the Winesburg story "Loneliness" is typical not only of Anderson's adolescents but of many of his adult characters: "He [Enoch] knew what he wanted to say, but he knew also that he could never by any possibility say it."⁴⁶

S. K. Winther sounds what is probably the keynote of all of Anderson's work when he writes "...loneliness more than any other aspect of life marks the quality that is Anderson."⁴⁷ George himself, despite the many acquaintances he has made as a reporter, is basically a lonely person. He frequently is seen by himself--lying in bed restlessly thinking, dreaming alone before a fire in the woods, writing late at night in the office of the Winesburg Eagle, or walking the streets of the town lost in a lonely reverie. One critic even feels that Anderson even defines love in terms of loneliness: "...love is essentially the shared acceptance by two people of the irremediable fact, in the nature of things, of their final separateness."⁴⁸ This love, he feels, is realized by George and Helen White in "Sophistication," but it is an experience beyond the ken of Winesburg's grotesques because they cannot accept the idea that "loneliness is a universal condition."

We have already discussed George's guilty feelings (Chapter II) which arise from his sexual conflicts. George, like Huck and unlike Holden, experiences only mild depression, though he is filled with "youthful sadness, young man's sadness."⁴⁹ Most of his sense of sadness comes from the "still, sad music of humanity" that he hears about him. In "Sophistication" he

...looks out upon the world, seeing as though they marched in procession before him, the countless figures of men who before his time have come out of nothingness into the world; lived their lives and disappeared into nothingness.⁵⁰

But most typically, depression in Anderson's Winesburg stories grows from frustration, most often sexual. Figures such as George's mother, Kate Swift, Alice Hindman, and Wash Williams, are portraits of individuals who face almost utter despondency behind walls of loneliness and incommunicability. Even George, whose detachment arises above the grotesques, is not wholly free from the effects of these walls. He talks to himself, clutches pillows in his bed and pretends they are women, and, as his mother tells him, spends too much time indoors. Nor can George avoid a feeling of depression that makes him want to escape. In a confusion about his future after his father has chided him for his dreaminess, he tells his mother that he "...just wants to go away and look at people and think."⁵¹

Holden's suffering from his conflict with the "official culture" is extreme. For him the problem of incommunicability is acute. Charles Kegel defines the book's theme as "a great quest for communicability."⁵² Whereas Huck can turn to Jim, and George to the Winesburg grotesques, Holden can confidently turn to no one to exchange deeper feelings. He mistakenly thinks his former confidant, Antolini, has become homosexual,

and even his ten-year-old syster Phoebe, for whom he has great admiration, sounds like the voice of the "official culture" as she condemns his expulsion from Pencey and "ostricizes the hell" out of him. After hearing him condemn almost everything associated with prep schools, she challenges him to name one thing that he likes, and he is momentarily stopped by the poignancy of her question. He says that he just likes sitting and talking, which she says is really nothing. His angry reply to her grows from the depth of his frustrated desire to communicate: "It is so something really! Certainly it is! Why the Hell isn't it? People never think anything is anything really. I'm getting goddam sick of it."⁵³ The final gesture of Phoebe's inability to communicate is her ending the conversation with an exhibition of belching.

When Holden first arrives in New York he gets in a phone booth because he feels like "giving somebody a buzz." He thinks of several people he might call but dismisses them for various reasons and comes out of the booth twenty minutes later without having called anyone. Almost a dozen times he either tries or thinks about calling Jane Gallagher, but he never talks to her. Even his Ivy League intellectual friend Luce does not want to talk about the topics he introduces. Holden's frustration at the lack of finding someone to genuinely communicate with leads him to an extreme fantasy which he admits is "... crazy, but I liked thinking about it anyway."⁵⁴ "I thought what I'd do was, I'd pretend I was one of those deaf mutes. That way I wouldn't have to have any goddam stupid useless conversations with anybody."⁵⁵

During his two days in New York he is surrounded by people whom he knows, yet he is still lonely. Although he dates the attractive Sally Hayes, he alienates her when he criticizes life in New York City and

prep schools and then seriously suggests that they run away to a rural area in Vermont or Massachusetts. This proposal leads to a quarrel and Holden finds himself alone again. Typical of his references to his loneliness are the following: "I felt so lonesome all of a sudden. I almost wished I was dead."⁵⁶ "Boy, did I feel rotten. I felt so damn lonesome."⁵⁷ At the very end of the book he makes a confession which attests to his utter loneliness; his brother asks him what he thinks about the happenings of the past year, and Holden says he does not know what to think:

About all I know is, I sort of miss everybody I told about. Even old Stradlater and Ackley, for instance. I think I even miss that goddam Maurice. It's funny. Don't ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody.⁵⁸

Holden's guilt feelings, like his lying, are complex. Overtly he manifests little sense of guilt--his sexual promiscuity, the only point of conscience that bothers him, is a superficial problem met by his making "sex rules" which he readily breaks. Yet it is difficult to imagine a sixteen-year-old, however urbane and sophisticated, doing the things that he does without some manifestation of guilt. He uses profanity continuously, runs away from school, drinks in bars, and has a prostitute in his room without ever expressing the slightest sense of guilt, though most of these actions leave him haunted by depression. It is hard to say to what extent this depression is caused by a suppressed feeling of guilt, but it seems clear that Holden is to some extent a victim of the morally calloused society that he condemns. Psychologically he is a case of compartmentalized thinking, for he condemns in others what he fails to see in himself; consequently, his suppressed guilt is transformed into a generalized feeling of depression.

As was noted earlier in the discussion of Holden's relations with other people, he continually feels sorry for people and is saddened and depressed by them. It was also noted how his neurotic concern for others leads him to be irrationally depressed by very ordinary situations. But though Holden's prevailing mood throughout the book is depression, the book itself is not depressing, as Ihab Hassan explains:

The controlling mood of the novel--and it is so consistent as to be a principle of unity--is one of acute depression always on the point of breaking loose. But despair and depression are kept, throughout, in check by Holden's remarkable lack of self interest, a quality of self-heedlessness which is nearly saintly, and by his capacity to invoke his adolescent imagination to "horse around," when he is most likely to go to pot. These contrary pressures keep the actions of the novel in tension and keep the theme of sentimental disenchantment on the stretch; and they are sustained by a style of versatile humor.⁵⁹

Conscious humor like Holden's is not readily apparent in Huck or George. Holden even has the maturity to see the humor in his own inadequacy, which he displays when he accidentally leaves the fencing team's foils on the subway and thus prevents a match. But overshadowing Holden's comic propensities is the gloomy, ubiquitous depression that haunts him.

Like Huck, who escapes down the river, and George, who leaves Winesburg to go away to the big city "to be alone and think," Holden also flees, going to New York City where he wants to escape from Pencey and relax before going home for the Christmas holidays. However, he finds the "sivilization" of the big city oppressive; so he, like Huck, dreams of an escape to the West, which is "...very pretty and sunny and where nobody'd know me and I'd get a job."⁶⁰ Heiserman and Miller note the irony that at the end of the book he is out West, not in a cabin as he had planned, but in a psychiatric sanitarium which--doubly ironic--is near Hollywood, the very shrine of all he hates about society.⁶¹

Holden, unlike Huck and George who are merely somewhat aware of death's implications, has a clear urge offered by the release of death. We have already noted his pleasure in the "nice and peaceful" mummy tombs in the museum. After seeing a war movie he says that he could not stand being in a war. "...they better just take me out and stick me in front of a firing squad. I wouldn't object."⁶² He is somewhat glad that the atomic bomb has been invented and says, "If there's ever another war, I'm going to sit right the hell on top of it..."⁶³ But his most definite urge to death comes right after Maurice has struck and humiliated him, and for a brief moment he seriously thinks of jumping out of his hotel window.

It is apparent from the discussion of the boys' conflict with their "official culture" that social criticism is implicit in all three novels, though of course none of the three could possibly be classified as a social novel per se.

In Huckleberry Finn the social criticism is fairly simple. Although Huck never explicitly states his judgments on society, there is never any ambiguity about the morality of the social forces about him, for his stark, clear reporting of his "adventures" reveals by implication the prejudices and inhumanity around him. Probably the book's most powerful social criticism can be summarized in Huck's generalization that "Human beings can be awful cruel to each other."⁶⁴ Huck sees this cruelty in many different forms. It comes in overt forms such as the defrauding of the Wilkes sisters and the Dauphin's heartless selling of Jim. But most of the cruelty in the book is done under at least the partial sanction of the "official culture." The feuding murders of the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons and the murder of the innocent Boggs are done in the name of honor. The tarring of the Duke and Dauphin passes as justice. Miss

Watson's instilling in Huck a preternatural fear of the "bad place" and a sense of guilt for deviation from conventionality is done in the name of religion. The circus crowd's jeering at the ostensibly drunk rider and Tom's torment of Jim in the escape episode both pass for good entertainment. Society, as Tom so lucidly exemplifies, has a blindness which rationalizes cruelty and calls things moral which to Huck are patently immoral.

Anderson's social criticism may be interpreted as being directed against the walls of incommunicability and frustration which divide men and make them spiritual dwarfs. But the real problem of Anderson lies deep in the primal psychology of man, which Anderson seems to say is basically inscrutable. Herman Dudley in "The Man Who Became a Woman" comments on this inscrutable nature:

I went and stood with my back against the side of the stall, thinking how mean and low and all balled-up and twisted up human beings can become and how the best of them are likely to get that way any time, just because they are human beings and not simple and clear in their minds, and inside themselves, as animals are, maybe.⁶⁵

Through George Willard's development we are presented with the picture of the best man can do to make as fruitful as possible this bewildering human condition. George's example seems to say that an understanding, sympathetic love for all men coupled with a detachment which stands above but not aloof from most men goes a long way toward transcending the grotesque pattern.

For Holden Caulfield, whose sensitive nature has suffered acutely from a society which is blind to genuine feelings and love, pain has brought a perspicacity into the nature of society's evils. Society to Holden is a vague mass for which he has unqualified contempt, but like

Swift, he can hate man while still liking individuals. His major criticism of society is that it is "phony," which is his terminology for the affected, insincere egoists all about him. Holden cannot offer anything particularly constructive for the correction of this phoniness except the example of his own martyrdom. Salinger, like Holden, does not offer formulas for society; his characters, like his own life, retreat from society and seek a security in childhood or mysticism, far from the din of humanity.

Salinger and his characters are too debilitated, too ego involved in their anxieties to lash the age with a vigorous attack; they stand offering a cloistered love to their own clique and pitifully view a world which is insensitive to them.

CHAPTER IV

STRUCTURE RELATED TO THE MORAL CODES

In any good piece of art the elements of the structure should harmoniously interact with each other to produce a satisfying total effect. This harmonious interaction in good art does not come about solely through the artist's deliberate concern with each separate element but rather is attained through a great initial insight, a totality of vision which pictures the work on a big canvas where the structural elements blend and become indistinguishable. Since the moral integrity of the adolescents of Twain, Anderson, and Salinger is assumed in this study to be a major theme, and since each of the three works being dealt with in this study is at least a minor masterpiece of good art, then the elements of structure in each book should support this theme. This chapter will attempt to demonstrate how the various elements of structure in the novels reinforce the theme of the boys' moral integrity. The elements to be discussed include narrative point of view, characterization, plot, theme, and symbolism.

An author who writes a serious work about an adolescent character must appear to write from neither a superior nor a condescending viewpoint. Twain, Anderson, and Salinger take their boys seriously, and this gives Huck, George and Holden a reality that is not present in such books as the delightful though artistically inferior Penrod and Seventeen of Booth Tarkington, who regards his adolescents with a kindly condescension.

Huckleberry Finn and The Catcher in the Rye are written in the first person and are both essentially oral in style. Both Huck and Holden tell their stories frankly; there is no attempt to make their speech "literary" or even grammatical, for Twain and Salinger made deliberate attempts to reproduce accurately real speech patterns. The force of this adolescent first-person narration is apparent from each book's first page. Immediately we are struck with an adolescent viewpoint that glows intensely with a sincerity not possible with the detachment of an omniscient narrator. Not even the subtlest use of the language of the omniscient viewpoint could so effectively suggest the moral integrity of Huck and Holden as powerfully as their actual speech. Thus the first person narration in Huck Finn and The Catcher supports the axiom that the best art develops themes through implication rather than through explicit statement.

The first person narration also has another advantage for an author, for by using it he can reduce the problem of distance between his maturity and adolescence inexperience, a problem which can lessen the seriousness of a work. By writing in the boys' own words, Twain and Salinger can come closer to Huck's and Holden's "consciousness" while avoiding omniscient asides which are perhaps more appropriate for exploring the adult mind.

First person narration in Huck Finn and The Catcher sharpens the characterizations of Huck and Holden. Not only the author but the reader, too, can penetrate more deeply into adolescent consciousness through the nuances of real speech. First person narration also brings about humor which in an omniscient narration would be severely limited. Huck's naive but perceptive observations and Holden's unconscious profanity both provide a kind of comic relief which deepens the shadows of their profound

moral conflicts.

Anderson, as Malcolm Cowley notes, also belonged to an oral rather than a written tradition and thought of himself basically as a storyteller.¹ In his best stories of adolescence ("I'm a Fool," "The Man Who Became a Woman," "I Want to Know Why"), he uses the first-person viewpoint effectively to show his youths' moral dilemmas, but his narration lacks the sparkling, convincing ring of real boys' talk that Twain and Salinger capture. Absent, too, from Anderson's characterization of adolescence is a sense of humor which gives a "plump sphericity" to Huck and Holden.

One...longs for a single fully rounded character; what Anderson says about...people is true, but it is not all the truth; there are important phases of their existence about which he seems to know nothing. This comes partly from his theory of life as a history of moments. He somehow neglects important influences that have brought about these moments.²

George Willard of Winesburg also is characterized only in these "moments" of intense feeling, as are the adolescents in the short stories; and this limitation, coupled with a lack of humor, to some extent weakens Anderson's attempt to arouse sympathy for the values of his adolescents.

The plots of all three novels are somewhat amorphous, a quality which is chiefly due to their growing out of an oral, storyteller tradition. However, this amorphousness does not breach the unity in the three books but rather provides, within the context of this oral tradition, a more effective method for conveying the books' themes.

Huckleberry Finn follows the picaresque tradition, with the road, of course, being the river. Yet Huck is several cuts above the typical picaresque rogue, and his journey down the river is motivated by more than the usual artificial cause. In the usual picaresque novel the

adventures of the hero are the chief end. But in Huck Finn they are for the most part stumbling blocks keeping Huck from getting Jim to freedom. But while they are thwarting Huck they are also educating and developing his moral character. Thus Huck Finn resembles more closely the tradition of Pilgrim's Progress than the more strictly picaresque tradition of a novel such as Le Sage's Gil Blas.

If the river episodes are viewed as the cause of Huck's development of moral character, then the last fifth of the novel, the Phelps farm section, cannot be interpreted as being only a weakness in the novel's plot, as some critics have charged. The return at the last of the novel to the status quo of the opening actually provides unity, for it brings the plot full circle and, as has been detailed in Chapter III, enables us to witness clearly Huck's change in attitude and his moral growth. What critics usually confuse as a weakness in plot in the last section is probably no more than a disgust for Tom's excesses of "style." While it can be argued easily that Twain laid the romantic foolery of Tom on too thickly, one must remember that Twain's era had a strong penchant for an excessive romantic sentimentality; so that to make his point he had to do it heavily. In his attempt to be intentionally ironic in exaggerating Tom's "style," however, he slips into indefensible "clowning" that is inconsistent with the tone of the rest of the novel. Yet, despite this shift in tone, Huck still clearly emerges as the moral hero, and Twain has the discretion not to make Huck a willing participant in the clowning.

The Catcher in the Rye, too, follows a picaresque pattern, but instead of the river its road is the maze of the metropolis. Like Huck, Holden is intensely charged with a moral awareness, but his wandering

in the city is not motivated by a mission but simply by a desire to escape the sham world of prep schools. Since the main action of the novel covers only three days, Holden does not develop his moral consciousness as does Huck on the river; rather he brings his moral sense, fully developed, to bear on people as a sort of touchstone by which he determines whether they are true or "phony." As noted in both Chapters II and III, of the scores of people he rubs shoulders with in hotels, bars, taxicabs, theaters, museums, and restaurants, only a handful prove to be true or "non-phony."

Not only does the wandering Holden in New York City provide Salinger with a persona by which to judge people, but Holden also provides an ideal example for showing the loneliness, depression, and pain the sensitive individual must bear if he is to live above the selfish phoniness of the "official culture." Unlike Huck Finn's somewhat optimistic prospect of flight to the Territory as an escape from "sivilization," The Catcher in the Rye ends on a note of bleakness; Holden is in a psychiatric sanitarium and apparently is still torn between the force that tries to send him over the "crazy cliff" of adult phoniness and the force of his own pure but childlike code of innocence. The conflict, Salinger seems to suggest, is the inescapable fate of the sensitive modern man.

Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio is, strictly speaking, not a novel at all but rather a series of separate stories about the people of Winesburg. This amorphous plot structure, which we suggested earlier grows out of an oral tradition, is noted by Cowley, who says of Anderson's novels that "...not one...has balance and sustained force; not one doesn't break into episodes or nebulize into vague emotions."³ This "nebulizing into vague emotions" destroys the unity of his best true novels, such as Dark

Laughter and Poor White, but it provides within the more easily controlled short story form of Winesburg a unity of mood and theme. Each story in the collection contributes a mood of haunted frustration against the theme of the loneliness and incommunicability of American small town life. Intertwining with this theme is another theme, the rise of self-awareness of young George Willard. Listening to the various stories of the grotesques while going about his duties as a newspaper reporter, George gradually becomes aware of the pathos of the buried lives of Winesburg. Desiring to be a writer, he feels that he must somehow speak for the grotesques, and this feeling takes on the character of a moral mission which grows throughout the book.

The three books also have a few key symbols which are central to an understanding of the nature of each boy's moral problems.

Much controversy has arisen about the role of the Mississippi River in Huck Finn. For critics such as Leo Marx⁴ and Gilbert Rubenstein,⁵ the river has no symbolic meaning beyond a general connotation of freedom. But for T. S. Eliot,⁶ and especially Leonel Trilling,⁷ the river has great symbolic significance which involves both religious and moral forces. These latter critics, however, fail to offer an interpretation of the moral symbolism suggested by the river.

An important clue to the symbolic significance of the river lies in Twain's description in Life on the Mississippi of how the casual traveler's view of the river differs with the experienced steamboat pilot's view.⁸ The traveler's comprehension of the river ends at the beautiful, smooth, placid surface. But the pilot sees more than just the beauty of the surface; he also knows that treacherous snags, stumps, and shifting sandbars lie hidden beneath, and he must study the nuances of the river's surface

to avoid them. The river in Huck Finn can be seen as a symbol of the moral universe in which only the initiate can navigate safely. Early in the book Huck is just a casual traveler who is out on the river principally for the adventure. Gradually the river, both literally and figuratively, presents snags, and gradually Huck becomes initiated into a mature understanding of the moral universe, able to sense what lies beneath the surface of moral issues. In his moral growth he leaves his friend Tom Sawyer far behind, for Tom has not had the lessons of the river and is throughout the book merely an adventure-seeking traveler, destined sooner or later to run aground. Indeed, the whole metaphoric comparison of the moral universe with the river in Huck Finn is so rich that one is tempted to extend it indefinitely.

Anderson's principal symbol is some type of incarceration which provides reinforcement for his recurring theme of lonely frustration.⁹ In Winesburg incarceration is evident in Wings Biddlebaum, who gets his name from the restless waving of his hands which is like "the beating of the wings of an imprisoned bird." Dr. Reefy sits all day in a stuffy office whose windows are permanently stuck shut. But probably the most powerful example of symbolic imprisonment is Alice Hindman's "turning her face to the wall" in her dark bedroom as she tried to reconcile herself to Winesburg's loneliness. Incarceration as a symbol finds its classic statement in what is probably Anderson's best novel, Poor White:

All men lead their lives behind a wall of misunderstanding they have themselves built, and most men die in silence and unnoticed behind the walls. Now and then a man, cut off from his fellows by the peculiarities of his nature, becomes absorbed in doing something impersonal, useful, and beautiful. Word of his activities is carried over the walls.¹⁰

One cannot help feeling that George Willard will ultimately be such

an exceptional man, a man whose mission will be to break down these walls.

The Catcher in the Rye has a variety of symbols suggesting Holden's dilemma in a phony world. His patch of gray hair hints at a troubled maturity greater than his sixteen years would suggest, and his hunting cap is sort of red badge of his conflict against conformity. His omnipresent cigarette, too, reveals an attempt to appear adult, yet this affectation is but another mark of his own "phoniness." But the book's principal theme, the struggle to preserve the integrity of childhood in the metropolitan wasteland, is masterfully couched in the title scene.

When Phoebe asks Holden what he wants to be in life, he replies:

...I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around--nobody big, I mean--except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff-- I mean if they're running and don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be.¹¹

The cliff, of course, is the dangerous threat of adult phoniness. This falling symbol is closely related to the symbol of the gold ring. As Holden is watching Phoebe and some other children riding a merry-go-round, he comments:

All the children kept trying to grab for the gold ring, and so was old Phoebe, and I was sort of afraid she's fall off the goddam horse, but I didn't say anything or do anything. The thing with kids is, if they want to grab for the gold ring, you have to let them do it, and not say anything. If they fall off, they fall off, but it's bad if you say anything to them.¹²

On the merry-go-round of childhood one can reach for the gold ring, the promise of an Edenic happiness, but there is the danger, as Holden has bitterly learned, of disillusionment and frustration. But though he

himself has compromised with the phony world, he feels he must do nothing to spoil the vision for others. His own case proves the gold ring is unattainable, yet nothing, he feels, must detract from the hope of others attaining it. The cliff symbol and the symbol of the gold ring express Holden's chief dilemma, the preservation of his own innocence and the innocence of children and child-like adults.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In assessing the literary value of the three principal works of this study--Huckleberry Finn, Winesburg, Ohio, and The Catcher in the Rye--one must try to explain their tremendous popularity with youth. That each book involves an adolescent as a major character explains this appeal partially but not completely. The books' ultimate appeal to youth is due, I believe, to their speaking a language which resonates to the adolescent Weltanschauung. Against the torpid didacticism of books all too frequently recommended by adults for teenagers are these three which are fleshed with a spirit of revolt against all that is stultifying and evil in the adult "official culture." Winesburg and The Catcher are not regular fare on the shelves of public school libraries, ostensibly because they are "bad," i.e., conducive to a corruption of morals. However, an inspection of the protagonists in both novels reveals that these books are moral in the highest sense. The most probable reason that these two novels are often withheld from youth is that they question too exactly the standards of the "official culture." Huckleberry Finn itself, after a battle with censors, sits established in most school libraries largely because it is adventurous and has accumulated enough age and respect to be labeled a classic.

What though, precisely, is the quality that youth admires most in

Huck, George, and Holden." It has already been mentioned that youth shares in the three boys' spirit of revolt against the morally dulled conventions of society, but this spirit is but an effect which grows from the boys' moral code. This code places personal integrity above the demand for conformity to society. Ultimately, then, the decision of Huck, George, and Holden not to conform to the pattern of the "official culture" is a moral one, for it means that each boy must forsake the relatively easy path of conventionality and launch out on his own self-determined course. This kind of brave independence appeals to young people who find in Huck, George, and Holden figures with whom they can strongly identify. With Huck they share in the sheer adventures of the river experiences while admiring his "playing fair" with such people as Jim, the Wilkes girls, and even the two frauds. In the intimate moments of George's personal life they realize, perhaps for the first time, that loneliness and secret desires are not unique with themselves. And in Holden their suspicions about the imperfection and sham of the adult world are confirmed.

The spirit of revolt in the three books, which is so greatly admired by youth, does not appeal so strongly to more conservative adults. Perhaps this is behind Lionel Trilling's lower opinion of Winesburg in his maturity despite his enthusiasm for it in his youth.¹ Perhaps this also is behind the now fashionable reaction to The Catcher in the Rye. Only Huck Finn can escape with a minimum of mature, adverse criticism because its revolt is primarily against the unequivocal evils of the "official culture." Too, the matured reader is more sensitive to technical weaknesses that youth overlook in their absorption with viewpoint and plot, and these weaknesses, undoubtedly greater in Winesburg and The Catcher,

hurt the effectiveness of these novels in the adult reader's mind. Yet despite sophisticated criticism, adolescents probably will continue to sense that in all three books are the echoes of their innermost selves, and they will continue to regard them as something approaching religious revelation. What Alfred Kazin says of Salinger and his appeal to youth can quite aptly apply to Twain and Anderson:

...young people...respond to him with a consciousness that he speaks for them and virtually to them, in a language that is peculiarly honest and their own, with a vision of things that captures their most secret judgments of the world.²

Chapter I pointed out that the three boys do not have a strong family life, a fact which helps contribute to their independent thinking and their dissatisfaction with the "official culture." Since they do not have parents whose characters they wish to emulate, the three boys turn to mentors who provide admirable examples for their moral development. From Jim, Huck learns the truth of human dignity; from Kate Swift, George learns the necessity of understanding people deeply; and from Mr. Antolini, Holden learns the truth of living humbly for a cause.

Because the three adolescent boys come to their worlds without bringing a lifetime of accumulated prejudices, they can examine freshly (though perhaps somewhat naively) the faults of men and institutions around them. The three books thus rehearse again the old theme of the discovery of evil. Huck learns of the cruelty man can show to his fellow beings; George realizes the evils in the walls that separate men from each other; and Holden discovers the sham which permeates society. Thus, their discovery of evil in society leads to an implicit social criticism in all three books.

The picaresque-like structure of Huck Finn and The Catcher and the loosely-related, short story form of Winesburg give the three boys a wide

range of people with whom they associate. Because they act from motives higher and therefore different from those of the "official culture," they frequently have conflicts with their society. Huck's conflict is with the romantic sentimentality of his age which blinds people to real moral issues. To illustrate this conflict, Twain lets Jim represent a higher kind of morality while Tom Sawyer represents the romantic sentimentality of the "official culture." Huck's moral development throughout the novel involves his gradual rejection of Tom's kind of morality of conformity and the affirmation of Jim's morality of the good heart. George Willard's principal conflict with society involves his need to express himself in a society which is frozen by fears and inhibitions. Like his society, George, too, is somewhat paralyzed in his ability to articulate his true feelings, but unlike the people whose stories he hears, he is well on his way to breaking the grotesque pattern. Holden's conflict with society is the conflict between the sensitive, sincere individual and the insensitive, artificial "phonies" that seem to be everywhere. Holden himself, despite his struggle to maintain his integrity in this kind of society, is aware that he has compromised with the phonies to some extent; indeed, the ordeal of this struggle has left him with deep psychic wounds.

For Huck and Holden the religion of the "official culture" offers a source of conflict. Though Huck early in the novel intellectually rejects the widow's admonition to "help everybody I could," his treatment of Jim later on the river shows that he has unconsciously heeded her advice. The fact that he feels that he is damned for helping Jim (he continues to judge himself by Miss Watson's narrow creed) shows how intense his sense of loyalty to Jim really is. This loyalty is another example of Huck's own moral code transcending that of the "official culture's."

Holden confesses that he is "sort of an atheist" and that he does not take most of the Bible seriously. In arguments with schoolmates about religion, he shows his basic disagreement with the dogmas of orthodox belief. Yet despite this, his character is marked by the gentleness and love for others which characterize the religious temperament, and his life bears resemblance to that of the religious martyr. His comparison to Christ by some critics, however, is superficial, and an attempt to make him into a boy-saint is futile.

Another indication of conflict that Huck and Holden have with their society is revealed through their lying. The fact that they do lie would seem to refute the thesis of their superior morality, but as detailed in Chapter III, their lying basically serves as a protective device to defend the feelings and safety of others against a hostile world; thus their lying can be morally justified.

George and Holden have conflicts with the "official culture" about sex. Though both have promiscuous love affairs, they preserve a strictly honorable, highly idealistic attitude toward Helen White and Jane Gallagher, the girls for whom they feel a real love.

Perhaps the most significant trait that the three boys have in common is their immediate, compassionate kindness which arises spontaneously out of their natures. Though it can be argued that this kindness comes out at least partially from their sense of being "outsiders" from conventional society and that their sympathy is usually limited to other such outsiders, it cannot be denied that in them there is a strain of pure love that mitigates many of their faults. Indeed, their association with a wide variety of people demonstrates their power to love their fellow man. Huck not only can show affection for a runaway Negro but can also

sympathize with his enemies, the two frauds whom he sees being tarred-and-feathered. George is able to respond to the pathetic lives of Winesburg with an emphatic kindness; he is the sole friend of lonely Wings Biddlebaum and the only person to whom Wash Williams will tell the story of his unhappy marriage. Holden's love embraces children, nuns, a senile schoolmaster, a serious kettledrummer, and even ducks on the Central Park lake. At the end of the novel he says he even misses Stradlater and Maurice, people who have dealt with him cruelly.

In summary, then, what are the boys' basic moral assumptions?

First, each boy has for every person he encounters a certain open affection that reaches beyond a mere casual pleasantry; the three possess for others an agape love that is both unconscious and intuitive. Huck's affection for others springs from the simple, natural goodness of his heart. George and Holden, being older than Huck, have a dim sense of "the still, sad music of humanity" which gives them a more sophisticated affection.

The second tenet of each boy's moral outlook is his determination to follow his own sense of right, even to the extent of conflicting with deeply established cultural standards. This conflict frequently produces a sense of guilt in the boys, though the alert reader sees that this guilt springs from a certain blindness in them, viz., their tendency to judge themselves by the standards of the "official culture" while following their own sense of right. This second tenet, too, is closely related to the first because most of the conflicts the boys have with their society grow from their placing the love for individuals above the conventions of society. Huck protects Jim's escape because he has more affection and respect for Jim than for the mores of his society. George

seeks to break the mold of the grotesque pattern not because he feels superior to the Winesburg folk but because he has a deep love for them and feels that he can be a means of expression for them. Holden's conflict with society grows out of his love for the innocents of the world such as Phoebe, James Castle, and Jane Gallagher. In trying to protect both these people and himself from the evils of "adultism," he is driven to a nervous collapse.

The third idea associated with the boys' moral outlook is their innocence. Innocence is here defined as a state of the heart rather than a matter of overt action. By this definition the boys are "innocent," for despite their erring, they preserve a basic goodness of heart which grows out of their affection for others. Their innocence is not a naive kind that grows out of inexperience; in the pageant of humanity in which all three boys are involved, they experience far more than the average adolescent. Furthermore, it would seem that the preservation of this innocence is becoming progressively more difficult in American society, as the three novels in this study and Ihab Hassan's fine critical work Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel would imply.³

On the basis of the similarity of the moral outlooks of the adolescents of Twain, Anderson, and Salinger, it would seem safe to assert that these three authors write in a similar moral tradition. Also, all three of them, as was shown in Chapter I, have an adolescent-like quality in their own natures that is reflected in Huck, George, and Holden. Through these characters the authors seem to be projecting their own adolescent-like innocence. Through these characters, too, they reveal the dilemmas that the sensitive idealist encounters as he struggles to maintain his own

moral integrity in an unsympathetic world.

Huck, George, and Holden not only have a similar moral outlook, but they also represent each author's attempt at defining the good heart, a tradition that goes back to Hawthorne's Hester Prynne and Melville's Billy Budd. But any definition of the good heart involves innocence and an inescapable confrontation with evil. This colliding of innocence and evil in the life of the callow individual is the central problem of all three and is perhaps, as Leslie Fiedler suggests,⁴ the central problem in American experience.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

¹ Ihab Hassan, Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel (Princeton, 1961), p. 41.

² Eric Solomon, "Huckleberry Finn Once More," College English, XXII (1960), p. 173.

³ Samuel Clemens, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, ed. Sculley Bradley, Richmond Beatty, E. Hudson Long (New York, 1962), p. 102.

⁴ Sherwood Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio (New York, 1960), p. 40.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ J.D. Salinger, The Catcher in the Rye (New York, 1961), p. 5.

⁷ Ibid., p. 155.

⁸ Ibid., p. 143.

⁹ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁰ Leslie Fiedler, An End to Innocence (Boston, 1955), p. 128.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 34.

¹² Edgar Branch, "Mark Twain and J. D. Salinger: A Study in Literary Continuity," American Quarterly, IX (1957), p. 153.

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