NOTES


2) *Loc. cit.*


5) John Gedsudski reminds us of Holden Caulfield who wishes to be the catcher in the rye.


   Ihab Hassan, *Radical Innocence*, p. 269. Hassan also regards the Laughing Man as an idealized projection of the Chief himself.


seems to be some discrepancy between them. First of all, his telling itself shows the discrepancy clearly. While reproducing conversations between the Chief and Mary Hudson and their behaviors as they were, the narrator refers to the story of ‘The Laughing Man.’ This fact suggests that the narrator is already aware of an inner conflict the Chief underwent, which was quite incomprehensible to the nine-year-old narrator.

Concerning the story of ‘The Laughing Man’ itself, exploration from various angles can be possible, including some psychological approaches. Appart from such approaches, it would be undeniable that the story of ‘The Laughing Man’ profoundly reflects the Chief’s state of mind and his inner conflict.

Above mentioned, the narrator’s ambiguous and sophisticated telling shows a kind of discrepancy between his understanding of what he saw and heard in 1928 and his present one. Though the author seems to make the first person narrator merely look back upon the narrator’s experiences, his telling itself produces an intricate construction in the story which enables readers to trace not only the narrator’s past response to his experiences but also his present one. In this work, therefore, Salinger appears to try to express the discrepancy between the narrator who saw what happened when he was nine, and the narrator who now looks back upon them.

In Salinger studies, many critics and scholars often discuss the two worlds in his works; the adult world and the world of children. It would be, however, impossible to define a clear boundary between the two worlds. In this work, Salinger tries not to show a hopeless gap between the two worlds, but to give actuality or reality to a young man’s growth by making the boundary ambiguous. Therefore, it can be said that the technique chosen for this work is in just keeping with Salinger’s intention.
realized that.

All through his telling, the narrator has never condemned the Chief for his sudden and disastrous ending of the story, or for his seemingly high-handed speech and behaviors. Far from that, he tells about the Chief as enthusiastically as he did when he was nine. Everywhere in the narrator’s telling about the Chief, we can recognize that the narrator sees the Chief’s conflict. After all, it can be said that the narrator attains his full growth to understand the Chief, recognize his situation and appreciate his feelings.

CONCLUSION

At first sight the point of view of this work seems to be simple enough, yet its construction is very intricate in fact. Although the narrator looks back upon the affairs he experienced when he was nine and tells them to the reader, he never recounts his experiences as what they were. His telling really produces ambiguity which results from his mental growth and his understanding of the past affairs accordingly. However exactly one might try to recount his experiences, he would never be able to do so. For one could not remain what he used to be, and the meaning of his experiences would be changing as he grows. When one tries to recollect his experiences, they are told not by what he was but by what he is. So they can not avoid undergoing some transformation which is attributed to his growth.

In this work, the narrator also looks back upon the relationship between the Chief and Mary Hudson, and reproduces only their conversations and behaviors as they were. Admitting that he “had no idea what was going on between the Chief and Mary Hudson (and still haven’t, in any but a fairly low, intuitive sense),” (p. 105) his present interpretation of what he actually observed and heard must be quite different from his past one; there
The narrator tells the readers the Chief’s high-handed order and his strange behavior in detail. The narrator’s telling seems to imply that he knows why the Chief behaved himself that way, though he in those days only “watched him with patience and even a certain amount of spectator’s interest.” (p. 107)

The Chief began to release the new installment of ‘The Laughing Man’ at length: the Laughing Man, who received four bullets, and regurgitated all those bullets, gave a terrible laugh and killed Dufarge. The counterattack made the Comanches feel relieved. The narrator now puts an interpretation on the installment as follows:

(If the installment was going to be a short one anyway, it could have ended there; the Comanches could have managed to rationalize the sudden death of the Dufarges. But it didn’t end there.) (pp. 108-109)

What he says as above is not at all in a spirit of criticism on the Chief’s indifference toward the boys’ receptivity. Although it is not sure whether the Chief was aware of the Comanches’ feelings or not, he went on with his installment to make it end disastrously, as if he persuaded both himself and the Comanches that the story of ‘The Laughing Man’ would be never revived; the Laughing Man rejected his loyal confederate’s help and chose death. Toward such an ending of ‘The Laughing man,’ the Comanches including the narrator himself only felt the death of the laughing man most unbearable.

The Laughing Man in fact was just created by the Chief himself. Whether the Laughing Man might represent the Chief’s state of mind or not, it made no difference to the Comanches. For, the moment the Chief ran up the installments, the Laughing Man did pass into their possession, and became an idol who had no relation with the Chief. The narrator now
decidedly serious enough for the Chief to disregard the boys' feelings.

Mary Hudson appeared with an air quite different from usual one in the midst of the Comanches' baseball game. When the narrator came up to her and suggested that she join in the game, she made no response to his words, only saying, "Just please leave me alone." (p. 105) He did not know what to do. When the baseball game was called, the Chief began a conversation with Mary Hudson out of earshot of the Comanches. The narrator looks back upon what they were doing as follows:

The last good look I had at Mary Hudson, she was over to near third base crying. The Chief had hold of the sleeves of her beavercoat, but she got away from him. She ran off the field onto cement path and kept running till I couldn't see her any more. The Chief didn't go after her. He just stood watching her disappear. (pp. 105–106)

At the moment, the narrator could not know what happened to them. Then, he went over to the Chief and bluntly asked him "if he and Mary Hudson had had a fight." (p. 106) But the Chief did not answer to the narrator and he only told him to tuck his shirt in. Then, the narrator found that "his black hair, which had been combed wet earlier in the day, was dry now and blowing." (p. 107) To the narrator and his fellows, the Chief merely looked cold without gloves on the 'wintry day,' and they only wished "the Chief had gloves." (p. 107) In those days, the narrator could not guess the Chief's state of mind, but now he shows a steady growth to read another's mind.

After that, as soon as the Chief got on the bus in which the Comanches had been eager for an installment, he said, "All right, let's cut out the noise, or no story," (p. 107) in spite that the bus had already been quiet. He then blow his nose with his handkerchief and leisurely replaced it in his pocket.
adversary, the Laughing Man was shot by the detective. When the Chief “took his dollar Ingersoll out of his pocket, looked at it” (p. 102) he put a stop to the installment at that thrilling scene in spite of the Comanches’ worrying about the Laughing Man after the catastrophe. Perhaps because he knew Mary Hudson broke an appointment, he finished off the installment, not caring at all what uneasiness he might bring upon all the boys. In the following passage, we can recognize the Chief’s unusual state of mind:

I asked the Chief if he wasn’t going to wait for Mary Hudson. He didn’t answer me, and before I couldn’t repeat my question, he tilted back his head and addressed all of us: “Let’s have a little quiet in this damn bus.” Whatever else it may have been, the order was basically unsensible. The bus had been, and was, very quiet. Almost everybody was thinking about the spot the Laughing Man had been left in. We were long past worrying about him—we had too much confidence in him for that—but we were never past accepting his most perilous moments quietly. (pp. 102–103)

While the narrator in those days was not a little perplexed at the Chief’s incomprehensible order without replying for his question, he felt so uneasy about the peril which the Laughing Man faced. For a moment, he only wondered why the Chief said such a thing. At that time, the gravest crisis that was upon the Laughing Man prevented the narrator from examining the Chief’s ‘unsensible’ order. The narrator, however, becomes now aware of the Chief’s complicated state of mind, the narrator seems to show even good understanding, and not only for the Chief’s defiant manner how he finished off the installment but also for his saying, ‘Let’s have a little quiet. . . .’ And he now guesses that something serious happened to the Chief at that time. As if he makes sure of the relation between the Chief’s unusual manner and the serious event, he begins to tell what happened at dusk of the day. The affair between the Chief and Mary Hudson was
a woman on the picture. During the next couple of weeks, therefore, the Comanches “got used to it [the picture of Mary Hudson],” (p. 94) and “it gradually took on the arresting personality of a speedometer.” (p. 94) On the other hand, the narrator now keeps his eyes upon the fact that “the picture—however forcibly or accidentally it had been planted on the Chief—was not removed from the bus.” (p. 94) He now perceives the change of the Chief’s telling, and feels sure that the change was attributed to his encounter with Mary Hudson.

In a month or so after Mary’s appearance before the Comanches, the plot development of the story of The Laughing Man witnessed a remarkable change for the second time. Until then, Mary Hudson had “played baseball with the Comanches a couple of times a week (whenever she had an appointment with her dentist, apparently.)” (p. 99) As for the story of The Laughing Man, the Chief must have told new installments to the Comanches everyday during the time, but the narrator does not mention them. Just before he ran up the installment which started a considerable change, the narrator looks back upon the Cheif’s appearance and his manner as follows:

One wintry day in April, after making his usual three o’clock pickup at 109th and Amsterdam, . . . But his hair was combed wet, he had on his overcoat instead of his leather windbreaker, and I reasonably surmised that Mary Hudson was scheduled to join us. (pp. 99–100.)

In order to wait for Mary Hudson, the Chief parked the bus, and then “to kill the time painlessly for the Comanches,” (p. 100) he released a new installment of The Laughing Man. The narrator tells the outline of the installment, saying “I remember the installment to the last detail, and I must outline it briefly” (p. 100): captured in substitute for one of his “four blindly loyal confederates” (p. 91) by the detective Dufarge, his most formidable
the other Comanches:

I happen to regard the Laughing Man as some kind of super-distinguished ancestor of mine. . . . And this illusion is only a moderate one compared to the one I had in 1928, when I regarded myself not only as the Laughing Man's direct descendant but as his only legitimate living one. I was not even my parents' son in 1928 but a devilishly smooth impostor, . . . (pp. 91–92)

The Comanches were quite indifferent to the change of the Chief’s telling. They were not farsighted enough to think what was happening to the Chief.

Concerning the narrator's reflection on a picture of Mary Hudson, we should observe in detail. In the passage as follows, the narrator's feeling is well brought out:

One afternoon in February, just after Comanche baseball season had opened, I observed a new fixture in the Chief's bus. Above the rear-view mirror over the windshield, there was a small, framed photograph of a girl dressed in academic cap and gown. It seemed to me that a girl's picture clashed with the general men-only décor of the bus, and I bluntly asked the Chief who she was. He hedged at first, but finally admitted that she was a girl. . . . I asked him what he had her picture in the bus for, though. He shrugged slightly, as much as to imply, it seemed to me, that the picture had more or less been planted on him. (p. 93)

At that time, the narrator felt sure that the Chief had not fixed the picture there of his own choice, and did not try examining the Chief's true motive any more. The narrator seemed to want the Chief not to be such a man as to fix a girl's picture to his bus for his own pleasure. When the narrator observed the picture, he seemed to feel intuitively that the Chief would turn his attention from the Comanches to the girl. In 1928, the narrator was too young to consider the change of the Chief's telling in correlation with
velopment in its first stage changed day by day into a dynamic one. As for the Laughing Man himself, he who had been wretched and lonely in his childhood grew to be a ‘great’ robber and to be possessed of the high qualities of mind and character as follows:

Soon the Laughing Man had amassed the largest personal fortune in the world. Most of it he contributed anonymously to the monks of a local monastery—humble ascetics who had dedicated their lives to raising German police dogs. What was left of his fortune, the Laughing Man converted into diamonds, which he lowered casually, in emerald vaults, into the Black Sea. His personal wants were few.

The Laughing Man’s eccentric behavior as well as his laudable act seems to be suggestive of the Chief’s sense of value. That is, the Chief clearly began to project his views in the story of ‘The Laughing Man.’ The story, therefore, came to reflect intangibly the Chief’s inner life. In the transfiguration of the main character in the story, the narrator recognizes a reflection of the Chief’s change of mind, which he could not make out when he was nine. The change of the tone of the Chief’s telling clearly indicates that something happened to him, but the narrator and his playmates were interested only in the development of the story at that time.

It does not appear that the narrator in 1928 became aware of ‘something’ behind the change. The Comanches including the narrator himself were absorbed in ‘The Laughing Man’ which became more and satisfactory to the Comanches, and that was all. When they were listening to the story, they were not interested in the tale-teller himself at all. As a result of it, their thoughts, play and acts were decidedly influenced upon by the Laughing Man’s character and his behavior. The following passage clearly points out how profoundly the Laughing Man himself fascinated the narrator and
rator’s telling as a key to understand this work.

In the following chapter, by shedding light on the telling of the narrator itself, I would like to examine the work.

II

It seems to be worthy of note that the narrator gives a good deal of space to retell the story of ‘The Laughing Man.’ It occupies about a quarter of the work. Why is it necessary for the narrator to devote so much space to retell ‘The Laughing Man’? It is undeniable that an improvised story is never told without reflecting the improvisor himself, that is, his state of mind. The story of ‘The Laughing Man’ reflects the Chief’s state of mind all the more because it is run up by the Chief himself. When the narrator looks back upon those days with the Chief, he can not leave the story of ‘The Laughing Man’ out of consideration. It seems to the narrator that the laughing man is intricately related with the Chief himself.

On exploring some implication of ‘The Laughing Man,’ it must not be overlooked that the tone of the Chief’s telling of the story changed at a certain point. The narrator’s own interpretation as follows inserted into ‘The Laughing Man’ in Part 2 seems to be indicative:

(It took the Chief a couple of months to get that far into the story. From there on in, he got more and more high-handed with his installments, entirely to the satisfaction of the Comanches.)

(p. 88)

‘It took the Chief a couple of months’ to tell the Laughing Man’s personal history, the situation he is placed, his adventurous daily life and so on. ‘The Laughing Man’ run up by the Chief who ‘got more and more high-handed with his installments’ underwent a certain change; the steady de-
It is true, however, that the development of the relationship between the Chief and Mary Hudson is not a little of interest. The readers might explore the causes why the Chief and Mary Hudson could not accomplish their love, and even try to see an entwined correlation between the break-up and the Laughing Man's tragic end. On this point, Warren French expresses his views clearly as follows:

The story at first seems unsatisfactory because the young narrator cannot tell what has happened between Gedsudski and Mary and the reader can think of not too few but of too many possible explanations. Knowing the cause of the lover's quarrel is, however, irrelevant to understanding the story; for it does not concern the romantic break-up, but the effects of this break-up on the impressionable young narrator: he suffers the double disillusionment of seeing the man he idolizes frustrated and of losing a source of innocent pleasure with the abrupt ending of the story about the laughing man.

French's remarks seem to suggest that this work can not be a kind of a love story entertaining readers who intend to seek to the causes of the break-up of the lovers, that is, this work can not be 'a detective story.' If Salinger had had such an intention, he could have chosen more effective point of view—the objective point of view. Either the omniscient point of view or the limited omniscient point of view seems to have been more effective in realizing such an intention. Why, then, does Salinger choose the point of view of the first person narrator here? The point of view of the first person narrator seems to have technical advantages as well as disadvantages. One of the most striking features of the point of view is that the narrator of a story tells what happened to him on his own account, that is, he can make a choice what he is going to tell and handle 'time' freely according to his emotion. So I can not but regard the first person narrator and the nar-
toward Mary Hudson from hostile to friendly

Part 4: the day when the Chief and Mary Hudson parted: the development of 'The Laughing Man': the Comanches' response to the Laughing Man's death

As seen above, in Part 1 and in Part 2, nothing particular happens that gives an intense shock or impact to the narrator in his boyhood. The narrator tells in both parts how the Comanches felt of intimacy with the Chief and adored him in those days. Although the Laughing Man could be regarded as a projection of the Chief as not a few critics have referred to, this paper does not aim at exploring that point. In this paper, therefore, not the Chief but the narrator himself will be closely examined.

Comparing the telling of the narrator in each part, in Part 1 and in Part 2, the narrator looks back upon his early days and simply tells what happened to the Comanches including himself and the Chief as he recollects, that is, according to 'psychological order.' Abridged installments of 'The Laughing Man' are inserted into Part 2. Only the narrator's recollection of his young days makes up Part 1 and Part 2. In Part 3 as well as Part 4, the narrator also recollects what had happened, but in the both parts he begins to tell the past events according to 'chronological order.' Sometimes his telling in the parts reproduces various conversations among the Comanches, the Chief and Mary Hudson. Especially through Part 4, the narrator exactly tells a series of affairs centering on that of the Chief and Mary Hudson from beginning to end which happened during only several hours. And besides, two installments of 'The Laughing Man' are inserted in a series of affairs in the part. That is, on the day when the Chief and Mary Hudson parted, he told two installments at intervals of only a few hours. The break-up between the Chief and Mary Hudson curiously coincides with the Laughing Man's tragic end.
told the Comanches the new installment of 'The Laughing Man' in his re-
converted comercial bus. The story run up by the Chief himself "was just 
the right story for a Comanche." (p. 86)

One day, before the Comanches, suddenly appeared the Chief's girl
friend, Mary Hudson, who had "unclassifiably great beauty at the first 
sight." (p. 94) From then on, "she played baseball with the Comanches 
a couple of times a week." (p. 99) However, "one wintry day in April," 
(p. 99) she "ran off the field," (p. 106) and after that she never appeared
before the Comanches again. In the installment told by the Chief on that
day, the Laughing Man suddenly met his death in a tragic manner and was
"never to be revived." (p. 110) On hearing the tragic end, the narrator
felt his knees shaking at that time. When he stepped out of the Chief's bus,
he saw "a piece of red tissue paper flapping in the wind against the base of 
a lamppost." (p. 110) The red tissue paper promptly reminded the narrator
of the Laughing Man's poppy petal mask. He arrived home clattering
his teeth in fear and went to bed as was told.

Concerning the construction of this work, it consists of four parts.
What the narrator tells in each part is as follows.
Part 1: the association between the Comanches and the chief; the Chief's
disposition, virtues, background, brilliant past and physical 
appearance; the Comanches' respect for the Chief
Part 2: the summary of 'The Laughing Man' before Mary Hudson's
appearance before the Comanches; the Laughing Man's lot, his
superhuman abilities, his virtues, his conducts and so on: the
Comanches' response to 'The Laughing Man' and the influence of
the story on them
Part 3: Mary Hudson's appearance; the Chief's nervous, indecisive at-
titude to Mary Hudson; a change in the Comanches' attitude

— 139 —
charge of the children, and at the same time he interposed 'The Laughing
Man,' which was created and told by John Gedsudski himself, in his telling.
Moreover, the development of the story of 'The Laughing Man' appears to
reflect subtly John's actual state of mind—he encounter and parting with
his girl friend, Mary Hudson.

The structure of the telling in the story and the reflection seem to
produce not a little ambiguity, and the ambiguity itself makes it difficult to
understand the work. The aim of this paper is to explore an aspect of the
ambiguity by studying the structure of the telling, touching an implication
of 'The Laughing Man,' an inserted story in the story.

I

In "The Laughing Man," the narrator of the story, who is now more
than twenty years old, tells his experiences in 1928 when he was nine. In
those days, the narrator "belonged with maximum esprit de corps, to an
organization known as the Comanche Club." (p. 83) "Every schoolday
afternoon at three o'clock," (p. 83) the chief of the Club, John Gedsudski,
who was "a law student at N.Y.U.," (p. 85) "according to his financial
arrangement" (p. 83) with the Comanches' parents, picked up twenty five
boys of the Comanche Club and drove them over to the Central Park where
the Comanches usually played baseball, football or soccer. The Chief was
always an impartial and unexcitable umpire at all their games, and "a
master fire builder and extinguisher." (p. 85) Rainy afternoons, the Chief
usually took them to the Museum of Natural History or to the Metropolitan
Museum of Art. Sometimes, the Chief took the boys camping. The
Chief had "many achievements and virtues," (p. 85) and every one of the
Comanches "from the smallest hoodlum to the biggest loved and respected
him." (p. 85) When it got too dark to play ballgame, the Chief routinely
Concerning the technique of the point of view of a story, Salinger already chose the point of view of the first person narrator in "Soft-Boiled Sergeant" in the Saturday Evening Post in 1944. The narrator of the story looks back upon his meeting with the main character, who is ugly, but very tender, humane. "Soft-Boiled Sergeant," therefore, could be regarded as a prototype of "The Laughing Man." Ihab Hassan describes Salinger as "the kind of writer who returns to favored themes and characters with some consistency," but the technique Salinger shows in "The Laughing Man" seems to be much more intricate than that in "Soft-Boiled Sergeant." In "The Laughing Man," the narrator of the story recollects on his early days and relates his various experiences when he was nine. The narrator, moreover, tells not only his daily happenings but also a fictional story 'The Laughing Man' which was told to him and his playmates by a man they all loved and respected in those days.

Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph Blotner's view on "The Laughing Man" seems to be very suggestive:

"The Laughing Man" of a year later is a complete change in theme and technique from the three previous New Yorker stories. Apparently simple, it turns out to be one of the most sophisticated and intricate of all Salinger's tales.

As Gwynn and Blotner point out, this story shows a highly intricate structure. The narrator retrospects on his early days when he was nine and belonged to 'the Comanche Club,' and seemingly relates his various experiences exactly as they were, but they are not always recounted as they were. There can be found some discrepancy between his experiences as they were and his experiences recounted by the narrator. Looking back into the past, the narrator tells us his daily life in those days with his playmates—the Comanches—and the Chief, John Gedsudski, a college student who took
An Aspect of Ambiguity in "The Laughing Man"

Yasuaki Shirakawa

J. D. Salinger's *Nine Stories*, consisting of nine short stories, was published by Little, Brown and Company in 1953. The collection was compiled by Salinger himself from the stories which had already been published the previous five years. Salinger published "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," the opening story in *Nine Stories," "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut," the second story, and other three short stories one after another in 1948, and "The Laughing Man," the fourth story in the collection in 1949, in the *New Yorker*. It can be said, therefore, that the few years after 1948 make the most fruitful period of his literary career. Ihab Hassan classifies Salinger's works into four periods as follows:

This fair-sized body of work—fair-sized by contemporary standards but slim in comparison with the output of many earlier writers—may be classified into four "periods": the early tentative efforts, up to "The Inverted Forest," 1947; the fine stories which appeared in the *New Yorker* and were later included in the collection *Nine Stories*, 1953; *The Catcher in the Rye*, 1951; and finally the more recent narratives, beginning with "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period," 1953, which express a new religious bent.

"The Laughing Man" appeared during the major period when Salinger was steadily establishing his fame as a writer, and it is clearly one of ‘the fine stories’ as Ihab Hassan classifies.