

6-30-2016

Remembering Salinger's Franny And Zooey Through Pari And The Royal Tenenbaums

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REMEMBERING SALINGER'S *FRANNY AND ZOOEY* THROUGH *PARI* AND *THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS*

by

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Bachelor of Arts
Shahid Beheshti University, 2013

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts in

English

College of Arts and Sciences

University of South Carolina

2016

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the ways in which Mehrjui's *Pari* and Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums* borrow from Salinger's *Franny and Zooey*. My argument is that Salinger and the concepts he introduced in the book are remembered through both films. Being a product of their historical/cultural contexts, *The Royal Tenenbaums* embraces the aesthetics of the text and *Pari* converses with the spiritual aspect of the main text. Anderson's film captures the United States' preoccupation consumerism and the hollowness at turn of the twenty-first century, while *Pari* explores the angst and despair in the post Iran-Iraq war context of the film's release, feelings that were similar to that of the post World War II context in which *Franny and Zooey* was published. All texts introduce concepts like alienation while presenting characters that speak to/for the intellectuals of their time.

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1.1 Introduction

Jerome David Salinger rose to fame in the 1950s with the publication of *Catcher in the Rye*, a book that captured the pulse of the youth with its presentation of post-war angst and is still sometimes taught in American high schools (Albanese). Although literary critics remained intrigued by J. D. Salinger's mysterious life, for a while, there were fewer conversations regarding his literary works, perhaps because he refrained from publishing after 1965 and removed himself from the public eye. Nevertheless, after his death in 2010, the publication of all new Salinger biographies, the reissuing of his out-of-print stories in *Three Early Stories*, the release of a documentary about his life , and an internet leak of some of the author's unpublished short stories remind us that Salinger and his exceptional tales were never really forgotten; they have generated renewed interest in the author who had come to be seen as an important voice of the post-war period.¹ Literary critics, biographers, even screenwriters and filmmakers never lost interest in Salinger's literature.

While critics and biographers sought to explain Salinger's silence and analyze his canonical literature, many renowned directors and screenwriters attempted to get their hands on his popular stories. They knew that in many cases, a popular novel will turn into a popular film and bring success. Additionally, the episodic nature of Salinger's stories,

¹ There was an overflow of Salinger biographies after Salinger's death. A few months after the writer's death, *Salinger: A Biography* by Paul Alexander was published. Later *Salinger: A Life* (2012) by Kenneth Slawnski and *Salinger* (2014) by Shane Salerno and David Shields, which followed Salerno's documentary *Salinger*, in 2013, appeared.

² In 1948, Salinger approved the sale of rights to *Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut* (published in *Nine Stories*).

particularly *Franny and Zooey*, and the peculiar characters that people them have lead directors like Billy Wilder, Elia Kazan, and Steven Spielberg to seek the rights for a cinematic adaptation. However, as might be expected given Salinger's retreat from the world, they were never given permission (McAllister).² As a result, any attempt to adapt a visual text from J.D. Salinger's literary work has been done either obliquely or overseas.

While *Catcher in the Rye* has always been the center of Salinger critics' attention, it does not share the same cinematic qualities as some of Salinger's other works. Though less discussed academically, *Franny and Zooey* in particular captured the eye of some other filmmakers. While exploring the recurring philosophical concepts present in all of Salinger's literature, *Franny and Zooey's* episodic structure attracts those interested in literature adaptations; moreover, *Franny and Zooey* is peopled with dramatic characters who are suited for the screen. These characteristics have prompted those inspired by Salinger's tales to select it for adaptation.

The cinematic representations of *Franny and Zooey* include Dariush Mehrjooi's *Pari*(1995), which was made in a nation that has held no official copyright relations with the United States since the 1970s, and Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums*(2001), an American film that does not conspicuously cite the book as its inspiration, despite its obvious inspiration from it. These two films are the most conspicuous cinematic adaptations of *Franny and Zooey*. Mehrjui and Anderson directed and wrote the films

² In 1948, Salinger approved the sale of rights to *Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut* (published in *Nine Stories*). An adaptation of the story was made by the name *My Foolish Heart*. When Salinger saw the final production, he was outraged by the infidelity of the director and prevented the possibility of another adaptation (Fosburgh).

based on the book.³ There has been no academic treatment of the adaptation of *Franny and Zooey*, although reviews and blog entries have made casual note of *Franny and Zooey* as a source text. Therefore, this paper expands upon the casual similarities discussed in reviews, magazines and blog entries regarding the way Anderson and Mehrjui's films are in conversation with Salinger's *Franny and Zooey*.⁴ As the first attempt to fill in this gap, this paper explores the different ways in which Anderson and Mehrjui's films adopt conceptual and aesthetic features of Salinger's *Franny and Zooey*. While *The Royal Tenenbaums* demonstrates a materialistic, aestheticized version of *Franny and Zooey*, a reinterpretation that fits Anderson's cinematic style and an American mood of consumerism in the late 1990s, *Pari* showcases the spiritual and religious aspects of *Franny and Zooey*, an interpretation that matches the angst and despair in the post Iran-Iraq war context of the film's production and release. *Franny and Zooey* sheds light on the post-WWII struggles of intellectuals and *Pari* makes an effort to help us define the intellectuals' struggles after the Iran-Iraq war. The resurgence of interest in *Franny and Zooey* demonstrates the ongoing influence of the memorable author's works and their potential for remediation. I explore the ways in which *Franny and Zooey* (with its post-WWII context) could be adapted for the screen *within*, and relevant *to*, two such radically different contexts as the late capitalist, pre-9/11 U.S. of the early 2000s, on the one hand, and the post-war, oppressive Islamic regime of 1990s Iran, on the other, to discover what shared appeal, *Franny and Zooey* has in both contexts. Since there are aspects of the book that each film emphasizes and ignores, I intent to clarify what these points of overlap and divergence teach us about Salinger's work.

³ Wes Anderson co-wrote the screenplay with Owen Wilson and produced it with the help of Touchstone through American Empirical Pictures.

My argument is that the image of a despaired intellectual who is looking back instead of looking into the future is what is offered in all the texts most vividly. *Pari*, *Franny and Zooey*, and *The Royal Tenenbaum's* intellectuals, all try to seek comfort in their childhood home and reminisce about the past. Some follow the path of their dead brother like Pari, Franny, Dadashi, and Zooey and some by looking at the past as an image to feel the void of the fast and consumable world of post-modern time like the Tenenbaums .

The comparisons I present in this paper are based on the texts' themes, the filmmaker's and the writer's reputations, and the timeline in which each text is situated. In the sections below, I will first introduce the novel and the author. Then, I will offer close readings of *Pari* and *The Royal Tenenbaums* along with Dariush Mehrjui and Wes Anderson's backgrounds

1.2 *Franny and Zooey's* Plot Summary

J.D Salinger's *Franny and Zooey*, a *New York Times* bestseller, encompasses two interdependent stories that were republished in the same book in 1961. The two stories were first published in the *New Yorker* in 1955 and 1957, respectively (Alexander 26). *Franny and Zooey* tells the stories of two of the youngest member of a New York family, Franny and Zooey Glass, who bewilderedly debate the societal hypocrisies of their time and seek a path for spiritual redemption. Although told through the third person, each of the two stories focuses on each sibling's personal mindsets and is told following Franny's nervous breakdown.

Salinger wrote many stories about the Glass family, and they appear in *Nine Stories*, *Franny and Zooey*, and *Raise High the Roof Beam and Seymour*. The Glass family consist of Les and Bessie, the parents, Seymour Glass, Web Gallagher “Buddy” Glass, Beatrice “Boo boo” Glass Tannenbaum, Walter and Waker Glass (twins), Zachary Martin “Zooey” Glass, and the only daughter, Frances “Franny” Glass. Although *Franny and Zooey* focuses on the lives of the youngest children, Franny and Zooey Glass, it inevitably references the other members of the Glass family, as their lives are entangled with one another.

1.3 Salinger

J.D. Salinger (1919-2010) was born and raised in the upper west side of Manhattan, the location in which most of his stories, including *Franny and Zooey*, take place (Hamilton). He started writing stories and publishing them in renowned magazines like *The New Yorker*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *Collier's* from an early age. He was largely self-taught. He dropped out of New York University and Ursinus College and never received a university degree. Columbia University writing classes taught by Wit Burnett were the only academic education he ever acquired.

Salinger was drafted into the army in 1942, when the United States entered World War II. He served in Germany as an interrogator for three years (M. Salinger). When the war ended, Salinger was hospitalized for a few weeks, possibly due to a nervous breakdown. Seymour Glass’s suicide after his return from World War II in “A Perfect Day for Bananafish,” the distress that leads Holden to a mental institution in *Catcher in the Rye*, and the World War II veteran’s experiences with post-war flashbacks and

anguish in “For Esmé—with, Love and Squalor” all speak of Salinger’s concern for his own war-time experiences and what he witnessed (Hamilton).

When Salinger returned home from the war, he focused on his writing career again. He began submitting short stories to well-known periodicals, and after a few rejections, they began to appear in popular magazines, establishing him as a literary voice for his day. The short stories were critically praised, but it was his first novel, *Catcher in the Rye* (1951), that brought him fame. The novel is Salinger’s most controversial and most recognized book. It is one of the Modern Library’s one-hundred best novels of the 20th century and according to *Publisher’s Weekly*, the book has sold more than 35 million copies around the globe. Because of *Catcher in the Rye*’s success, expectations for *Franny and Zooey* were high in 1961, when it was first published; *Franny and Zooey* employs the same witty language and philosophical concepts as *Catcher in the Rye*. *Franny and Zooey* and later *Raise High Roof Beam: Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction* once again validated Salinger’s literary reputation (Dunn).

Salinger did not enjoy the massive public attention he received after publishing *Catcher in the Rye*, so, in the words of his most famous biographer, he “silenced himself” after publishing *Raise High the Roof Beam: Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction* in 1963 and “Hapworth 16, 1924” in 1965 that appeared in *The New Yorker* (Hamilton 8).⁵ Salinger’s seclusion--he left New York City for Cornish, New Hampshire in 1953 and spent the rest his life there—and refusal to publish anything after 1963 have resulted in both positive and negative responses from critics over the years. Salinger’s literary

⁵ Salinger himself, regarding his decision to be silent, wrote on the dust jacket flap of the first edition of the book *Franny and Zooey*, “it is my rather subversive opinion that a writer's feelings of anonymity-obscurity are the second most valuable property on loan to him during his working years” (qtd. in Dromm and Salter).

reputation was shaped by his decision to seclude himself from the public and, after great success, stop publishing.

Some Salinger scholars like Warren French and James Lundquist have called his reclusion “an inability to make the social adjustment expected of mature members of society” and have concluded that he is “a difficult writer to understand and to read with much sympathy”. But others have respected his protection of “anonymity-obscurity” and regarded it as “a conscious intellectual and spiritual stance,” comparing Salinger with other important authors like Hemingway, Kafka, Camus and Becket that were also unwilling to publish their work and maintain public appearances (Pattanaik 114).

Still other critics look at Salinger’s silence as a religious practice because Salinger, as I shall explore in greater detail below, was fascinated by Eastern religions like Buddhism. In his article “A Holy Refusal,” Dipti Pattanaik interprets Salinger’s silence as an effort to reach enlightenment. Reclusion and renunciation of world actions are important virtues in Buddhism and other similar religions like Vedanta that Salinger, according to Ian Hamilton, was “seriously” moved by—even to the point that he was willing to reclude like a monk (8). Salinger’s literature demonstrates his familiarity and fascination with these religions, from Holden Caulfield’s longing to live in reclusion in the woods, to *Teddy*’s mystic implications about reincarnation and joining “Brahma,” to the Glass children’s spiritual quest.⁶ Salinger describes, with a praising tone, his character , Raymond Ford, the protagonist in “The Inverted Forest” as someone who “did not speak

⁶ Brahma is considered the creator in Hinduism, another eastern religion that shares many characteristics with Buddhism and Vedanta. Buddy Glass lives a reclusive life in upstate New York, teaching in a women’s college. Seymour Glass leaves his family to go to war and lives an alienated life away from his family until he commits suicide. Franny’s nervous breakdown and Zooey’s constant murmur of Buddhist sayings are good examples of the family’s fascination with such religions.

much; he did not speak unless he had to speak” admitting the value of silence.(Hamilton 126).

Salinger considered writing a “spiritual tool” for himself because , after all, the above religions suggest that a man’s work should center around the journey and not the fruit and he never stopped writing presumably until the day he died, as observed by those who lived with him (Joyce Maynard and Margaret Salinger), but he stopped publishing his work soon after the first sights of success (Pattanaik 115,116). Given Salinger’s commitment and interest in these eastern religions, the reason behind his decision to stop writing for the public becomes clearer. One could argue that there is an inherent paradox between choosing a monk-like life and maintaining a desire to be published and widely read.⁷ Publishing, especially if it brings fame, means there is still attachment to the world of ambition. It’s possible that as soon as Salinger made this connection, he committed to never sharing another story with the public. Before he made this decision, however, he explored it in writings that *were* published. *Franny and Zooey* explores the concept of attachment to worldly actions and *Pari* appropriately draws on such concepts to a great extent.

⁷ Dipti Pattanaik makes the same claim in his article.

1.4 *Pari*

Thirty-four years after *Franny and Zooey*'s publication date, Dariush Mehrjui, a renowned Iranian filmmaker who has won numerous international film awards, directed and produced *Pari*.⁸ It premiered in Iran in 1995. As Mehrjui himself stated and the opening credits suggest, *Pari* was "loosely based" on *Franny and Zooey* (McKinley). Mehrjui's movie, whose second screening at the Lincoln Center in 1996 was canceled after Salinger's protest, is the story of Pari and his brothers "confronting the issues of art and religion in contemporary Iran" (McKinley).⁹ According to the director, the film is "a kind of cultural exchange" for people who follow his work. The cultural exchange perhaps refers to the same cynicism and spiritual redemption that Salinger's stories present. *Pari*'s central character is conspicuously based on Salinger's character Franny, and her family mirrors Salinger's Glass family.

When *Pari* premiered in Iran, many were already familiar with Salinger's work through *Catcher in the Rye*'s first translation in the 1960s and second translation in 1992. *Franny and Zooey* had yet to be translated into Farsi, however.¹⁰ The first translation (by Milad Zakariya) did not appear until 2001. The movie created interest in the translation of *Franny and Zooey*. Therefore, it is arguable that Mehrjui introduced another one of

⁸ Mehrjui has won The Don Quixote Award at the Berlin International Festival and the Silver Hugo award at the Chicago International Film festival. Mehrjui's groundbreaking 1969 film *The Cow (Gav)* is often recognized as paving the way not only for a "new wave" of Iranian cinema during the Pahlavi era but also for the post-revolutionary art cinema of the Islamic Republic that flourishes to this day (Richard Gabri)

⁹ In the same interview, Mehrjooi claimed that he "wrote him a letter indicating that [he] was just a small filmmaker doing an adaptation," and since he did not hear back, he went on making the movie.

¹⁰ According to National Library of Iran's website, it was first translated by Ahmad Karimi Hakkak and later by Mohammad Najafi. *Catcher in the Rye* was translated into Farsi in 2015 for the third time by Araz Barseghian (www.nlai.ir).

Salinger's literary works to Iranian readers mostly because of his personal interest in Salinger's work.

Darius Mehrjui's filmmaking career, education, and personal comments reveal his interest in philosophy and the existential state of humanity, the subjects that Salinger's books always touch on. In 1959, Mehrjui moved to the United States to pursue his undergraduate education at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) where he studied cinema and later philosophy. As a result, he gained estimable knowledge in both disciplines in one of the prestigious universities in the world. It was during his stay that he showed an interest in American literature and familiarized himself with Salinger's books. In one of his interviews, he claimed that *Franny and Zooey*, an American bestseller at the time Mehrjui was in the US, became one of his favorite books and that he had always intended to return to it. We know now that returning to it meant making a film adaptation of the novel (Mahani).

Taking advantage of his good interdisciplinary education, he gave lectures on film and English literature upon his return to Iran, where he became a central figure in the country's film industry (Wakeman). As a director, his fascination with both Iranian and world literature is very apparent since a large archive of his films are literary adaptations.¹¹ He has had a prolific filming career under both Iranian regimes (Pahlavi government and the Islamic government) and has received domestic and foreign appraisal before and after the Islamic Revolution, despite the censorship and oppression both regimes leveled on the cinema industry. Most of Mehrjui's films are critical of Iranian society of their time, and they often interweave everyday societal behaviors and values

¹¹ *The Cow, Diamond 33* etc.

along with life's greater questions and philosophical matters. A good example of this recurrent theme is Mehrjui's iconic film, *Hamun*, which has been deemed the best Iranian motion picture of all time by major Iranian film critics and film aficionados (Sadr).

Combining everyday societal values with life's greater questions and philosophies meant criticizing the society that lived, and still lives, under the Islamic regime.

Production of films and other forms of art in Iran were extremely constrained after the 1979 Islamic Revolution when the new, oppressive regime of the Islamic Republic was instated. Iranian authorities imposed Islamic values taken from the Koran and related scriptures on Iranian society and consequently, on Iranian cinema. The Koran was the ultimate truth, and any deviance from it was declared ungodly, unlawful and punishable.¹² Despite the oppressive atmosphere, Mehrjui managed to release his screenplays and films and remained an aboveground director. He continued to comment on multiple aspects of tradition and Islamic beliefs like the patriarchal concept that an infertile woman is doomed (a theme explored in *Leila* [1996]); he also commented on being an artist in an oppressive regime in *The Pear Tree* (1998), which depicts the main character facing writer's block because of the repressive atmosphere in which he lives.

As Mehrjui's career After years of restriction brought about by the Islamic Revolution, Iran's cinema began to experience new freedom in the 1990s because "the rhetoric of liberal-democratic civil society entered the public debate" and created the opportune moment for artists to engage in new conversations that were prohibited, like

¹² The Koran suggests that one man equals two women and that women should wear veils in front of all men who are not part of their immediate family. According to Islam, drinking alcohol is prohibited. Questioning "allah" and the prophets is considered a sin, etc.

questioning human existence and exploring religious and secular themes (Rivetti et al. 648). According to Rivetti and Cavatorta, “at the time, some intellectuals (called *roushanfekran-e nou*, new intellectuals or alternative thinkers) used the concept to denounce state authoritarianism and [bring a reformist movement into light]”. These intellectuals supported Mohammad Khatami, the regime’s renowned reformist, and his candidacy that emphasized changing the political discourse and a pathway to a “democratization” within the limits of an Islamic nation (648). The result was Khatami’s election in 1997; Iran entered a “reformist” era that was still dominated by Islamic beliefs but which permitted criticism and freedom of speech to an infinitesimal degree. There was more room to engage in existential conversations in the 1990s and early 2000s.¹³ A lot of writers and directors like Mehrjui, as I shall explain, interacted with both secular and Islamic concepts and managed to present amalgamated representations to the Iranian audience for the permission to be published.

Mehrjui’s critique of Iranian society was facilitated by his knowledge of Salinger’s literature and its critique of postwar American society. Salinger’s work received the most attention in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s, when America and its people were faced with the existential atmosphere of the Cold War. For instance, when the war ended, many writers like Salinger, who fought in the war, were dismayed and disillusioned by its aftermath, the possibility of an atomic bomb. A large number of post-war writers in America and other parts of the world turned to themes of alienation, disillusionment, and detachment, especially that experienced by intellectuals, who felt alienated from society because they were so appalled by what it had become

¹³ *Franny and Zooey*’s first Iranian edition came about six years after Mehrjui’s film and was translated by Milad Zakariya.

after the war. Startled and disheartened by human aggressiveness and the consequences of the war, the protagonists of the iconic novels of post-WWII like Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* in America, Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* in England and Albert Camus' *The Stranger* in France are in the habit of challenging societal values and searching for a new truth that does not involve massacre and atomic bombs.

In *Franny and Zooey*, we read about the distress that the Glass children feel following the suicide of their brother, a veteran. Seymour Glass commits suicide shortly after returning from the World War, a death that could be caused by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (anguish and depression as a result of witnessing bloodshed). As we read in *Franny and Zooey*, Seymour had been the most beloved and spiritual member of the family who took his own life, like many American veterans in the 1950s (Hendin and Haas). As the country bombed the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and the Cold War began, an atmosphere of fear was nourished by Senator Joseph McCarthy, who warned of the spread of Communism within the United States (Dunn). Domestic and foreign tensions permeated the country. Seymour's post-war suicide and Walt Glass's death in a "freakish explosion" in Japan remind readers of the post-war horror and the condition of American veterans (Salinger 53)

When Franny returns to the Glass's house, her brother comments on the family photo albums, old journals and old furniture, sarcastically stating that the "whole goddamn house stinks of ghosts" (103). The lost lives of Seymour and Walt animate a nostalgia for the good old days, a time when everyone lived in the same house and there were no tensions and no grief caused by the war. Thus, *Franny and Zooey* is not only the

story of Franny's quest for spiritual redemption, it is also the story of Franny and Zooey's effort to cope with a war that led to their brother's suicide and its aftermath.

When Mehrjui directed and produced *Pari*, the Iran-Iraq war (1980 to 1988) had ended seven years earlier but its aftershocks were still felt, much like the aftermath of World War II in 1950s America. The war ended with a ceasefire suggested by the U.N. It had left millions of casualties on both sides and two economies in decline. The Cold War relations between Iran and Iraq and the West that lingered after the war worsened when Iraqi authorities refused to remove their troops from Iranian borders and Iranians refused to free Iraqi prisoners as a result (Tarock). As was the case for American veterans in World War II, veterans of the Iran-Iraq War suffered from PTSD and their families faced new challenges as a result. The post-war struggles of Iranian society from one side and the ongoing oppression of the regime from the other created a similar alienated, disillusioned, and fearful atmosphere to that Salinger and his peers felt in post-WWII America.

Intellectuals like Mehrjui and Kiarostami attempted to define truth, challenge Islamic values and traditions, and consider possible reformations, opening up new discussions in Iranian cinema.¹⁴ In this moment of existential crisis, Iranian intellectuals, attempted to look for life's answers both within their own cultural traditions (e.g., ancient Persian philosophy) and beyond them (e.g., American literature). They did so to not only help their society but also to define their own character and their place within it (Sadr 128). Looking back at attempts to define the identity of intellectuals in the country

¹⁴ Kiarostami is perhaps the most critically acclaimed Iranian director to date. He has won all the major film awards around the world including the Academy Award and the Cannes award. According to Martin Scorsese, "Kiarostami represents the highest level of artistry in the cinema" (Jeffries).

in various visual and written texts, Sadr defines the 1990s intellectual identity with “four major traits: deep insecurity, political cynicism, personal mistrust and self-destruction” (218). Salinger’s personal life and the literature he produced speak of the same traits, so it is no surprise that at this point in Iranian history, when Iranians were facing the aftermath of the war, works like *The Catcher in the Rye* and later *Franny and Zooey* were being translated into Farsi (Persian) and widely read by young Iranians, especially those who aspired to identities of young intellectuals.

Thus, the demand increased for literature and film that offered a sympathetic, perhaps cynical, outlook on the post-war atmosphere like Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye*, with its frustrated protagonist and his dream of escaping society for living in the woods. Readers and viewers wanted new material that spoke to the current issues and emotions of the country. Thus, in the 1990s, filmmakers pushed the envelope and explored such philosophical concepts. Kiarostami’s *Taste of Cherry* (1997) and Mehrjui’s *Hamoon* (1990) and *Pari* all deal with intellectuals who are fed up with the status quo and its values and are either restless (e.g., Hamoon in *Pari*) or desensitized (e.g., Mr. Badii in *Taste of Cherry*) as a result. Their desire to isolate themselves from society takes on a Holdenesque nature.

In his extensive discussion of Iranian cinema, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, Hamidreza Sadr, who is one of the most prominent film critics of the nation, praises Mehrjui’s cinematic achievement regarding the concepts of detachment from the world. He claims that “[the alienation theme] and its relationship to several other character traits and attitudes in the context of contemporary politics was most fully developed in the insightful *Hamun*” (128). Here, Sadr calls Mehrjui “the representative of

intellectuals” in the 1990s, or the reformist era, and calls *Hamun* a “landmark of Iranian cinema, [which] captured [the intellectuals’] sense of malaise” (128). The protagonist of *Hamun* lends the book *Franny and Zooey* to his fiancé and urges her to read “the masterpiece”. This foreshadows Mehrjui’s next movie, *Pari*.

Given the limitations that intellectuals were faced with as a result of Islamic doctrines dominating the artistic world, Mehrjui’s task of transfiguring *Franny and Zooey* so that it would conform to strict Islamic measures was challenging. Mehrjui sought to make a version of *Franny and Zooey* that, even as it got past censors, would appeal to the Iranian audience in the 1990s, mainly through a close attention to religion and spirituality and by altering the religious concepts that Salinger presents in his book. Mehrjui places Franny in an Islamic Iran, names her Pari, and gives her visual Muslim characteristics. The effect is that sometimes it seems as if Franny is trapped in Iranian garments.

Pari’s character is explicitly based on Franny’s. The film captures a few days in the life of Pari while she goes through a state of anguish and perplexity following reading a book called *Solook (A Way to Spiritual Growth in Sufism)*. Pari’s book mirrors Franny’s obsession with the *The Way of a Pilgrim*, a book whose protagonist, according to Franny, goes on a pilgrim journey saying the Jesus Prayer along the way.¹⁵ Pari’s book belongs to her older brother, Asad (Salinger’s Seymour), who committed suicide by burning his house in the woods. We never learn the name of Pari’s other brother, the one she is closest to, the one who mirrors Zooey’s character. Pari calls him “dadashi,” which is a friendly way of saying “brother” in Persian. He lives with their mother, Azam, and strives to help Pari grow away from her distress by comparing the ways of Sufis to religious

¹⁵ The Jesus Prayer : “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner”.

figures like Prophet Muhammad, Ali (Prophet Muhammad's successor, according to Shia Islam) and Jesus. Dadashi does for Pari what Zooney does for Franny by discussing Jesus, Buddha and Ramakrishna (a Brahmanian figure).

Mehrjui's decision to allude to the Islamic world was smart and apropos. At a time when the Islamic doctrines governed Iranian cinema, Mehrjui's chances to get approval for his film's release lay in connecting the characters, the overall theme, and the visual representations, including the locations, to Islamic beliefs, but these alterations were subtle and did not change the overall message of the film. For instance, in Salinger's text, Franny and Lane are in a relationship but the book never mentions any future plan for them to get married. However, due to the Iranian regime's censorship regulations, pre-marital relationships were not recognized and were rarely allowed to be shown in films. As a result, Pari (Niki Karimi) has a fiancé (Farhad Jam) and the viewers know they are engaged in the first quarter of the movie, when Pari's fiancé wonders which city is preferable for the wedding ceremony. Pari lives in Tehran, the capital, and her fiancé lives in Isfahan, a major city to the north. An interesting visual decision is that Pari's character wears a version of a burqa, a traditional garment worn by women in Islamic, mostly Arabic, countries that covers all the body except the face (in some countries, some women cover their faces as well). Although all women in Iran were, and still are, required to cover their torso and their hair in public, a large population of Iranian women did not wear and still do not wear burqas in public. Most women, especially modern and progressive women, choose to wear scarves that cover their heads partially and a manteau with long pants and long skirts to cover their body. However, Mehrjui thought it better for the main character to wear a burqa. Perhaps he reached the

conclusion that *Pari* was more likely to be shown in the theaters if Pari appeared modestly dressed. Unlike the decision to depict Pari as engaged, however, Mehrjui's decision to have Pari dressed in a burqa is problematic because in Iranian cinema, women in burqas usually represent either conformity to traditional and Islamic values or entrapment in them. Pari represents neither. Nowhere in the film are we told that the society or her family dictate wearing a burqa. And Pari's restless and intellectual character in no way demonstrates a bowing down to Islamic values and conforming to traditions; in fact, her liberal character, and the film's theme are built around her questioning her beliefs, her behaviors, and what the professors at her college teach; therefore, the film's characterization of Pari does not justify her choice of clothes but it does show Mehrjui's effort in every aspect to make the film suitable for the Iranian context of its time. Most viewers recognized, and could still recognize, that Pari's clothes are a concession to the censors not an extension of her character.

Allusion to Islamic concepts and values was not the only technique that made *Franny and Zooey* and its adaptation presentable to the Iranian audience. The film's setting and locations play an important role in the presentation as well. In one scene, on the way to a restaurant, Pari asks her fiancé to pull over when they are near a famous vacated mosque, The Shah Mosque in Naqshe-Jahan Square. First, she goes inside and tries to calm her mind. Then, she makes her way to the dome that allows her to have a panoramic view of the surroundings. The classic Persian architecture of the mosque, Safavid art, and the prayers on the walls all speak of a Persian culture that predates the current regime and is known to every living Iranian generation. The use of Safavid art allowed the readers to identify with Pari.

The process of transforming the book's themes and abstract concepts was more challenging than the visual aspects like costumes and setting. The political regime censored any production that was deemed disrespectful of the values of Islamic faith, so there were many things to be changed about the story so that the production could pass the tests of the censors. Mehrjui solved this problem by turning to Islam, but not the mainstream Islam that was introduced by the Iranian government. Mehrjui likely determined that the mainstream Islamic faith (e.g., Sunni and Shi'ite) and its creeds were too narrow-minded to allow for the re-telling of the story of Franny and her inner struggles. Mainstream Islam dictates the following of a set of constraining rules and regulations with the promise of redemption in the after-life; but like all religions, Islamic faith did not remain anchored and took many forms and interpretations over the years. Among these forms and interpretations is Sufism and poems of the renowned thirteenth-century Persian poet, Jalall ad-Din Muhammad Rumi, known in the western world as Rumi, was one of its main followers in Iran. Sufism is a mystic interpretation of Islam and according to *Funk & Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia*, "the term sufi (Arab., 'man of wool') was coined in the early 9th century as a name for mystics whose ascetic practices included wearing coarse woolen garments". The encyclopedia claims that Sufism has mystical overtones and is defined as a longing to escape life's hardships specifically the ones brought by "the social and political upheavals of the time"; life's problems at the time of Muhammad's prophecy created "a tendency toward Quietism" which lead to the foundation of Sufism.

Mehrjui's artistic decision regarding using Sufism the worked in part because Salinger was heavily influenced by Eastern religions such a Zen Buddhism and Hindu

Advaita Vedanta throughout his life, and such religions share many characteristics with Sufism. *Franny and Zooey* (as well as Salinger's other books) includes many references to these and other eastern faiths.¹⁶ For instance, in a letter to Zooey, Buddy Glass reveals that he has been "lecturing to the faculty [about] Zen and Ma-hayana Buddhism" (29). In another instance, Zooey confesses to Mrs. Glass that he has been mumbling the "Four Great Vows" including attaining "the Buddha-truth" three meals a day every day since being introduced to them (47). In another instance, during Franny and Lane's talk in the restaurant, Franny unabashedly breaks out, "I am just sick of ego, ego" (16). The outburst captures her realization that she is fed up with her worldly desires, as well as her ambitions to become an actress. Consequently, she abandons her part in the play. These examples reveal how Salinger's interest in eastern religions are showcased in *Franny and Zooey*.

Not only are Salinger's books full of references to Buddhism, but his characters are always explicitly or implicitly following Buddhist teachings. Almost every Salinger character shares the same outlook on life: to be redeemed, one has to detach, to a certain degree, from worldly or societal desires. In *Franny and Zooey*, Salinger writes of Franny's fiancé, Lane Coutel's "lustful designs". Salinger's books frequently explore asceticism. Salinger's characters "subtly deny success...[signifying] the signs of austerity and voluntary denial of worldly pursuits, the kind of spiritual discipline expected of a *sadhaka*" (Pattanaik 118).¹⁷ Dipti R. Pattanaik, in his effort to interpret Salinger's silence through a close look at his characters, writes of the monk-like nature of all of them.

¹⁶ More on Salinger's fascination with eastern religions, Look at "The Holy Refusal": A Vedantic Interpretation of J. D. Salinger's *Silence* by Dipti R. Pattanaik.

¹⁷ *Sadhaka* is one who practices *Sadhana*. *Sadhana* means "to accomplish". *Sadhaka* is the person on the journey to be enlightened but he has not yet reached the goal. For more information, look at Klaus K. Klostermaier, *A Survey of Hinduism: Second Edition*, 346

Pattanaik claims that most of the characters that Salinger has created are in “the fringe of the dominant society” since they all share a Holden-like way of being (119). They criticize ambition and the ambitious society and aspire to leave it for good, like Salinger himself did. They all remind us of “an ideal Hindu monk who devotes all his efforts for self-realization and the greater benefit of the world”. Pattanaik calls Salinger’s works “stories with mysticism” acknowledging the same recurring theme of renouncing worldly desires that Mehrjui carries forward with his adaptation, by alluding to Sufism, the closest religious practice to Buddhism in Iran (119).

Considering restricted cinematic opportunities in Iran, Mehrjui uses Sufism as a replacement for Salinger’s Buddhist concepts in *Franny and Zooey*. Although not quite the same as other branches of Islam, Sufism is still an extension of Islam. The replacement worked because Sufism moves away from the cut-and-dried, strict doctrines of mainstream Islam and it is defined by the same ideas as religions like Buddhism (e.g., detachment from worldly desires). Mehrjui re-told the story of *Franny and Zooey* by customizing the religious themes Salinger employed, changing them to Sufistic themes. The transformation makes *Pari* more Iranian and less Americana. Sufism and Eastern mysticism was, and continues to be, deeply rooted in Persian culture. The film’s portrayal of mystical concepts is explicit and evident throughout the film: the mise-en-scene, the relationships, the characterization, the ongoing conversations, and the overall theme of the film.

A great example of Mehrjui’s effort to make *Franny and Zooey*’s story suitable for an Iranian audience is when Pari and her fiancé discuss poetry in a restaurant. To demonstrate her beliefs about poetry, Pari first repeats Franny’s lines, “I know this much,

is all. If you're a poet, you do something beautiful. I mean you're supposed to leave something beautiful after you get off the page and everything. The ones you're talking about don't leave a single, solitary beautiful thing" (11). Later, she adds to Franny's insights about poetry by quoting from *Muslim Saints and Mystics: Episodes from the Tadhkirat al-Auliya' (Memorial of the Saints)*, a book written by the Sufi Persian poet, Farid ud-Din Attar: "Sher Natijeye ka o hal last na samareye hefz o ghal, va az ayan ast na az bayan, va as asrar ast, na az tekrar, va az jooshidan ast na az kooshidan (their words are the result of work and not the fruit of preservation, it's from clarity not from wordiness, it's mysterious, not repetitive, it's from talent not from effort)"(n.p.). The quote praises the advice and the words of Sufis and pertains to Persian mysticism. Mehrjui to *Franny and Zooey's* themes of criticizing modern art, having unreachable, idealistic aspirations, and expressing cynicism toward society and its values, in this case, expectations of what poetry is or does. He does so by quoting from a Sufi poet.

In another scene, Pari's brother, "dadashi", quotes Rumi : "Man na manam, Na man manam (I'm not me and me is not I)." ¹⁸ The verse indicates forgetting about the "I" or "the ego" and getting unified with God. The verse Dadashi repeatedly mumbles when discussing spiritual matters with Pari should remind us of the same aloofness and disengagement prevalent in Salinger's works. Sri writes, "Rumi's poetry is not bound by any particular creed; it embodies...universal quest of the human soul for its divine Source and incorporates many...elements under the banner of an all-embracing Love for God" and discovery of truth, much like Buddha's quest for enlightenment (193). What prevents us from reaching that goal, according to Sufism and Buddhism as Salinger's characters

¹⁸ For more Rumi, look at : *The Essential Rumi* by Coleman Barks.

constantly obsesses over it, is “our carnal self (nafs), full of egotism and desire, which clouds our vision and veils the ever-present reality of the noumenon from our awareness” (Sri 197).¹⁹ Therefore, Rumi, perhaps the most important mystic poet of the Persian world, believed that it is the “lower self” and the ego that prohibits us from redemption and discovering the truth (197). This self is the same “ego” that Franny and Pari are sick and tired of. The ego and the theme of refrain from egoistic behaviors are re-presented in Mehrjui’s adaptation through the siblings’ long discussions about the book Pari is reading that might be inviting her to refrain from worldly desires because they are “egoistic” .

Zooey reminds readers over and over again of a similar notion of detachment, a theme that exists both in Buddhism and Sufism. For example, Zooey reprimands his sister about repeating the “Jesus Prayer” she has read in *The Way of a Pilgrim*: “you can say the Jesus Prayer from now till doomsday,” he says, and he reiterates the concept of abstinence from worldly desires. Zooey emphasizes, “if you don't realize that the only thing that counts in the religious life is detachment, I don't see how you'll ever even move an *inch*. Detachment, buddy, and only detachment. Desirelessness. ‘Cessation from all hankerings’” (198). At last, Zooey’s conclusions imply implementing the “desirelessness” into one’s craft or vocation like Salinger did into his own writing.

The intriguing ending of the book and the film come along with Franny and Pari reaching a more peaceful state of being. Zooey ends the book with telling Franny that cessation of engaging in worldly activities and reciting prayers are not necessarily the pathway to redemption and union with God. Worrying about having ambition and what others think also does not define a religious life. He tells his sister that:

¹⁹ Noumenon is what comes before phenomenon.

it's this business of desiring, if you want to know the goddam truth that makes an actor in the first place. Why're you making me tell you things you already know? Somewhere along the line—in one damn incarnation or another, if you like—you not only had a hankering to be an actor or an actress but to be a *good* one. You're stuck with it now. You can't just walk out on the results of your own hankerings. Cause and effect, buddy, cause and effect. *The only thing you can do now, the only religious thing you can do, is act. Act for God, if you want to— be God's actress, if you want to. What could be prettier?* You can at least try to, if you want to —there's nothing wrong in trying" (emphasis mine 198).

A similar dialogue takes place between Pari and Dadashi at the end of the movie. Pari's third brother repeats the same line, reminding his sister that "the only religious thing" to do is to act, and to live for the sake of living and not for the hope of gaining rewards or confirmations from others, an audience in their case because they are actors. The concept of living for the sake of living and being "God's actress" resonates well with Buddhist teachings of living in the moment and avoiding a constant desire, or ambition, for future rewards. It also appropriately echoes the same beliefs present in Sufism; and therefore, conveys the same message Zooley does. It tells us that Dadashi believes the source of redemption is in being "God's actress" meaning that we have to live and do what we do just for the fact that we are given life. Being alive is the sole reason to live.

Mehrjui's film was successful in transferring Salingeresque mystic themes to Iranian Sufi beliefs and capture the essence of a post-war Iran that has left Iranian intellectuals alienated and disappointed. It was not, however, successful in developing and modifying the characters of Franny and Zooley to original Iranian characters.

Franny's character is developed as an intellectual girl who is going through an existential crisis while Pari's character appears as a pampered rich daughter who is trying to appear intellectual. This happens because there is not enough character development. Though Mehrjui succeeds in directing a film visually well-suited for the Iranian audience and censors, he does not succeed in adding Iranian personality features to the once American characters. Pari is the same person as Franny except for her garments and her environment, which would be fitting if it was not conforming to Islamic beliefs like her engagement and her conservative garments.

1.5 The Royal Tenenbaums

In 2001, Wes Anderson, an acclaimed American director recognized for his remarkable visual style, directed *The Royal Tenenbaums*, a movie featuring characters who were later compared to Salinger's.²⁰ In fact, following Salinger's death in 2010, Anderson told a *New York Times* journalist, without reference to *The Royal Tenenbaums*, that he was not only "inspired by" Salinger's stories but that he thinks he has "imitated and stolen [them] to the best of [his] abilities" (Brody). Like Salinger, Wes Anderson, tells the stories of precocious adolescents with unusual talents who have already developed a resentfulness toward the world in which they live.

Knowing that he will not get the chance to make an adaptation of any of Salinger's stories until their intellectual property rights expire, it appears that Wes Anderson has found creative ways to indirectly allude to the works of a writer that inspire him.

Although several Wes Anderson movies have thematic similarities to Salinger's stories

²⁰ He was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay for *The Royal Tenenbaums* in 2001, *Moonrise Kingdom* in 2012 and *The Grand Budapest Hotel* in 2014, as well as the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature for *Fantastic Mr. Fox* in 2009 (IMDB.com)

(dysfunctional families with child prodigies and adolescence alienation), *Rushmore* and *The Royal Tenenbaums* bear the most resemblance to Salinger's work and many reviewers have pointed out these similarities.²¹ For example, Chicago Reader's film critic, Jonathan Rosenbaum writes, in his review of *Rushmore*, of the "adolescent anguish" that is present in *Catcher in the Rye*; he mentions other similarities between the film and the book, but chooses not to go further.²²

While Anderson's *Rushmore*'s story is analogous to *Catcher in the Rye*'s, *The Royal Tenenbaum*'s story fits our discussion of *Franny and Zooey*. Not only *The Royal Tenenbaums*'s story but its title point to Salinger's stories and the Glass family. The title serves as the first clue amongst the many harmonies the film bears with *Franny and Zooey*. The fact that Wes Anderson names his fictional family "Tenenbaum", which is almost a replication of Boo Boo's (Franny and Zooey's sister) last name "Tannenbaum," illustrates Wes Anderson's familiarity and fascination with Salinger.²³

Wes Anderson adopts multiple narratives from *Franny and Zooey* and manipulates it in *The Royal Tenenbaums*: the close relationship between a brother and his sister. When Franny goes through her nervous breakdown and returns home to the Upper East Side, she winds up having extensive and profound discussions about the divine and the nature of existence. Zooey is the one who understands the crisis she is experiencing and

²¹ *Rushmore* is the tale of the fifteen-year old Max Fischer (Jason Schwartzman), his relationship with a rich industrialist (Bill Murray), and their shared interest in Max's female teacher. The movie is thought to be inspired by *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951).

²² He writes, "...fiction of J.D. Salinger [is] another sympathetic chronicler of adolescent overreaching whose eagerness and attentiveness can lead his fiction into equivalent forms of fantasy projection and hyperbole. To their credit, Anderson and Wilson share none of the class snobbery that subtly infuses much of Salinger's work, and though they don't harp on it, they seem to understand some of the less articulate forms of adolescent anguish....like Salinger they harbor a protective gallantry toward their characters that becomes the film's greatest strength and its greatest weakness.

²³ . She is the central character in one of Salinger's short stories, "Down at the Dinghy" (published in *Nine Stories*).

helps her realize the meaning of this never-ending search for spirituality and piety, which is just doing what one does best for the sake of doing it and not for rewards. While Franny and Zooney's relationship has its roots in complex matters of life and death and their shared interest in acting, Margot and Richie's relation, although conspicuously influenced by Franny and Zooney's, has its roots in courtship and eroticism as the two family's upbringing were different. Early in the movie, we realize that Richie has an odd obsession with his sister—although it is not disturbing—and that the two siblings are close. Richie paints amateur portraits of his sister and hangs them on the studio he has in their big house on Archer Avenue in New York City. When they were young, they “ran away from home and camped in the African wing of the public archives”. Later in the film, following Richie's unsuccessful suicide attempt prompted by a thought that he could never be with Margot, Richie and Margot once again share a tent and reveal their romantic/erotic love for one another. Although, the Tenenbaum's relationship is an extreme interpretation of the Glass's, it is justified in the context of the idiosyncratic atmosphere of the movie.

The Royal Tenenbaums is a story of escaping failures and returning to your origin for comfort. The film depicts three and only children of the Tenenbaum family and their return to their family home with their mother and father. The children return home years after they left the house because of their mental breakdowns. The year is 2001 and the Tenenbaum children, now in their adulthood, feel lonely and in desperate need of family comfort. Chassie (Chas) Tenenbaum (Ben Stiller) moves to his childhood house with his sons a year after his wife dies, Richie Tenenbaum (Luke Wilson) moves back home a while after he has an embarrassing meltdown in his Tennis matches, and

Margot's(Gwyneth Paltrow) marital problems lead her to lock herself in the bathroom and eventually be talked into returning home by her mother, Etheline Tenenbaum(Angelica Huston). The children's mental breakdowns collide with their father's return , Royal Tenenbaum's(Gene Hackman), who decides to move back in the house after twenty-two years of being separated from his wife. In that manner, all the members of the Tenenbaum family are together again in the same house.

The Royal Tenenbaums's plot shares many parallels with *Franny and Zooey's*, highlighting the resurgence of interest in Salinger at the turn of the twenty-first century. One could argue that the Tenenbaum family is written based on Salinger's Glass family. The Tenenbaum family are not as big as the Glasses; they have two boys and an adopted daughter who are gifted from an early age. Franny and Zooey (and all the children of the Glass Family) as well as Chassie, Richie and Margot Tenenbaum are child prodigies. They have eccentric talents and are quite mature for their age. The Glass children appear on a radio show called *It's a Wise Child*, which asks challenging questions of children, according to their age, and rewards them with money for correct answers. According to Salinger's stories, all of the Glass offspring were awarded enough money to pay for college. Seymour Glass received his PHD when he was only eighteen years old and was considered the spiritually enlightened one in the family. Additionally, Franny is an astute student of theatre in college and an actress. She possesses an analytical mind and is usually defined by how she challenges people around her with life's deepest questions. Zooey, both repelled by and obsessed with theatre, is a good-looking actor. Like his close sister Franny, he is constantly in search of his identity and spiritual redemption. He is sage, tenacious, and well-read.

Similar to the Glass family, the Tenenbaums are involved with careers that are mostly artistic, from an early age. They have an involvement with the radio. For instance, Richie Tenenbaum broadcasts from his radio station, *H.A.M radio*. At the same time, according to the film's narrator, Chassie Tenenbaum excels in the business world since "he went into business in the sixth grade, breeding Dalmatian mice that he sold to a pet shop in Little Tokyo, and started buying real estate in his early teens." Richie is "a champion tennis player since the third grade" and "has won the U.S. Nationals three years in a row," since age seventeen, while, their adopted sister writes plays from an early age and [has] won a "Braveman Grant of \$50,000" (a fictional award) in ninth grade.

Like the film's narrator reminds us "virtually all memories of the brilliance of young Tenenbaums... [will be]erased by two decades of betrayal, failure, and disaster". These precocious children later turn into despaired, isolated adults. This point leads us to *The Royal Tenenbaum's* and *Franny and Zooey's* thematic harmonies. Similar to *Franny and Zooey* and *Pari's* theme of coping with the WWII aftermath and reminiscing about the past, like coming to terms with Seymour's suicide, remembering his Buddhist spiritual wisdom and Franny and Zooey's time with him, *The Royal Tenenbaums* examines the motif of looking back at childhood and missing the past. In a memorable scene from Salinger's book, after long conversation with Franny, Zooey enters Seymour and Buddy's bedroom in an attempt to come himself down only to find himself reading the writings on the wall and Seymour's stack of cardboards. What was written on the cardboards was a memory of his brother's twenty-first birthday when him and Franny were but little children. Being in Seymour and Buddy's room perhaps reminds Zooey of a simpler, more joyful time again and invites him to escape adulthood. Salinger, with a

disdainful tone, describes some of the objects around the room as “more emphatic signs of adulthood”, as if one made the point of spotting “signs of adulthood” in the room; it is almost as if the signs were alarming Zooney of the disappointments and the despairs being an adult brings. By entering the room, Zooney is both reminded of the spiritual despair state of adulthood and intellectualism as he covers his face with his hands, and the free-spirited state of childhood as he reads the birthday story on the cardboards. We also read about Franny’s nostalgia and her longing to talk to her brother Seymour or Buddy, who intentionally has limited access to a telephone. Franny’s longing leads Zooney to impersonate himself as Buddy and call the house from another room to talk to Franny. Zooney does so to address her feeling she has no spiritual guidance and help deal with a nervous breakdown that is not unrelated to the absence of their spiritual brothers.

The same series of revelations happen in *The Royal Tenenbaums*. The Tenenbaum children move back to their childhood house , desperately looking for a part of themselves. They are there not only to overcome their mental breakdowns (which happened due to different traumatic experiences in their lifetimes) but to also relive their childhood. We see this, first and foremost, through looking at their clothes. Margot wears the same striped Lacoste shirt and fur coat she used to wear when she was in the 9th grade (in the opening scenes), Richie wears the same brown-colored suit and headband he wore when he was winning Tennis matches as a child, and Chas always wears his red Adidas work-out clothes he wore in the opening scenes of the film. The Tenenbaum children , and their parents, constantly speak of the past events, even reconstructing the same situation to feel the same way they did before (e.g., Richie and Margot spent the night in the same tent they did as children).

Although *The Royal Tenenbaums* borrows existential concepts of nostalgia from *Franny and Zooey*, his treatment of it is rather different. Literature scholar, David Cross Turner claims that *The Royal Tenenbaums*' nostalgia is demonstrated as a "consumable image", an image reflects "a world of media... temporal breakdown, and cultural amnesia" emphasizing that in the postmodern world that the Tenenbaums live in, it is not possible to experience the real "deep-structured past" (qutd. In Turner 161). The failure to experience the emotional nostalgia because "authenticity and time have themselves become victims of postmodern speed and space", in 2001 when the film is released and the Tenenbaums live in, is shown by focusing on objects, like personal belongings and rooms' décor, as well as camera movement and symmetrical, perfectly designed, hyperbolic shots (e.g., The characters' clothes always match the color of the furniture, or the characters are seated exactly in the middle of the couch and have the same distance from the right and left side of the frame). Anderson, himself, explains the use of objects in an interview : "[n]ot until the end of the first reel is there an event in the story, there's just setup"(qutd. In Turner 160) The setup is in work with the film's camera movement. *The Royal Tenenbaum*'s, and other Anderson's films, signature camera movements also work perfectly for creating the consumable face of nostalgia, or nostalgia as something the characters can look at and not experience. The camera that films *The Royal Tenenbaums*' either does not move or moves rapidly from one shot to the other; it is almost as if the film is a series of fixed or moving photos that are displayed consecutively. Camera usually does not follow characters; characters leave or leave the frame. As a result, the camera movement illustrates characters' nostalgia for what Turner's refers to as "hollow" and "consumable" and sheds a new light at *Franny and*

Zooey's treatment of nostalgia that derives from the sibling's deep feeling of loss and craving for spiritual guidance while reminiscing the past (childhood). Franny and *Zooey*'s nostalgia is a result of the despairs of adulthood and being an intellectual (this resonates with *Pari* and Sufism that focuses on escaping worldly desires) and not a "cultural amnesia" that U.S. experiences at the turn of the century. Because if we consider Margot as the intellectual of our story, then we can conclude that an intellectual at the turn of a 21st century is broken and suffers from that "cultural amnesia" where she can look at the past and experience a consumable version of nostalgia but is unable to fully feel the same nostalgia Franny and *Pari* can.

Consequently, treatment of similar existential concepts, longing for childhood and different facets of nostalgia, are exhibited well through comparable characters and their appearances in *The Royal Tenenbaums* and *Franny and Zooey*. Margot Tenenbaum's appearance as well as her personality (or at least the insufficient details we can draw from the movie) could potentially be influenced by Franny Glass's. Both characters are unsatisfied with their lives and suffer from an emotional or clinical depression. They are both unhappy with their romantic relationships. Franny is dating Lane Coutell, an ambitious literature major, and Margot is married to a pretentious neurologist, Raleigh St. Clair.²⁴ Of course, Franny never turns to adultery, like Margot, but at some point in each story, both women suffer from nervous breakdowns.²⁵ And for both, the emotional (and in Franny's case, spiritual) crisis leads them to return home to recover.

²⁴ Augustine St. Clair is the name of a wealthy plantation owner in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

²⁵ Margot has an affair with Eli, Richie's best friend.

How analogous Margot's appearance is to Franny's is hard to miss. Margot Tenenbaum's signature look is sharply cut, short, blond hair that is always sparkling. She puffs on her cigarette whenever she gets a chance and she always has a melancholic, bitter look on her face. Franny Glass and Margot Tenenbaum share a lot of their characteristics. In *Franny and Zooey*, Salinger writes of Franny's hair as "jet-black and very prettily cut, [that] had been washed three times in as many days" (81). Franny's hair is overly washed and perfectly cut like Margot's hair. Throughout the book, we read about Franny lighting and puffing cigarettes as well, always to ease the pain. In the first pages of *Franny and Zooey*, we read, "She then took a cigarette from Lane's pack on the table, and he lit it for her and one for himself (8). The uncanny resemblance between the two eccentric characters brings us closer to the ways Wes Anderson's film is entering the conversation with Salinger's book.²⁶

Both children in the Glass family and the Tenenbaum family are isolated from one another. They live in different parts of the United States and communicate sparingly, usually via ambiguous letters. The lack of communication makes reunion scenes significant because, in both stories, there are tales of the individuals being re-united with a current/potential romantic partner or another family member. These reunions have significance in my juxtaposition because the scene in which Margot Tenenbaum reunites with her brother getting off the train -the slow motion scene captures Margot's walk toward Richie while the audience listen to Nico's *These Days*-seems to be a clear-cut remake of when Franny reunites with her boyfriend Lane. Salinger writes:

²⁶ This blog initially brought the similarity of the two scenes into attention: <https://waystomakeyousee.wordpress.com/2012/12/22/j-d-salinger-the-novelistic-grandfather-of-wes-anderson/>

Franny was among the first of the girls to get off the train, from a car at the far, northern end of the platform. Lane spotted her immediately, and despite whatever it was he was trying to do with his face, his arm that shot up into the air was the whole truth. Franny saw it, and him, and waved extravagantly back. She was wearing a sheared raccoon coat, and Lane, walking toward her quickly but with a slow face, reasoned to himself, with suppressed excitement, that he was the only one on the platform who really knew Franny's coat. He remembered that once, in a borrowed car, after kissing Franny for a half hour or so, he had kissed her coat lapel, as though it were a perfectly desirable, organic extension of the person herself (7).

In the scene in which Margot is reunited with her brother, she, too, is wearing a fur coat, she continues to wear the coat in most scenes of the film. Richie and Margot's extended embrace, moreover, mirrors Lane and Franny's lingering kiss.

The Royal Tenenbaums not only shares several story lines and characters with *Franny and Zooey*, it also borrows visual techniques from it. The above quotation regarding Margot's coat becomes even more interesting in the consumerist context of *The Royal Tenenbaums* and Wes Anderson's hyper-stylized cinema because his cinema has usually been praised for its production designs, costumes, hairstyling, and distinctive, eye-pleasing mise-en-scene. Anderson's films offer some of the most aesthetically gratifying images in modern cinema. The last line of the quote from Salinger's book is in conversation with Anderson's emphasis and usage of objects and character's belongs: "Lane kissed her coat lapel, as though *it were a perfectly desirable, organic extension of the person herself*" (emphasis mine). According to Salinger, the clothes become the

person who is wearing them and possibly vice versa. Anderson, consciously or unconsciously, borrows the concept of person-garment likeness out of the book and intelligently, and literally, portrays it on screen. Margot's hair, garments, cigarette, bag, shoes, gloves, and even facial expressions are exaggerated and in bold colors. For example, when she cuts her finger in an accident during a visit to her Amish family, the film shows a close shot of sewing equipment and her pink glove with half of the ring finger cut off instead of her actual finger. The shot emphasizes Anderson's attention to objects and their function as extensions of characters not merely what is owned by them. A series of close shots of objects thing prevail throughout the movie. One can conclude that in Wes Anderson's movies, people are defined by what they own and what they wear. Film scholar, Stefano Baschiera's defines Anderson' cinema as "a cinema of objects (118). He writes, "'Stuff' often fills the frame, contributing significantly to the visualization of the storytelling and to the creation of the characters' identity. [These objects] are central to the development of the narrative, and, consequently, to the meaning of the film". Anderson employs the same concept Salinger uses to describe Franny in Lane's eyes , objects as extensions/parts of a person , in Franny and Margot's case, a coat.

Anderson has been called an "auteur" (Martin).²⁷ His cinema is known for its idiosyncratic visual style, one that includes the use of deep space composition, perfectly symmetrical framings and shots, and extreme close-ups.²⁸ Furthermore, Anderson's films

²⁷ The personal control of such filmmakers are usually so distinctive that she or he is regarded as the author of the movie.

²⁸ An example of the deep space composition is when "Etheline (Anjelica Huston) is in her office and a window is framed next to her... [and] the gardener is outside the window in the background listening in on a conversation"(Martin). Anderson creates a subplot with the gardener without the need to make another scene (Martin). He uses this technique very often.

are usually bursting with distinctive colors, whether a “grainy yellow filter,” as in *The Royal Tenenbaums* or their extreme saturation, as in *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. In other words, Anderson characterizes his films with uncanny fixation on aesthetics and the material world of the stories he also writes his films’ screenplays. In order to fully demonstrate this insistence on the material world, Anderson religiously attends to objects, anything from furniture and items of clothing to cigarettes and posters. As I discussed with regard to Margot’s garments, material items extend from the identities of his fictional characters, The significance that Anderson puts on colors and material objects, moreover, helps to establish the characters’ function in the film. Some even claim that Wes Anderson uses and focuses on objects so masterfully that he “overcomes the separation between subjects and objects, the human and the non-human”; therefore, the characters become the objects, usually their belongings, and vice versa (Baschiera 120).

Wes Anderson’s attention to objects and possessions and the hyper-stylized shots in *The Royal Tenenbaums* become more interesting in the cultural context in which the film was produced and released. One could argue that Anderson borrowed from the aesthetics in *Franny and Zooey*. Central to this aesthetic is attention to possessions and their figuring as extensions of one’s character. Borrowing from Salinger’s stylistic choices in *Franny and Zooey* functioned well in 2001 because of America’s re-gained interest in materialism.

In the last half of the twentieth century, during the postwar period of prosperity, the United States was characterized by an increasing consumption of goods and celebration of materialism. Sociologist Claude S. Fischer writes of the time, “even laborers spent the largest share of their income on things other than the basics of food,

shelter, and clothing” (69). Americans were obsessed with possessions and ownership (Fischer 69). This mentality of consumption never left America. In the late 1990s and very early 2000s, the demand for product acquisition reached a new high point. Fast food industries prospered, banks gained more power and tax reductions, with the Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001(EGTRRA), and the increase in credit card companies opened new doors for market prosperity, which caused people to buy more and more. The fear from the Cold War and the bomb was long eliminated, so American people felt secure and longed to extend their possessions. The transition to the second tensions between the US and the middle east, September 11th and the second Iraq war, was yet to occur and Americans’ value system, first and foremost, was still identified by materialism.

America’s renewed increasing desire for wealth, and possessions in particular, resonates well with the cinema of Anderson and *The Royal Tenenbaums*. Anderson’s filmmaking is distinguished by his characters’ nostalgia being defined by objects and possessions, which are correlated in his films. Given the director’s concentration on objects and aesthetics *and* the American people’s newfound engrossment in material wealth and consumerism, I argue that *The Royal Tenenbaums’* success and Anderson’s conscious, or unconscious, decision to emphasize the unspiritual side of Salinger’s book rather than the spiritual and religious aspect of it that Mehrjui latches on to (given his post war context) is justified. In *The Royal Tenenbaums*, Objects serve as means to define each character’s, including the intellectual of the film, Margot’s, nostalgia toward the past and the way they experience it. For instance, Margot’s coat , that was shown as the extension of Margot, and the fact that she has worn it since childhood, and continues to wear it in her adult life speak to both the nostalgia and the objectification of nostalgia.

Margot speaks for the American intellectual that feels empty at the end of 21st century, not because a war has just ended, but because she is not able to connect to her past deeply.

1.6 Conclusion

Like *Pari* attempts to define the intellectuals' struggles of the 1990s in Iran, *The Royal Tenenbaums* defines the significance of the materialistic rhetoric in late 1990s and the early 2000s in the United States. Salinger's book, *Franny and Zooey*, once again becomes a tool for a filmmaker to demonstrate the status of intellectuals: who are the characters that populate all three stories? A number of young intellectuals trying to define and find their identity within the society and their family. They are young and restless, by an exhaustion from an invasive war or the exhaustion from the nostalgia for the past, even though they have become a part of it themselves, like Franny and Margot have the way they are the extensions of their coats as seen by the camera or by the author's description. They chose Salinger because, judging by his interest and his silence and his literature, he and his characters too, was exhausted by the same atmosphere. They chose *Franny and Zooey*, not *Catcher in the Rye*, because, while *Catcher in the Rye* fixates on the same issues in a life of an adolescent-Holden is eighteen years old-characters in *Franny and Zooey* go to college, have careers, and have even served in the war. They are young adults so a wider audience can identify with them. These filmmakers borrow from Salinger and *Franny and Zooey*, explicitly or obliquely, because he, so masterfully, represented the young crestfallen soul of a thinker that even years after its publication date, it is still relevant. Hence, many were thrilled when the new biography and documentary about Salinger, *Salinger*, announced that five new books are expected to be

published between 2015 to 2020 and *The Guardian* speculated that “A Religious Manual” and “The Complete Glass Chronicle” might be amongst them (Bury). Perhaps with more of Salinger’s books in our hands, we could understand his characters even better, and therefore, improve our understanding of the ways they and their stories shape an identifiable representation of young intellectuals in different times and nations, a representation that captures alienation and confusion by society and , and even family in *The Royal Tenenbaums*, and wants to go back to his or her childhood and the first attempt to achieve that is by moving back to his or her childhood home. Franny and Zooey give American intellectuals of the 1950s characters to identify with, *Pari and dadashi* give Iranian intellectuals characters they can relate to, and finally, the Tenenbaums and Margot specifically, since she is the playwright and the intellectual of the story, bring a possible representation of the intellectual at the turn of the 21st century with its speed and its consumption.

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