

R. D. 2
Windsor, Vt.
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Dear Mr. Herbert,

I'll try to tell you what my attitude is to the stage and screen rights of The Catcher in the Rye. I've sung this tune quite a few times, so if my heart doesn't seem to be in it, try to be tolerant....Firstly, it is possible that one day the rights will be sold. Since there's an ever-looming possibility that I won't die rich, I toy very seriously with the idea of leaving the unsold rights to my wife and daughter as a kind of insurance policy. It pleases me no end, though, I might quickly add, to know that I won't have to see the results of the transaction. I keep saying this and nobody seems to agree, but The Catcher in the Rye is a very novelistic novel. There are readymade "scenes" - only a fool would deny that - but, for me, the weight of the book is in the narrator's voice, the non-stop peculiarities of it, his personal, extremely discriminating attitude to his reader-listener, his asides about gasoline rainbows in street puddles, his philosophy or way of looking at cowhide suitcases and empty toothpaste cartons - in a ~~way~~ word, his thoughts. He can't legitimately be separated from his own first-person technique. True, if the separation is forcibly made, there is enough material left over for something called and Exciting (or maybe just Interesting) Evening in the Theater. But I find that idea if not odious, at least odious enough to keep me from selling the rights. There are many of his thoughts, of course, that could be labored into dialogue - or into some sort of stream-of-consciousness ~~xxxx~~ loud-speaker device - but labored is exactly the right word. What he thinks and does so naturally in his solitude in the novel, on the stage could at best only be pseudo-simulated, if there is such a word (and I hope not).