



YOUTH IN CRISIS: AN ERIKSONIAN INTERPRETATION OF ADOLESCENT IDENTITY IN “FRANNY”

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to discuss Jerome David Salinger’s short story “Franny” from an Eriksonian point of view. Erik Erikson, still a major figure in the study of personality development, pays substantial importance to adolescence since it is the main period of identity formation, which some adolescents find difficult to go through. Adolescents that cannot develop fidelity to their society end up having either fanaticism or repudiation as it has been illustrated through Salinger’s main characters in “Franny”. Contrary to the general perception of Salinger critics, Franny is not an adolescent to look up to when approached with Erikson’s theories on adolescence and identity formation.

Key Words: American Literature, Jerome David Salinger, Youth Fiction, Adolescence, Identity Formation

Özet: Bu makalenin amacı Jerome David Salinger’ın “Franny” adlı öyküsünün Eriksoncu bir bakış açısıyla incelenmesidir. Kimlik gelişimi konusunda önemini hala koruyan Erik Erikson’a göre, pek çok gencin sorunlu bir dönem olarak yaşadığı ergenlik dönemi, bireyin kimlik gelişiminin çoğunu içerdiği için özel bir öneme sahiptir. Salinger’in “Franny” öyküsündeki ana karakterlerde de görüldüğü gibi, bu dönemde topluma bağlılık geliştiremeyen bireyler ya fanatizme ya da reddedişe kapırlırlar kendilerini. Salinger eleştirmenlerinin genel kanısının aksine, Erikson’un ergenlik ve kimlik geliştirme kuramlarıyla bakıldığında, Franny hiç de imrenilecek bir genç değildir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Amerikan Edebiyatı, Jerome David Salinger, Gençlik Edebiyatı, Ergenlik, Kimlik Gelişimi

1. Introduction

One of the leading figures of youth fiction of the twentieth century Western literature is Jerome David Salinger. The success of his international best-seller *The Catcher in the Rye* and his short stories about the Glass family, which is generally dubbed The Glass Saga, has been mystified with some sensational events surrounding the author. Salinger has been leading an ascetic life for more than 40 years both as a public figure and an author. He does not accept interview proposals and he ferociously fights against people trying to write his biography. Furthermore, those who tried to take his photo secretly or entered his yard were backed-off with a raffle. One of his rare photos was taken by an intruder from the inside of a car while Salinger is seen right in front of the wind shield: his fist raised in fury evidently to crush the windshield if not the photographer, his eyes staring at the intruder and inevitably the camera with a stern hostility. John Wenke calls him “America’s preeminent author-in-absentia” (xi) since he has not published anything new since 1965. There are rumors that he keeps on writing in his study but Salinger has literary chosen to vanish.

Salinger mostly chose to write about adolescents or young people. His ever-popular adolescent hero of *Catcher in the Rye* is a boy of sixteen who cannot integrate into the mainstream adult culture. As Wenke indicates, five pieces of *Nine Stories* are about “the conflict between the innocent, if problematic, world of children and the decadent, sterile world of adulthood”... and three of them are on “the alienation of a post-adolescent youth not initiated into manhood” (31). *Franny and Zooey*, a novella comprised of two longish stories, is mainly about the youngest member of the Glass family. The novella is generally discussed as a piece of the Glass Saga and a discourse on Far East religions because of the invasive theme of religion it contains. However, when “Franny”, the first story in *Franny and Zooey*, is stripped off the mysterious Glass connotations and discussed in isolation as an individual story, it can be seen that it is perhaps the most straightforward illustration of identity crisis most adolescents are prone to suffer from.

2. Common Representations of Adolescence

Salinger is not alone in the attempt of rendering young people as one can promptly remember the traditional Bildungsromans of the nineteenth century represented mainly by *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield* of Charles Dickens. In traditional Bildungsromans childhood or adolescence is depicted as a problematic period at the end of which the protagonist matures and reaches commonsense. Such portrayal of adolescence is not limited to traditional Bildungsromans; social sciences as well as biology seem to represent adolescence as a problematic period. As Christine Griffin indicates, the first person to discuss adolescence seriously is G. Stanley Hall, who dominated the general conception of adolescence up to 1980s. Hall's two-volume influential work, focusing on young people and their relationships with education, family, sexuality and employment, "provided a firm biological foundation for the dominant concept of adolescence which is still with us today: the 'storm and stress' model. Adolescence is seen as a potentially distressing time for *all* young people, owing to the inevitable hormonal upheavals associated with puberty that are assumed to set the young people apart from the world of 'mature' adulthood" (18-19).

Griffin asserts that the mainstream representation of youth as "youth as trouble" has changed more into "youth in trouble" over the time since the 1980s. While the new understanding quits considering youth a uniform, homogenous body in race, ethnicity, gender, class and ability, it still goes on regarding adolescence a problematic period from a different perspective. For example, in 1980s a number of discussions took place around the crisis awaiting young people not because of unemployment, lack of education or poverty but because of the mismatch between biological and social definitions of youth. While biology suggests that one is an adult at the age of, say 18, the society still considers the same person a child because of his dependence on the family (Griffin 20). This contradiction, among many other conflicts of adolescence, creates an identity problem for many young people.

3. Erikson's Theory of Personality Development

Though an early-twentieth century figure, Erik Erikson is still accepted as one of the leading scientists to deal with adolescence. His works such as *Childhood and Society* (1950), *Identity and the Life Cycle* (1959), *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (1968) and *The Life Cycle Completed* (1982) are particularly revealing since Erikson does not isolate youth but elaborates on it as a part of life and hence, as a fundamentally significant stage in personality development. Furthermore, being a man of letters interested in psychology, sociology, psychoanalysis and anthropology, he has an interdisciplinary approach to the development of personality.

Erikson is generally quoted as a Freudian ego-psychologist. It is true that he accepts the basic theories of Freud on id-ego and super-ego; he also partially accepts Freud's five stages of personality development. However, he added three more stages to Freud's theory by indicating that personality development does not end with adulthood but goes on up to deathbed. In re-treatment of the first five stages of Freud as well as his own stages, Erikson adopts a social and cultural approach since development of personality takes place in a social setting.

In *Identity: Youth and Crisis* Erikson starts explaining the personality development theory with the epigenetic principle:

Whenever we try to understand growth, it is well to remember the *epigenetic principle* which is derived from the growth of organism *in utero*. Somewhat generalized, this principle states that anything that grows has a ground plan, and that out of this ground plan the parts arise, each part having its time of special ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functioning whole. (*Identity* 92).

The epigenetic principle suggests that "we develop through a pre-determined unfolding of our personalities in eight stages. Our progress through each stage is in part determined by our success, or lack of success, in all the previous stages" (Boeree 3). Erikson states that each stage includes a certain crisis. This crisis, psychosocial in content, is not very different from neurotic conflict of Freud since both are normative. Once these crises are overcome successfully one by one, the individual

accumulates his means of leading a healthy life. For Erikson psychological health is more than mere existence or staying away from illnesses: the outcome of successful tackling with crises is a “vital personality... re-emerging from each crisis with an increased sense of inner unity, with an increase of good judgment, and an increase in the capacity ‘to do well’ according to his own standards and to the standards of those who are significant to him” (*Identity* 92). The personality characteristics man accumulates in each stage is later called vital virtues in *Identity: Youth and Crisis* though today they are shortly called virtues.

Each stage has an optimal time for the attainment of the endorsed virtue which includes finding a balance between a positive and a negative characteristic. To be precise, the virtue of hope of the first stage of life is attained when the child finds a balance between trust and mistrust. He must learn mostly to trust people but he must also develop a capacity for mistrust by providing a balance between the positive and the negative element. Otherwise, he will develop to be a gullible adult. Consequently, the task of crisis resolution, i.e. accumulation of virtue, is not to eliminate the negative element and adopt the positive of the crisis. Only when he learns who to trust and who not to, the child is accompanied with the virtue of hope, which helps him throughout his survival. In cases where the individual is not able to provide a balance, he may develop maladaptations and malignancies. A maladaptation, the less harmful of the two, involves too much of the positive characteristics whereas a malignancy is having too much of the negative. Resorting to the first stage, we can state that if the child does not develop the virtue proper, he might have the maladaptive tendency of believing everyone and suffer from sensory distortion. In the other case, he might not be able to trust anyone and develop withdrawal distinguished with depression, paranoia and psychosis (Boeree 4-6).

4. Erikson’s Theories on Adolescence

As the titles of Erikson’s books suggest, he attributes a major importance to identity and consequently to adolescence since identity formation is mostly completed in the adolescence. In Richard Steven’s words “...[t]he phase which in many respects has perhaps most fascination for Erikson is adolescence. This is the time of physical and social changes where developing a sense of *identity* becomes the focal issue” (49). Ego growth is completed by the end of adolescence in three steps according to Erikson: introjection, childhood identifications and identity formation. In initial stages of development the infant, through the mechanism of introjection, incorporates the mother’s image. The mother and the baby mutually integrate each other’s identity, if we can speak of the infant’s identity in this stage. Once the baby gets older, he gets into contact with more people, namely, the family members including parents, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles and grandparents and as a result, chooses one or more reliable person whom he can identify himself with. Introjection should be left back in order for identification to take place. Finally, the child, who is introduced to a larger society and who is no more content with his previous role models, should abandon his childhood identifications so as to form his own identity (*Identity* 158-159).

This new identity is comprised of both social and individual values. For this reason, Erikson contents

The adolescence process... is conclusively complete only when the individual has subordinated his childhood identifications to a new kind of identification, achieved in absorbing sociability and in competitive apprenticeship with and among his age mates. These new identifications are no longer characterized by the playfulness of childhood and the experimental zest of youth: with dire urgency they force the young individual choices and decisions which will, with increasing immediacy, lead to commitments “for life” (*Identity* 155).

In *Childhood and Society* Erikson further emphasizes the seriousness of the crisis in this stage. The adolescent’s interaction with the society is at a larger scale now, which brings about the idea that he has to integrate in the society by developing an identity that is approved by the society:

The adolescent mind is essentially a mind of *moratorium*, a psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood, and between the morality learned by the child, and the ethics to be developed by the adult. It is an ideological mind – and, indeed, it is the

ideological outlook of a society that speaks most clearly to the adolescent who is eager to be affirmed by his peers, and is ready to be confirmed by rituals, creeds, and programs which at the same time define what is evil, uncanny, and inimical. (*Childhood* 262-263)

The idea of abandonment of previous identification and formation of new identity are what makes this period problematic: "...in puberty and adolescence all samenesses and continuities relied on earlier are more or less questioned again... The growing and developing youths... are primarily concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are... (*Childhood* 261). Consequently, when the previous "samenesses" are abandoned, it is only natural that some youths cannot go through this stage successfully and confront with role-confusion. As Erikson states "...[t]he danger of this stage is role confusion" (*Childhood* 262).

In a social setting and communal life, role confusion is almost synonymous with identity confusion as identity, to a certain extent, is in alignment with the society and its expectations from the individual. However, identity confusion, in Erikson's theory, is not altogether a detrimental force. It is one of the elements of the psychosocial crisis and consequently, a certain portion of it is necessary. The adolescent has to find a balance between identity confusion and identity so as to reach the virtue of fidelity to society. Fidelity to society, as Boeree states, should not be understood as blind obedience to and total acceptance of social values. It is more like an acceptance in spite of the imperfections his society has (Boeree 9). It must be added that by society one should necessarily mean the society the adolescent belongs to. This society can be as small as a village, a certain youth culture, a cult or a group of young people going to the same school. It is only unthinkable to expect the adolescent to accept all the values of the bigger society represented by the country, nationality or race given to the adolescent since identity, as hinted by Erikson as well, is a consequence of social interaction.

Erikson rightly points out that "...[y]oung people can ... be remarkably clannish, and cruel in their exclusion of all those who are 'different,' in skin color or cultural background, in tastes and gifts, and often in such petty aspects of dress and gesture as have been temporarily selected as *the* signs of an in-grouper or out-grouper" (*Childhood* 262). Such young people represent a group that has not been able to resolve the conflict between identity and identity confusion; their case actually signals a downturn in their identity formation stages. Those who are "clannish and cruel" when faced with the "different," as a matter of fact, go back to the previous stages of identity formation. They either totally identify with their group norms leaving very little space for their individual values or repudiate their membership to the society they live in. In this case the adolescent lives in a society for which he feels contempt and all his identity is based on his individual values. Although Erikson calls the first case totalism (*Life Cycle* 74), I prefer to adopt Boeree's term of fanaticism (9) for the sake of clarity. The second case is called repudiation (*Life Cycle* 73). Consequently, adolescent who cannot provide a proper balance between identity confusion and identity, either face the malignancy of repudiation or the maladaptive tendency of fanaticism.

5. Salinger's Adolescent Characters in Franny

Salinger's main characters in "Franny" are in the fifth stage of development according to Erikson's theory, which suggests that they are supposed to be in the process of identity formation or have completed it. "Franny" reveals a lot about the extent of the success of Franny Glass and her boyfriend Lane Coutell in identity formation. Traditional readers as well as most critics of Salinger erroneously tend to see Franny and Lane in a binary opposition: they praise Franny for being sensitive and genuine whereas condemn Lane for being shallow and phony. However, a beholder equipped with the knowledge of Erikson's theory of identity development easily sees that Franny is not a saint to be admired and Lane is not uniquely, if not evil, ridiculous. He can easily interpret that both characters are confused adolescents who could not successfully complete their identity formation. Consequently, from an Eriksonian point of view, Lane has the maladaptive tendency of fanaticism and Franny is suffering from repudiation.

"Franny" has very little in terms of plot: Franny and Lane meet at a train station, take a taxi to leave

Franny's stuff at the place she would stay, go to a restaurant to have lunch and have a long and dysfunctional conversation, which turns into a bitter quarrel, until Franny faints because she cannot take her identity confusion any more. In the opening of the short story Lane is waiting at the train station for Franny. While waiting on the platform, Lane reads Franny's last letter once again. The letter informs Lane of her visit and gives the reader some information about Lane, Franny and their relationship. Being written by Franny, some of the information in the letter can simply be dismissed as subjective comment until they are vindicated or refuted. Still we are informed that Lane at times goes "reticent" (10), and he analyzes "everything to death" (11). That they have danced only twice in eleven months suggests that they have been dating almost for a year. That she says "I love you" six times in a relatively short letter overtly indicates that she has strong feelings about him but the frequency of the love expression at the same time sheds skepticism over the reliability of the emotion involved. She complains that he "did not say once" (10) in his last letter that he loves her but Lane probably believes he loves her in his own fashion and hopes to spend a good weekend together. What he does not know at the time of reading the letter is that Franny is coming in a peculiar state of mind which she would later explain as "I just never felt so fantastically *rocky* in my entire life" (24) and "I think I'm going crazy. Maybe I'm already crazy" (26). Not long before does the reader have the chance to get informed both about the characters and their relationship.

5.1. Lane, the Fanatic

It is the weekend of the famous Yale game and the train station is full of boys waiting for their dates. Lane is introduced as "one of the six or seven boys out on the open platform. Or, he was and he wasn't one of them" (9). The narrator's hesitance to call Lane "one of the boys" is not without reason: he intentionally stands outside the "conversation range of the other boys" (9). Furthermore, when a Sorenson comes out of the busily talking groups of boys to ask a question about a school assignment, we are made to understand that Lane is not very fond of Sorenson, not because he knows Sorenson but because he has "a categorical aversion to his face and manner" (11). Lane's hesitance to join other boys' conversation might have simply been out of shyness if the narrator had not told us that Lane categorically dislikes Sorenson, which implies a conscious choice and which has further implications other than mere shyness. He deliberately stays away from the other boys because he believes that he belongs to the intellectual fringe of his college. This is such a strong belief that he tries to fit into that label with all his might. He is taken up so much by this belief that his identity formation has been damaged and has become a fanatic, which altogether means that all his identity is invaded by the norms of so-called intellectuals. In the final analysis, he ends up a caricature of an intellectual who has no existential identity.

The first sign of his fanatic intellectuality is implied in the very beginning. At the train platform he is described as "wearing a maroon cashmere muffler... giving him next to no protection against the cold" (9). The muffler, a symbol of intellectuality in the past or pseudo-intellectuality at present, is useless against the cold but it is very useful indeed to expose his intellectuality. His choice of restaurant, too, is in line with his group's norms: he takes Franny to Sickler's, "a highly favored place among, chiefly, the intellectual fringe of students at the college" (14). This is the right place to be for him where he can show up and get the approval of his fellow intellectual brothers. For this reason, when they are seated and served the first drinks, he feels completely content: "... Lane sampled his [drink], then sat back and briefly looked around the room with an almost palpable sense of well-being at finding himself ... in the right place with an unimpeachably right-looking girl – a girl who was not only extraordinarily pretty but, so much the better, not too categorically cashmere sweater and flannel skirt" (15). Consequently, both the restaurant and the girl he goes there with, alongside the useless muffler, are mere instruments of his struggle to look like an intellectual.

Like most fanatics, he is in need of approval of the group since his existence is only justified in the group. That is why Lane looks around to see whether other people of the group have seen him there with "the right-looking girl in the right place". Lane would once again look around when Franny leaves the table after a severe quarrel. His sense of well-being has gone now and he does not want anyone to understand it:

At that moment... he chanced to look up from the table and see someone he knew

across the room – a classmate, with a date. Lane sat up a bit in his chair and adjusted his expression from that of all-round apprehension and discontent to that of a man whose date has merely gone to John, leaving him, as dates do, with nothing to do in the meantime but to smoke and look bored, preferably attractively bored. (22)

One other symptom of fanaticism Lane displays is the refusal to accept the validity of any other point of view other than his or that of his group. In fact that is what Franny means by “analyzing things to death”. He argues with people until he completely obliterates the other point of view and until he is obviously the victor. When Franny and Lane argue about the professors in the Modern Languages Department Franny attends, not as stubborn as Lane and not feeling well already, Franny suggests that they change the topic. “But Lane couldn’t let a controversy drop until it had been decided in his favor” (20). Although Franny states that she does not feel well almost twenty times in three pages during their quarrel, he takes no notice of it since he is engrossed with the idea of being right in the argument.

His manner of argument, devoid of his personal values, too, demonstrates how fanatic he is. He relies completely on group norms and the judgment of the authorities of the group. He believes that Franny’s department has two of the best professors in the country. Whether he knows these people personally or not is unknown; what is known is that he believes they are good professors simply because their poems have been anthologized. Completely ignoring the idea that one might be a bad poet in spite of being anthologized, he accepts the value judgment of the intellectual authorities who let them in the anthologies. He employs the same logical fallacy once again when Franny criticizes an actor for being too lyrical in his performance. For Lane, the actor must have been good since he got “terrific reviews”: “I mean if some of the best critics thought this man was terrific in the play, maybe he was, maybe you’re wrong” (28). For Lane, one is terrific if he has been approved by the intellectual gods. Just before interrupted by Franny he is about to say Franny has not “exactly reached the ripe, old-” age to make correct judgments (28).

As the incidents above demonstrate, Lane’s problem is that he could not go through the steps of identity formation sanely. Though we do not know anything about his childhood identifications, it is for sure that at the time of developing his own identity, he remained in the identification stage only by changing the object to be identified with. As it has been stated before, Erikson holds that identity formation, to certain extent, is a social process that is based on abandonment of childhood identifications through “selection and commitment” (*Life Cycle* 73). In simple terms, with the implication that the desired end result is fidelity to the society which can be achieved through developing a socially acceptable identity, the adolescent chooses what to commit himself to. This process still requires the existence of a “conscious ‘I’ ”: “... a lasting sense of self cannot exist without a continuous experience of a conscious ‘I,’ which is the numinous center of existence: a kind of *existential identity*, then, which... in the ‘last line’ must gradually transcend the psychosocial one” (*Life Cycles* 73). At a time Lane must develop his identity by obtaining socially acceptable and personally desirable values from his environment, he identified this time with a group, namely the intellectual circle of his college. The invasion of the group norm of his personality is so complete that his “existential identity” literally ceases to exist. In the end the audience sees only a caricature of an intellectual and nothing else in his dysfunctional identity. Everything he does throughout the short story, from the way he speaks to the issues he talks about, emphasizes again and again that he is a fanatic. Perhaps what is most revealing is that we know nothing about his personal life: all he talks about is authors, critics, professors and other so-called intellectual students of his school.

5.2. Franny, the Repudiator

“Franny” was first published in the *New Yorker* in 1955 and later was made into a book with “Zooney” in 1961. There is an insignificant debate over whether “Franny” was initially intended as a part of the Glass Saga or not. Franny’s surname is not mentioned in the short story but both in “Zooney” and other works of Salinger it is revealed that Franny is the youngest member of the Glass family. Though her ancestry is not really significant when read as an individual story, her

membership to the Glass family has restricted the perception of many Salinger critics. They have been too willing and ready to assign her some positive attributes. For example Warren French argues that “Franny ... and Lane Coutell serve as excellent allegorical representations of the sacred and profane unhappily coupled” (91). To further his argument he adds Franny is “a period piece, reminding us of a time when perhaps the ultimate American failure resulted from an attempt to confront too much insensibility with too much sensibility” (93). Similarly John Wenke saves Franny from criticism by stating “... Salinger directs all his contempt for Ivy League phonies into his mocking depiction of their pseudointellectuality ... Salinger’s general target is phoniness. More precisely, it is the pretentiousness associated with smug intellectuality, the presumption of analytical superiority” (67).

Those who are critical of the conformity the American dream involves and phoniness of people might argue that Franny is a much saner person compared to Lane. Considering his attachment to the Glass family, it is obvious that Salinger, too, approves Franny more than Lane. However, cases like hers represent a “core-pathology” according to Erikson (*Life Cycle* 32). She already makes a suspicious entrance to the short story with her letter. On the one hand, she sounds like a very ordinary girl who complains about her boy friend’s reluctance to say “I love you.” On the other hand, she likes ancient poetry and plans to write her assignment on Sappho. Her most puzzling remark comes at the very end of her letter: “Let’s just try to have a marvelous time this weekend. I mean not try to analyze everything to death for once, if possible, especially me” (11). Wenke rightly states “[a]s a correspondent Franny is affectionate and resentful, laudatory and critical, adoring and irritable, effusive and retentive... The letter indeed reveals ‘strain’ and self-division. It offers signs of Franny’s inchoate breakdown” (68-69). The signs of identity “breakdown” she is suffering from would be manifest very soon.

She leaves the train to meet Lane in a very positive mood: she greets him “pleasurably”, kisses him “spontaneously” (12) and animatedly talks about unimportant things like the people she saw on the train or the clothes she brought for the weekend. However, when she learns that Lane could not arrange the place she wanted to stay, the audience gets to learn about another aspect of her feelings about Lane. Though she has written many amorous expressions in her letter, unhappy with the place Lane arranged for her to stay, she thinks he is inept: “Sometimes it was hell to conceal her impatience over the male of the species’ general ineptness, and Lane’s in particular” (13-14). Thinking on his ineptness immediately makes her feel guilty. She would surrender to the sense of guilt once again right after saying “Oh, it is lovely to see you... I’ve *missed* you” (14) because she promptly realizes that she does not mean them at all. Later she experiences the same feeling when she realizes that Lane has taken her to Sickler’s to show off with her “extraordinarily beautiful” girlfriend. The repetitive sense of guilt that haunts her is not without reason. To understand her state of mind we should also ask the same question Lane asks her: “What the hell’s happened to you in the last couple of weeks?” (27).

Franny has been going through identity confusion in the last couple of weeks. Being a successful student and a competent actress in the Theatre Department always acting the leading roles, she was an adolescent who seemed well-integrated into her society. However, lately she has grown critical of the values of her society, which can be described as, like that of Lane’s, the intellectual circle. She believes that people in this circle are phonies who follow the rules set out for them without any question and belief in them. Consequently, her long conversation, or rather discussion, with Lane in the restaurant is full of critical comments about the members of her society. Being a fanatic member of that society, Lane is the first person to get his share of bitter remarks.

Unsurprisingly enough, Lane talks about a paper he has written at length “as someone who has been monopolizing conversation for a good quarter of an hour or so” (15) when they are seated in the restaurant. Though the lovers were away from each other for more than a month, Lane twice suggests that she takes a look at the paper in spite of her terrible state of mind. It is obvious that she is not genuinely interested in what he is talking about as is evident from her digressive remarks on the food or drinks. Running out of her patience, she finally indicates that he is “talking like a section man. But exactly” (17). She explains what a section man is to Lane in the following sentences:

... where I come from, a section man's a person that takes over a class when the professor isn't there or is busy having a nervous breakdown or is at the dentist or something. He's usually a graduate student or something. Anyway, if it's a course in Russian Literature, say, he comes in, in his button-down-collar shirt and striped tie, and starts knocking Turgenev for about a half hour. Then, when he's finished, when he's completely *ruined* Turgenev for you, he starts talking about Stendhal or somebody he wrote his thesis for his M.A. on. Where I go, the English Department has about ten little section men ruining things for people, and they are so brilliant that they can hardly open their mouths – pardon the contradiction. (17-18)

Though she later apologizes for being so destructive, she cannot help adding that she is “just so sick of pedants and conceited little tearer-downers” (19) that she considers quitting her department: “It's just that if I'd had any guts at all, I wouldn't have gone back to college at all this year. I don't know. I mean it's all the most incredible farce” (19).

Franny's feeling of guilt is closely associated with her real emotions about Lane because in her view Lane is also one of those people she detests. Although she knows that Lane is a shallow boasting phony, she continues her relationship with him and that is why she is overcome by the feeling of guilt. She also feels a strong sense of embarrassment for leading the life she has because she cannot share any values with the people around her. If we consider that a young person's life is mostly covered by education and hobbies, we see that Franny only experiences discomfort and shame at school and the Theatre Department. For school she declares “I wish to God I could meet somebody I could respect...” (21). As for the Theatre Department, it is full of “nasty little egomaniac(s)” and she quits it:

‘I just quit it, that's all,’ Franny said. ‘It started embarrassing me. I began to feel like such a nasty little egomaniac... I don't know. It seemed like such poor taste, sort of, to want to act in the first place. I mean all the *ego*. And I used to hate myself so, when I was in a play, to be backstage after the play was over. All those egos running around feeling terribly *charitable* and *warm*. Kissing everybody and wearing their makeup all over the place, and then trying to be horribly natural and friendly when your friends came backstage to see you. I just hated myself...’ (27).

The people in the Theatre Department are in the same paradigm with Lane because, with their big egos, they all want “*get* somewhere, do something distinguished and all, be somebody interesting” (28).

While they are doing all these, they perfectly conform with the values of their society. Franny's bitter words on Wally Campell, a friend of Lane, show that she extends her criticism to Lane's vain friends as well. She believes that “they look like everybody else, and talk and dress and act like everybody else” (25). She can pretty well predict when they are going to be “charming”, “nasty” or “bragging” (25). They spend their summer vacations doing things approved by their so-called intellectual fellows like bicycling through Wales, working for an advertising agency or painting scenery. Even the ones that seem not to conform with the society, the bohemians per se, “are conforming just as much as everybody else, only in a different way” (26). Consequently, “[e]verything everybody does is so - I don't know – not *wrong*, or even mean, or even stupid necessarily. But just so tiny and meaningless and –sad-making” (26). As a result, she cannot survive in such a society that is both highly conformist in their own ways and pretends to be different from the others. She is sick of herself and “everybody else that wants to make some kind of a splash” (29).

Her response to the conflict she is in is total repudiation. As she insistently remarks she is sick of ego, hers and everybody else's, but she belongs to a community based on inflated egos. She does not want to be one of these people and consequently quits the Theatre Department and wants to have the courage to drop out of the school as well. Unable to develop fidelity to her society, she chooses to repudiate her membership to this society. Her long and severe argument with Lane is an embodiment her repudiation.

Repudiation can take the form of diffidence or defiance according to Erikson. In the first case the

adolescent displays “a certain slowness and weakness in relation to any available identity potential” whereas defiance “is a perverse preference for the (always also present) negative identity: that is, a combination of socially unacceptable and yet stubbornly affirmed identity elements” (*Life Cycles* 73). Erikson holds that a certain degree of repudiation is necessary if the available roles are limiting the adolescent’s potential to develop his identity through synthesis. However, when dominant, defiance “can lead to a sudden and sometimes ‘borderline’ regression to the conflicts of the earliest experiences of the sense of ‘I,’ almost a desperate attempt at self-birth” (*Life Cycles* 73-74). In plain words, adolescents suffering from defiance totally reject their social identity through repudiation of their social existence and rely completely on the existential “I”. In sharp contrast with that of fanatics, their identity is overrun by their personal values, like that of a baby just born into the world.

Franny’s repudiation can be seen in the case of defiance since she cries out loud that she wants to be “an absolute nobody” (29). Quitting the theatre is the humble first step of being an absolute nobody; she takes the conclusive step during the story. When she leaves the train, she holds a pea-green cloth bound book in her hand. Lane notices the book and inquires about it but Franny dismisses the question by saying it is just a book she was reading on the train. However, later we understand that this book is of special importance to her. At the first peak of their heated discussion, Franny goes to the lavatory where she cries “for fully five minutes” in an “almost fetal position... without trying to suppress any of the noisier manifestations of grief and confusion, with all the convulsive throat sounds that a hysterical child makes when the breath is trying to get up through a partly closed epiglottis” (23). Later she gets the book from her bag, glances at it and presses it on her chest firmly. The references to birth just before she takes the book are with good reasons since the book represents her new life away from the shallow values of her society.

The book, as she later unwillingly starts to tell Lane, is a religious book titled *The Way of a Pilgrim* written by a Russian peasant in the nineteenth century. The peasant starts a journey to learn what it means to pray incessantly as it is advised in the Bible. On his way he meets a starets from whom he learns the “Jesus Prayer”: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me”. He is to say this prayer without ceasing until it gets self-active. As Franny tells Lane, in spite of his irrelevant interruptions, one is not even expected to believe in what he says at the beginning. If one goes on saying the prayer incessantly, the quantity becomes quality and it is synchronized with the prayer’s heartbeat. In the end it “has a tremendous, mystical effect on your whole outlook ... I mean you do it to purify your whole outlook and get an absolutely new conception of what everything’s about” (34).

As a crude pseudo-intellectual but above all as a fanatic that cannot accept the possibility of an alternative to his point of view, Lane believes that “all this synchronization business and mumbo-jumbo” can only give one “heart trouble” and “all those religious experiences have a very obvious psychological background” (36). Franny is not a religious person; she is not even sure, as she confesses, if God exists or not. However, she regards the Jesus Prayer “an antidote to the entanglements of ego” (Wenke 73). It can be a means to finally become “an absolute nobody”. If her severe criticism of Lane, his friends and her own friends, - which altogether make her society - represent the first step of her repudiation, her attachment to the book forms the final step of repudiation since at the end of the short story, she starts to pray incessantly.

While explaining the book to Lane, she