

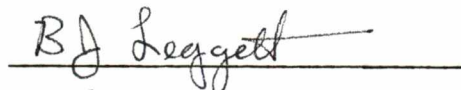
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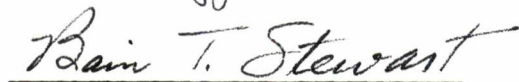
I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Kathleen Ferrell Woodard entitled "Salinger's Seymour Glass: Looking for Horses in His Stead." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.



A. Richard Penner, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:





Accepted for the Council:



Vice Chancellor
Graduate Studies and Research

SALINGER'S SEYMOUR GLASS: LOOKING FOR HORSES
IN HIS STEAD

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Kathleen Ferrell Woodard

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To my husband, Danny Ray Woodard, who
introduced me to Seymour Glass one night in
the Loveliest Village on the Plains. Without
Danny's constant patience and understanding,
this thesis would not have been possible.

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ABSTRACT

A fairly large amount of critical material has been devoted to the later stories of J. D. Salinger, the Glass stories; much of this material is concerned with examining the character of Seymour Glass and his influence on his siblings. Many critics are in agreement that Seymour functions as a spiritual leader and that he is in some way related to Zen Buddhism. The purpose of this study is to examine the Glass stories and the existing criticism in the light of a Zen influence. The study provides a clearer definition of Zen principles in Salinger's writing than is presently available, and it provides a definition of Zen enlightenment and Zen as a school of Mahayana Buddhism. From an examination of Mahayanism, this study defines the function of the Bodhisattva—one who seeks his own enlightenment and, who, once enlightened seeks enlightenment for others as well—thus illustrating how Seymour Glass functions as a Bodhisattva in relation to his siblings.

Seymour's suicide in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" is seen not as the act of a desperate man, but as the act of a Bodhisattva unable to communicate the Way to others. In death, Seymour communicates his message through his siblings, mainly through Buddy's writing. As Bodhisattva, Seymour is responsible for Franny's education, which in turn is partly responsible for her spiritual crisis. However, through Seymour's message, Zooey is able to lead Franny out of her crisis in Franny and Zooey. In Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters; and

Seymour: An Introduction, Buddy comes to understand Seymour's role as Bodhisattva more fully; the form of "Seymour: An Introduction" is accounted for in terms of a Zen-like breaking down of barriers between author and reader. Finally, in "Hapworth 16, 1924" (the last published Seymour story) Seymour is seen in the first stage of Bodhisattvahood. In essence, then, Salinger works backwards from Seymour's suicide to the seven-year-old Seymour, as if to explain the final outcome of Seymour's life.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1948, three years before the publication of the extremely popular The Catcher in the Rye, J. D. Salinger sowed the seed of what was to become his most engaging and challenging work—the creation of the Glass family. From the seed of his short story "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," grew the other works: "Franny" (1955), "Raise High the Roof Beam Carpenters" (1955), "Zooey" (1957), "Seymour: An Introduction" (1959), and "Hapworth 16, 1924" (1965), all dealing with the philosophical and spiritual searchings of the Glasses. The background of the Glass family and a brief introduction to the Glass family members follow:

The parents, Les (Jewish) and Bessie Gallagher Glass (Irish), were the vaudeville team of Gallagher and Glass, who gained "most nearly top billing in Australia" and "much more than just passing notability on the old Pantages and Orpheum circuits, here in America."¹ By 1925, however, Bessie was longing for more security and appealed to one of her admirers who gave Les a job, which he described as "the ministrative end of commercial radio" (RH&S, p. 146). In 1955, the time setting of Franny and Zooey, the Glasses lived in an old but fashionable apartment house in the East Seventies of Manhattan.

¹J. D. Salinger, Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters; and Seymour: An Introduction (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1963), p. 145. All further references to this work appear in the text as RH&S.

The eldest of the Glass children, Seymour, was born in 1917, entered Columbia when he was fourteen, and was already teaching there with a Ph.D. in English by the time his next-eldest brother Buddy was a senior there. In 1942, Seymour was a corporal in the Air Corps stationed in California. On June 4, 1942, he married Muriel Fedder, whom he had met in the winter of 1941 while he was stationed at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. Six years after his marriage on March 18, 1948, Seymour committed suicide while vacationing in Florida with his wife.

Buddy Glass, the next-eldest, was born two years after Seymour in 1919. He and Seymour shared a room in the Manhattan apartment of their parents, went to summer camp together in 1924, and later shared an apartment together just before the war. Buddy, then, was closest to Seymour and probably knew more about his brother than any of the other Glasses. Buddy never finished his degree in English, but in 1955 he was an author, teaching Advanced Writing as writer-in-residence at a girl's junior college in upper State New York. He lived alone "in a small, unwinterized, unelectrified house,"² yet kept the phone in the room he had shared with Seymour active and listed. He is the narrator/author of all the Glass stories, and at forty-six, admits that all his life has been spent trying to shed more light on the life of his eldest brother Seymour.

²J. D. Salinger, Franny and Zooey (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1961), p. 53. All further references to this work appear in the text as F&Z.

The next-eldest, a sister, Boo Boo, was born in 1920, and in 1942 was an ensign in the Waves stationed at a naval base in Brooklyn. She lived in Seymour's and Buddy's apartment while they were in the Army, and it is from her message written on the bathroom mirror that "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" gets its title. In 1955, Buddy tells us that she is married to a man named Tannanbaum (we learn from "Down at the Dinghy") and travelling in Europe with her husband and three children. In 1959, Buddy describes her as "a bouncy, solvent Westchester matron" (RH&S, p. 115).

After Boo Boo came the twins, Waker and Walt, born in 1921. Walt was killed in the autumn of 1945 in a freak accident while he was with the Army of Occupation in Japan. Waker, in 1942, was in a conscientious objectors camp in Maryland, and by 1955 had become a Roman Catholic priest. At the writing of Franny and Zooey he was in Ecuador attending a Jesuit conference.

One of the "babies" of the family, Zooey, was born in 1930. In 1955, Zooey was "an actor, a leading man, in television, and had been for a little more than three years" (F&Z, p. 52). Buddy describes him as "surpassingly handsome" and as having a "close to being wholly beautiful face" (F&Z, p. 51). We learn that Zooey is the only one of the Glasses who really forgave Seymour for committing suicide, and that Zooey is able, through Buddy and Seymour, to lead Franny, his younger sister, out of her spiritual crisis.

The baby of the family, Franny, was born in 1935. Like Zooey, she too is one of the most physically attractive of the Glasses (Buddy

describes her as "a first-class beauty"), and she is on the way to becoming an actress. In Franny and Zooey, she undergoes a spiritual crisis, brought on by seeing all the egoism in the world and ultimately by what she was taught by Seymour.

From an examination of the Glass stories, I will ascertain the function of Seymour as a character in relation to the other members of the Glass family. For the most part, I agree with the interpretation of Bernice and Sanford Goldstein, that Seymour functions as a Zen master or Bodhisattva, leading the other Glass children to enlightenment. However, what I intend to do in this study which differs from what the Goldsteins have already done is to examine more in depth the meaning of Zen and its connection with Mahayana Buddhism, whence comes the term "Bodhisattva." Although the Goldsteins, along with a handful of other critics, use the term Bodhisattva to describe Seymour's function, they do not define it sufficiently. I hope to illustrate here from my definition of Bodhisattva how Seymour functions as Bodhisattva. For my definitions of Zen and Mahayana Buddhism I have used the works of D. T. Suzuki, who we learn from Sumitra Paniker's dissertation Salinger read extensively.³

In addition to showing Seymour's function as Bodhisattva, I will account for his suicide in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" as a result of his role as Bodhisattva. In examining Franny and Zooey, I will show

³Sumitra Paniker, "The Influence of Eastern Thought on 'Teddy' and the Seymour Glass Stories of J. D. Salinger," DAI, 32 (1971), 6446A (Univ. of Texas at Austin).

how Franny's crisis is due in part to Seymour's teachings and how Seymour functions as Bodhisattva via Zooey to help Franny through her crisis. Also, I will consider Seymour's relationship to Buddy in Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters; and Seymour: An Introduction refuting the criticism that "Seymour: An Introduction" is a flawed narrative, based on an examination of Seymour's poetry and its effect on Buddy's writing. Finally, from studying "Hapworth 16, 1924," I will illustrate how this story shows us Seymour in the first stage of Bodhisattvahood.

CHAPTER I

THE INFLUENCE OF ZEN IN SALINGER

As several critics have noted, Zen and Zen enlightenment figure greatly in Salinger's later works. One of the first clear indications of Zen in Salinger occurs in his collection Nine Stories, which opens with the Zen koan:

We know the sound of two hands clapping.
But what is the sound of one hand clapping?

Most likely, the influence of Zen on Salinger's fiction is partly a result of his studies of Advaita Vedanta (a Hindu philosophy) at the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center in New York under Swami Nikhilananda and his extensive reading of Dr. D. T. Suzuki's books on Zen Buddhism.⁴ Whatever the source of influence, Zen is very important to an understanding of Seymour Glass and his role in relation to the other members of the Glass family.

Most critics who deal with the influence of Zen on Salinger's later fiction seem to agree on two basic premises: (1) that the concept of Zen enlightenment as a blending of opposites is important in understanding this fiction and (2) that the Zen koan is the device used to obtain enlightenment. To understand more clearly the concept of Zen enlightenment, let us look at the writings of D. T. Suzuki. He tells us:

⁴Paniker, 6446A.

The essence of Zen Buddhism consists in acquiring a new viewpoint of life and things generally. By this I mean that if we want to get into the inmost life of Zen, we must forgo all our ordinary habits of thinking which control our everyday life, we must try to see if there is any other way of judging things, or rather if our ordinary way is always sufficient to give us the ultimate satisfaction of our spiritual needs. . . . This acquiring of a new point of view in our dealings with life and the world is popularly called by Japanese Zen students "satori" . . . another name for Enlightenment.⁵

For Suzuki there exists no Zen until there is satori; it is the cornerstone of Zen.

For a clearer sense of satori, we turn again to Suzuki:

Satori may be defined as an intuitive looking into the nature of things in contradistinction to the analytical or logical understanding of it. Practically, it means the unfolding of a new world hitherto unperceived in the confusion of a dualistically trained mind. . . . the world for those who have gained a satori is no more the old world as it used to be. . . . Logically stated, all its opposites and contradictions are united and harmonized into a consistent organic whole. (ZB, p. 84)

One method of achieving satori is through the use of the Zen koan exercise. The koan is "a theme or statement or question given to the Zen student for solution, which will lead him to a spiritual insight" (ZB, p. 100). The question is put to the student by the Zen master, who is responsible for leading the student to enlightenment, and once the koan is understood the student has gained satori. However, the manner of achieving satori through the koan is different from what we might expect. First, the intellect is the greatest hindrance rather

⁵D. T. Suzuki, Zen Buddhism: The Selected Writings of D. T. Suzuki, ed. William Barret (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), p. 83. All further references to this work within Chapter I will appear as ZB.

than the greatest help in solving the koan, for the intellect discriminates between subject and object (ZB, p. 137). Instead of intelligence or pure reason,

The ultimate intent is to go beyond the limits of intellection, and these limits can be crossed over only by exhausting oneself once for all, by using up all the psychic powers at one's command. Logic then turns into psychology, intellection into conation and intuition. What could not be solved on the plane of empirical consciousness is now transferred to the deeper recesses of the mind. (ZB, p. 138)

The Zen student keeps the koan before him night and day for weeks or months, exhausting himself and reaching a "psychological impasse" (ZB, p. 136). After what seems a total psychic block, the student's psychic faculties become charged with new energy: "A penetrating insight is born of the inner depths of consciousness, as a source of a new life has been tapped, and with it the koan yields up its secrets" (ZB, p. 150). However, the experience of satori is not romantic or glorious; rather, it can occur in connection with any ordinary event in everyday life (ZB, p. 107). It remains, though, an abrupt, momentary experience which changes the way in which the student views all experience from then on (ZB, p. 108).

With this information in mind, let us look at the two critics who have performed the most extensive examination of Zen principles in Salinger's fiction, Bernice and Sanford Goldstein. For them, the most important aspect of Zen in Salinger's later fiction is enlightenment, "which results from the non-rational and spontaneous blending of dualities. . . ." ⁶ They feel that Salinger's main aim

⁶ Bernice and Sanford Goldstein, "Zen and Salinger," Modern Fiction Studies, 12 (1966), 313.

in the Glass stories is for the Glass children to achieve this blending of dualities, most importantly so that there is no distinction between self and other—no ego.⁷ And, in their struggle for enlightenment, Seymour, although dead, is their Zen master guiding them towards enlightenment, while his suicide becomes for them a sort of koan.⁸ *
Hence, Salinger is "attempting to recreate in fiction a kind of satori,"⁹ by producing this blending of opposites within his characters.¹⁰

We can agree with the Goldsteins in that we can see the Glass children are concerned about ego or loss of ego and about no longer perceiving distinctions. For instance in Franny and Zooey, Zooey, with some help from the unpresent Buddy and Seymour as spokesmen, makes clear to Franny the necessity of conquering ego and of being motivated by a sense of universal love without discrimination. Also in Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters; and Seymour: An Introduction, Buddy's search for an understanding of Seymour and his search for a modus vivendi ends when he realizes "that all we do our whole lives is go from one little piece of Holy Ground to the next" (RH&S, p. 213). In essence, Buddy understands that all actions are holy when one no longer perceives dualities. In both instances it is a recollection of Seymour's words or actions that leads the other Glasses to their realizations. There are, of course, several more evidences of a

⁷ Ibid., p. 314.

⁸ Ibid., p. 315.

⁹ Bernice and Sanford Goldstein, "Bunnies and Cobras: Zen Enlightenment in Salinger," Discourse, 8 (1970), 98.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 99.

blending of dualities in the stories; however, we will examine these in detail later. Also later, we will see how this blending of dualities can be taken one step further to account for the form of "Seymour: An Introduction."

In addition to what the other critics have stipulated, Ihab Hassan draws in another aspect of Zen influence in Salinger. He reiterates the Zen ideal of indiscrimination, yet he also finds in Salinger's later fiction some of the ideals of Mahayana Buddhism.¹¹ This is not unusual, as we learn from D. T. Suzuki that Zen is one of the Mahayana schools, a particular variety of Mahayanism (ZB, p. 85). And we learn that Mahayana Buddhism is more liberal and progressive and aimed more at helping us in our everyday lives than is its rival school, Hinayana Buddhism, which is more conservative and which "may be considered in many points to be a rationalistic ethical system simply."¹²

Hassan takes hold of this aspect of Mahayanism and applies it to Salinger's fiction:

In Mahayana Buddhism, particularly a religion of the Middle Way which avoids the excesses of worldliness and asceticism, the characters of Salinger seem to find a gentle and practical ideal against which their actions may be gauged.¹³

¹¹Ihab Hassan, "'Rare Quixotic Gesture': The Fiction of J. D. Salinger," The Western Review, 21 (1957), 274.

¹²D. T. Suzuki, Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism (London, 1907; rpt., New York: Schocken Books, 1963), p. 2.

¹³Hassan, p. 274.

This practical ideal, Hassan says, is matter-of-fact rather than mystical. We can see this practicality in Franny and Zooey. Instead of allowing his sister to become totally withdrawn from the world by using the Jesus Prayer, Zooey pleads with Franny to re-enter the world through her vocation. He tells her to carry out her acting career, to act for God if she must, but to act. Zooey himself realizes he should not leave New York to do a movie in France but should stay there to work out his problems. And Buddy's realization in "Seymour" leads him back into the classroom, Room 307 with the "Terrible Miss Zabel."

David D. Galloway also incorporates one of the principles of Mahayanism into his criticism, although perhaps unknowingly. He tells us that once enlightened, the enlightened one "re-enters the world to perform good works."¹⁴ As Suzuki tells us, this "re-entry" is indeed what distinguishes Mahayana from its rival school:

But the Mahayanists, perceiving a deeper sense in enlightenment as the most important constituent element in the attainment of the final goal of Buddhism, which is spiritual freedom . . . did not wish to have it [enlightenment] operated in themselves only, but wanted to see it realized in every being sentient and even non-sentient.¹⁵

¹⁴David D. Galloway, The Absurd Hero in American Fiction: Updike, Stryon, Bellow, and Salinger, revised ed. (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1970), p. 146.

¹⁵D. T. Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism, 1st ser. (London: Rider and Co., 1949), pp. 63-64.

Also, we learn from Suzuki that the name for the Mahayanist follower, "one who seeks enlightenment not only for himself but for others," is Bodhisattva.¹⁶

In light of this information, Galloway's interpretation breaks down as he contends that Seymour has rejected satori as a form of mysticism which leads him out of rather than back into the world. If we understand Suzuki's definition of satori, satori is enlightenment, and in the Mahayanist view, once enlightened, the enlightened one takes it upon himself to enlighten others. Hence, satori would not lead Seymour out of this world through mysticism, but back into the world as the Zen master or Bodhisattva "to perform good works."

The Bodhisattva, we discover, seeks enlightenment through the Four Great Vows and the paramita or Perfect Virtues.¹⁷ And Heinrich Dumoulin in his A History of Zen Buddhism tells us that these Four Great Vows "play an important role in the life of the Zen disciple. These vows are pronounced with fervor at the very outset of the spiritual career and are constantly repeated throughout the long years of practice":

¹⁶ D. T. Suzuki, Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra (1930; rpt. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1968), p. 428.

¹⁷ Beatrice Lane Suzuki, Mahayana Buddhism: A Brief Outline (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1969), p. 66.

However innumerable the sentient beings, I vow to save them all.
 However inexhaustable the passions, I vow to extinguish them
 all.
 However immeasurable the dharmas [Truths], I vow to master
 them all.
 However incomparable the truth of Buddha, I vow to attain it.¹⁸

Thus we see another connection between Mahayana Buddhism and Zen, one of its sects.

In addition, Dumoulin lists the paramita, noting that originally there were only six:

In Mahayana the first five of these—namely, giving (dana), morality (sila), patience (kshanti), energy (virya), and meditation (dhyana)—are directed toward the sixth, wisdom (prjana), as the goal and fruit of all endeavor.¹⁹

Later four other virtues were added with their goal being "excellence of knowledge (jnana)," a more intellectual knowledge than prjana, which is more intuitive.²⁰

My contention is, then, that Salinger does use Zen and Zen enlightenment as the Goldsteins present it, with the dead Seymour leading the other Glasses to satori or enlightenment. However, as I have pointed out, Zen as a sect of Mahayana Buddhism shares some important characteristics with Mahayanism. In particular, the Mahayanist ideals of practicality and of the Bodhisattva are very important to our understanding of Salinger's later fiction and his character Seymour Glass. As we will see later, these ideals are

¹⁸ Heinrich Dumoulin, A History of Zen Buddhism, trans. Paul Peachey (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), p. 27.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 24.

²⁰ Ibid.

fundamental to our understanding of Seymour's suicide and to our understanding of the form of "Seymour: An Introduction."

CHAPTER II

"A PERFECT DAY FOR BANANAFISH"

By 1943, Salinger had already published nineteen short stories in magazines such as Story, Esquire, Collier's, Cosmopolitan, Saturday Evening Post and others. For the most part, these early stories are considered to be influenced greatly by Salinger's perception of World War II. Salinger himself was drafted in 1942 and participated in the D-Day invasion of Normandy.²¹ As James Lundquist tells us, not all of these early stories are directly about the war, "but a war atmosphere permeates them." And from this atmosphere arises the "unstated" question, "What can one think and do when all possible beliefs are gone?"²² James E. Miller also recognizes a war influence on Salinger's early work: ". . . we may readily guess that the war was responsible for, or at least brought to the surface, an alienation from modern existence so profound as to manifest itself at times in an overpowering spiritual nausea."²³

However, 1948 was a turning point for Salinger in signing a contract with the New Yorker and in publishing his short story "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" in the issue for January 31, 1948. From

²¹James Lundquist, J. D. Salinger (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), p. 13.

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

²³James E. Miller, Jr., J. D. Salinger (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), p. 6.

this point on he became associated with the "New Yorker school of writing" and in 1953, seven of his New Yorker stories were collected together in the volume Nine Stories, the first of these being "A Perfect Day for Bananafish."²⁴ This story is important because it begins the saga of Salinger's Glass family. Also in this story, Seymour Glass makes his first appearance and ironically his last, for at the end of the story he commits suicide. Yet, Seymour maintains his position as the central figure of the Glass stories, most often as a powerful spiritual entity when the other members of the Glass family refer to him.

In simplified terms, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" is the story of a young man, Seymour Glass, on vacation with his wife, Muriel, in Florida. In the first scene, Muriel is engaged in a telephone conversation with her mother, from which we learn that Seymour has wrecked a car, apparently as a result of his obsession with trees. He has suggested very strongly that Muriel read a book of German poems written in German which he had given her previously. He has made some questionable remarks to his wife's grandmother and has done something with a set of pictures from Bermuda. He spends most of his nights in Florida playing the piano, secluded from his wife and others, and he will not remove his bathrobe on the beach for fear that people will stare at his tattoo. (Muriel's mother asserts that he has no tattoo.) From information Muriel's mother supplies to

²⁴Lundquist, p. 26.

Dr. Sivetski, a psychiatrist, it is determined that Seymour may "completely lose control of himself." In the next scene, Seymour chides Sybil Carpenter, a little girl he has met on the beach, about another little girl they know, Sharon Lipschutz. He tells Sybil an imaginative tale about bananafish and becomes irrationally hostile toward a woman who stares at his feet when he gets on the elevator. He proceeds to his hotel room, sits on the twin bed opposite his sleeping wife, and puts a bullet through his right temple.

From what scant clues are here, we must ask: Is there enough information to determine the motives behind Seymour Glass's suicide? This question and others concerning the meaning and significance of the bananafish parable have been dealt with by many critics, yet none reaches a completely satisfactory conclusion. By examining these interpretations, however, perhaps we can come to a better understanding of the story and kinds of conflicts it raises.

One way of viewing Seymour's suicide is to rely only on "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" and to disregard the other Glass stories that follow. To avoid being led astray by the other stories, Gary Lane examines this story alone in his interpretation. Lane bases his theory on the assumption that the German poems mentioned by Muriel are Rilke's Duino Elegies which contain the theme of "lamentation over the insufficiency of man and [are] pervaded by a symbolic Angel, the reminder, in his transcendence of human limitation, at once of

man's aspiration and necessary failure."²⁵ Hence, in Sybil Seymour sees innocence, but corruptable innocence. He sees that "Sharons, 'never mean or unkind' (p.22) turn soon into Sybils, who 'poke . . . little dog[s] with balloon sticks' (p. 22) and that Sybils, at least spontaneous and honest, grow thence to Muriels."²⁶ And once Seymour uncovers himself, he sees in his body this same imperfectability and mortality, his "tattoo."²⁷ Thus, Seymour must die when Sybil reveals to him "that unbridgeable gap between human aspiration and human possibility."²⁸ Yet, Lane does not see Seymour's suicide as negative, for perhaps in death "human limitation will give way to infinite possibility."²⁹

In a like manner, Warren French believes that Seymour's suicide should be interpreted from the standpoint of this story alone because Seymour has been developing in Salinger's mind for years; thus, the Seymour of "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" may not be the same Seymour of the later stories.³⁰ French's main contention is that Seymour is childish in wanting everyone's attention. Just as Sybil must have all of Seymour's attention with none diverted by Sharon Lipschutz, he

²⁵Gary Lane, "Seymour's Suicide Again: A New Reading of J. D. Salinger's 'A Perfect Day for Bananafish,'" Studies in Short Fiction, 10 (1973), 28.

²⁶Ibid., p. 31. Internal quotes are references to J. D. Salinger, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," in Nine Stories (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1953), p. 22. All further references to "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" appear in the text as "APDB."

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., p. 32.

²⁹Ibid., p. 33.

³⁰Warren French, J. D. Salinger (New York: Twayne, 1963), p. 84.

must have everyone else's attention. He attracts attention to himself by his unusual behavior and comments, and finally by shooting himself.³¹

James Lundquist too thinks that we should analyze Seymour on the basis of this story alone. Lundquist's view of Seymour's suicide focuses on Seymour and Sybil's discussion of "Little Black Sambo." He links the tigers, which run around the tree until they turn into butter, with the Buddhist wheel of life or "Great Round." The emphasis on Buddhist thought is that one must either escape the "endless round of existence" or not get so caught up in the wheel that one blends into it.³² And Seymour's suicide can be viewed as related to another Buddhist concept, that of nirvana. Nirvana is losing life to gain life, dying physically in order to live spiritually, which perhaps Seymour has achieved by escaping the wheel of life. Lundquist points out also that nirvana is not something which is attained gradually by working; rather, it is simply an awakening achieved without motivation. This lack of motivation can be seen in Seymour's lack of motivation in killing himself.³³

James E. Miller interprets "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" separately also and finds that Seymour suffers from "keen sensitivity to the overwhelming physicality of existence,"³⁴ and that Seymour is the bananafish gluttoned by the physical world from which he cannot escape. This is similar to Lundquist's idea that the world should not

³¹Ibid., p. 83.

³²Lundquist, p. 83.

³³Lundquist, p. 86.

³⁴Miller, p. 28.

become too much with Seymour and that his suicide is an attempt to escape "the endless round of existence." Miller also points out that his suicide is not meant to hurt Muriel but to free her from her life with Seymour which is so difficult for her to understand.³⁵

Although the aforementioned critics deal with Seymour's suicide by relying on information gained from studying "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" alone, a case can be made for taking into account information gained in the later Glass stories. As Bernice and Sanford Goldstein state:

That the story can be read as an isolated entity is certainly feasible, but the fact remains that the later stories continually refer to Seymour's suicide so that Salinger himself insists of working his way through the dilemma. . . .³⁶

Thus, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" is not simply an ending of Seymour's life; it can be a beginning towards understanding this character and his relationship to his family.

In dealing with the critics who take into account the other Glass stories in their interpretations of "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," we find that for the most part they explain Seymour's suicide as the result of the enlightened man's or sensitive man's inability to live in this world. Aruthr Mizener believes that Seymour, because he is so intense in his perceptions, has a great emotional need to be a part of the ordinary world. By marrying Muriel he attempts to become a part of

³⁵Miller, p. 29.

³⁶Bernice and Sanford Goldstein, "Zen and Nine Stories," Renaissance, 24 (1972), 175.

this ordinary world but is ultimately unable to reconcile his discriminating heart with Muriel's indiscriminating heart.³⁷

Ihab Hassan interprets Seymour's suicide as an attempt to cleanse himself from the corruption and alienation Muriel produces.³⁸

Likewise, Gwynn and Blotner perceive Seymour's suicide as a turning inward resulting from the lack of love given to him by his wife, which is further intensified by his relationship with Sybil.³⁹ Bernice and Sanford Goldstein explain Seymour's suicide as his inability to deal with the reality of adult "phoniness" in the face of children's innocence.⁴⁰ And finally, Theodore Gross interprets the suicide as the failure of the poet and artist to exist in this world⁴¹—"the inability of the extraordinary person to exist in contemporary America."⁴²

Those critics who interpret the bananafish allegory as an integral part of Seymour's suicide come to various conclusions also. David Galloway understands the bananafish allegory and suicide as a rejection of mysticism on the part of Seymour. He has had mystical

³⁷ Arthur Mizener, "The Love Song of J. D. Salinger," Harpers, 218 (February 1959), 88.

³⁸ Hassan, p. 267.

³⁹ Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner, The Fiction of J. D. Salinger (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1958), p. 19.

⁴⁰ Goldstein, "Zen and Nine Stories," p. 177.

⁴¹ Theodore L. Gross, "J. D. Salinger: Suicide and Survival in the Modern World," South Atlantic Quarterly, 68 (1969), 455.

⁴² Ibid., p. 461.

experiences all of his life and is so full of them that he cannot get out of the bananafish hole to participate in the outside world.⁴³ He commits suicide because he still strives for spiritual perfection but is unable to join the outside world.⁴⁴ Howard Harper, on the other hand, sees the bananafish parable as analogous to Seymour's spirit, which is gluttoned by the products of his sensitivity. Seymour then lives "on a level of intensity which these other people cannot share and which he himself cannot sustain."⁴⁵ Similarly, William Weigand explains the suicide as the result of a "surfeit of sensation."⁴⁶ In addition, Gordon E. Slethaug defends Seymour's suicide by calling it the will of God. The bananafish becomes each man as he gorges himself on life. Seymour has lived life to its fullest, is a bloated bananafish, and now must die. Because of his previous suicide attempts, Seymour must already realize that his life is at an end and that he must move on to another "incarnation" according to the will of God.⁴⁷

Despite all of these interpretations, however, problems still exist in finding a motive for Seymour's suicide. If we rely on "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" alone, we must consider Seymour selfish and childish,

⁴³Ibid., p. 461.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 151-152.

⁴⁵Howard M. Harper, Desperate Faith: A Study of Bellow, Salinger, Mailer, Baldwin, and Updike (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 86.

⁴⁶William Wiegand, "J. D. Salinger: Seventy-Eight Bananas," Chicago Review, 11 (Winter 1958), 5.

⁴⁷Gordon E. Slethaug, "Seymour: A Clarification," Renascence, 22 (1971), 127.

which would make the story appear shallow and meaningless. Or we must bring in outside information based on the assumed meanings of vague references. Although these explanations are plausible, they create a sense of insecurity in the reader at not really knowing what preceded the suicide. On the other hand, if we take into account the other Glass stories, we are faced with a variety of possible interpretations which focus primarily on Seymour's inability to deal with life. Yet, if, as we learn in the later stories, Seymour is the "sanest and strongest of men," a holy man, why does he kill himself? For as one critic states, "If the suicide in the hotel room was the act of a man weakened to insanity, then the whole legend becomes meaningless. . . . If it was the departure of a holy man from an unworthy world, it was out of character,"⁴⁸ because Seymour taught his siblings to live their lives to the fullest and with all their might.

The solution to this paradox lies partly in what Paul Levine has to say about Seymour in regard to "A Perfect Day for Bananafish":

Salinger juxtaposes the delightful conversation Seymour has with the little girl on the beach with his complete inability to communicate with any of the adults around him. Seymour's tragic obsession with his own inability to communicate with the outside world and live with it on its own terms is what kills him and plagues the rest of the Glass family.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Jack Skow, "Sonny: An Introduction," Time, September 15, 1961, p. 90.

⁴⁹ Paul Levine, "J. D. Salinger: The Development of the Misfit Hero," Twentieth Century Literature, 4 (1958), 94.

My own conclusion, based on the later stories, is that it is this inability to communicate with the outside world that is primarily responsible for Seymour's suicide. However, as we will see, his suicide is not simply the act of a frustrated man.

I contend that Seymour is an enlightened man, and that in keeping with the Mahayanist teachings, he strives to see others obtain enlightenment also. In this sense, he is a Bodhisattva. Yet, in life, Seymour is unable to communicate the Way to enlightenment to anyone outside his immediate family. Ultimately, as we see him in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," he is unable to communicate in almost any sense with the adults around him. He is isolated from his wife and his in-laws and is physically isolated from the rest of the hotel guests as he sits and plays the piano in another room every night. The only persons he can communicate with in this story are children, Sharon and Sybil, perhaps because children are more perceptive than adults and are more likely at least to listen to what may at first sound ridiculous, for instance the bananafish parable, just as the Zen koan at first sounds absurd. However, it is not so important for Seymour to communicate with children, who have not yet learned fully to discriminate, as it is for him to help the adults around him to unlearn their dualistic ways of thinking.

A prime example of his inability to communicate is seen just before he commits suicide. Seymour enters the elevator and is confronted by a woman who he believes is staring at his feet:

"I see you're looking at my feet," he said to her when the car was in motion.

"I beg your pardon?" said the woman.

"I said I see you're looking at my feet."

"I beg your pardon. I happened to be looking at the floor," said the woman, and faced the doors of the car.

"If you want to look at my feet, say so," said the young man. "But don't be a God-damned sneak about it."

("APDB," p. 25)

As a result of this exchange, the woman leaves the elevator as soon as possible and thus deters any communication she might have had with Seymour.

Because of his inability to communicate, then, Seymour does become like his bananafish, surfeited with the spirit of his own enlightenment. And because he cannot get out of his bananahole to communicate the Way to others, he dies. Yet his suicide is not simply an admission of failure or frustration. Instead, in death, Seymour finds another means by which he can communicate. For, as we see in the later stories, Buddy writes about his dead brother and about what his dead brother has taught him. In this manner, Seymour can communicate to the outside world what he could not while he was alive, and he can fulfill the ideals of the Bodhisattva.

CHAPTER III

FRANNY AND ZOOEY

"Franny," originally published in The New Yorker, November 19, 1955, and "Zooney," originally published in The New Yorker, May 4, 1957, were combined in 1961 to produce Franny and Zooney. The stories are usually read as companion pieces, as the first, "Franny," describes what leads up to Franny Glass' spiritual crisis and the second, "Zooney," describes how Zooney Glass helps his sister Franny to overcome her crisis. However, as Tom Davis points out, not for this reason alone should "Franny" and "Zooney" be read as companion pieces, for "the spiritual crisis involved is as much his [Zooney's] as Franny's, and perhaps more,"⁵⁰ as we shall see. From an examination of the causes of the crisis, the crisis itself, and the solution to the crisis, it is clear how Seymour functions as Zen master or Bodhisattva.

In "Franny," we see Franny at a Yale football weekend with her boyfriend, Lane Coutell. Her crisis is precipitated by the conversation she has with Lane over lunch, concerning among other topics, Lane's English paper on Falubert's lack of "testicularity." This pseudo-intellectual discussion on Lane's part brings to the surface the feelings Franny has been having for the past week, and perhaps even longer than that. Franny tells Lane that he is talking just like one

⁵⁰Tom Davis, "J. D. Salinger: The Sound of One Hand Clapping," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, 4 (Winter 1963), 45.

of the section men she hates so much: "I'm so sick of pedants and conceited little tearer-downers I could scream" (F&Z, p. 17). And later, Franny admits what lies at the core of her disgust: "I'm just sick of ego, ego, ego. My own and everybody else's" (F&Z, p. 29). Finally, we learn that Franny hopes to save herself from this "ego, ego, ego" with the Jesus Prayer found in her little green book, The Way of the Pilgrim.

In "Zooey," we find some of the more remote causes for Franny's crisis and for Zooey's crisis as well. "Zooey" opens with Zooey reading a four-year-old letter from Buddy Glass, Zooey's oldest living brother. From this letter we learn that Seymour and Buddy were responsible for a great deal of Franny's and Zooey's religious, philosophical, and classical education. Their education was different from what their other brothers and sister, Walt, Waker, and Boo Boo, received, however. Instead of putting Franny and Zooey straightway into a study of classical literature, Seymour and Buddy were "nervous, even frightened, at the statistics on child pedants and academic wiesenheimers":

Seymour had already begun to believe that education by any name would smell as sweet, and maybe much sweeter, if it didn't begin with a quest for knowledge at all but with a quest, as Zen would put it, for no-knowledge. Dr. Suzuki says somewhere that to be in a state of pure consciousness—satori—is to be with God before he said, Let there be light. . . . (F&Z, p. 65)

Therefore, they decided to hold back any kind of formal education:

till your [Franny and Zooey] were both able at least to conceive of a state of being where the mind knows the source of all light. . . . That is, we [Seymour and Buddy]

wanted you both to know who and what Jesus and Guatama and Lao-tse and Shankaracharya and Hueneng and Sri Ramakrishna, etc., were before you knew too much or anything about Homer or Shakespeare or even Blake or Whitman. . . . (F&Z, pp. 65-66)

It is important to note here that Seymour and Buddy did not require that Franny and Zooey become enlightened by achieving satori before they began their formal education, but that they only asked that Franny and Zooey be able to conceive of the state of mind necessary for achieving satori. Moreover, Franny and Zooey are expected to be aware of enlightenment on an intellectual level, rather than on an intuitive level.

Also important is what inspires this letter from Buddy. As he says, he has never before been able to tell Franny or Zooey why he and Seymour took over their education "as early and as highhandedly as we did" (F&Z, p. 64). But because of an incident four years ago at a local supermarket, Buddy was prompted to write this letter. As he was standing at the meat counter waiting for his lamb chops to be cut, he asked a pretty young girl waiting with her mother how many boyfriends she had:

She held up two fingers. "Two!" I said. "That's a lot of boyfriends. What are their names, sweetheart?" Said she, in a piercing voice, "Bobby and Dorothy." (F&Z, pp. 63-64)

In addition to this incident, Buddy's inspiration comes also from a "haiku-style" poem he found in Seymour's hotel room, written just before his suicide:

"The little girl on the plane
Who turned her doll's head around
To look at me." (F&Z, p. 64)

The importance of these two experiences, we learn, comes from what Seymour told Buddy one day, "in a crosstown bus, of all places—that all legitimate religious study must lead to the unlearning of the differences, the illusory differences, between boys and girls, animals and stones, day and night, heat and cold" (F&Z, p. 67). These two experiences illustrate exactly what Seymour was talking about. The little girl in the grocery did not distinguish between Bobby and Dorothy, boys and girls. And the little girl on the plane does not distinguish between herself and her doll, for she turns its head around to look at Seymour rather than turning her own head around to look at him.⁵¹ And as a result of these two instances, Buddy knows that he has "something happy and exciting to tell you [Zooey]" (F&Z, p. 68).

In concluding the letter, Buddy gives his advice: "Act, Zachary Martin Glass, when and where you want to, since you feel you must, but do it with all your might" (F&Z, p. 68). And as the Goldsteins tell us not only does Zooey accept the advice of his older brother, but he later passes it on to Franny in her crisis.⁵²

Buddy's letter, then, indicates that most likely Zen has had a profound influence on Franny and Zooey's lives and that the education they received at the hands of their older brothers was probably similar. The influence of Zen is seen as Seymour and Buddy place more emphasis on Franny and Zooey's understanding of the mind which perceives satori

⁵¹ Goldstein, "Bunnies and Cobras," p. 100.

⁵² Ibid., p. 120.

than they do on other kinds of knowledge. For Zooey, the emphasis on Zen teachings has been so great an influence (and such an annoyance) that he tells Bessie:

"Not that anybody's interested, but I can't even sit down to a goddam meal, to this day, without first saying the Four Great Vows under my breath, and I'll lay any odds you want Franny can't either. . . ." (F&Z, p. 104)

Also, a likely result of Zen teachings is Franny's concern with ego. However, we note that she seems just as concerned that others achieve a state of egolessness as she is that she herself achieve a loss of ego. Thus, Franny and Zooey are alike in the education that they received and are also alike in the kinds of reactions it produced, although Zooey is at a different point of development at this time. Zooey states:

"We're freaks, the two of us, Franny and I," he announced, standing up. "I'm a twenty-five-year-old freak and she's a twenty-year-old freak, and both those bastards [Seymour and Buddy] are responsible. . . . The symptoms are a little more delayed in Franny's case than mine, but she's a freak, too, and don't you forget it." (F&Z, p. 103)

Their education causes Franny and Zooey to be "freaks," and, as the Goldsteins point out, "Their very genius is their burden, their barrier toward the Way. . . ."⁵³ What Seymour and Buddy have taught them becomes a hindrance to them and, at the same time, the only way out of their predicament. Because of their intellect, they are more critical and do discriminate more than others. As Suzuki states, "The intellect is primarily intended to enable us to get on well

⁵³ Goldstein, "Zen and Salinger," p. 315.

with a world dualistically conceived; but for probing into ultimate reality it is an inadequate instrument. . . ." ⁵⁴ Furthermore, Zen holds an attraction for the highly intelligent, as satori frees them from the "impasse" they are sure to reach in attempting to achieve indiscrimination and egolessness by rationalistic means. ⁵⁵

However, because of their Zen teachings, their criticism of others makes them miserable. Zooey rants and raves about Mr. LeSage and Dick Hess and all the show business phonies, then says: "I sit in judgment on every poor, ulcerous bastard I know. . . . and I know that I'll pay like hell for any judgment I mete out, sooner or later, one way or another" (F&Z, p. 137). Similarly, Franny tells us: "I simply could not keep a single opinion to myself. . . . I started picking and picking and picking at all his [Lane's] opinions and values and—just everything. . . . It's a wonder he didn't shoot me. . . . I'd have absolutely congratulated him if he had" (F&Z, p. 138). And it is this critical nature, the Goldsteins make clear, that is a barrier to Franny and Zooey's enlightenment or awareness. "The Glass children, then, are not only highly critical of others, but of themselves as well for being too critical. These are two sides of a single coin, for the ego is enlarged and yet isolated by criticism." ⁵⁶ Thus, their critical

⁵⁴ D. T. Suzuki, Living by Zen, ed. Christmas Humphreys (New York: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1950), p. 92.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Goldstein, "Bunnies and Cobras," p. 104.

nature keeps them from realizing that there really is no duality between self and other.

In "Zooney," Zooney reveals to Franny the implications of her critical nature; it has both enlarged and isolated her ego. Her ego is enlarged in that she not only rails against ideas that she does not agree with, but she also rails equally against the people who hold these ideas. As Zooney tells her: "I mean you just don't despise what they represent—you despise them. It's too damn personal" (F&Z, p. 161). And Zooney points out that she does not discriminate amongst those in higher education, all of whom she condemns for not being interested in wisdom. What, Zooney asks her, happen to the one or two good professors when she does away with all the professors? In addition, she sets herself up to judge others, and Zooney tells her, "You keep talking about ego. My God, it would take Christ himself to decide what's ego and what isn't. This is God's universe, buddy, not yours, and he has the final say about what's ego and what isn't" (F&Z, p. 166).

Finally, in questioning Franny's motives for saying the Jesus Prayer, Zooney points again to Franny's enlarged ego. He tells her that she may be trying to pile up "spiritual treasure" which would make her as bad as those she rails against. Franny herself admits that she is aware of this possibility: "Just because I'm choosy about what I want—in this case, enlightenment, or peace, instead of money or prestige or fame or any of those things—doesn't mean I'm not as egotistical and self-seeking as everybody else. If anything, I'm more so!" (F&Z, p. 148).

Also as a result of her critical nature, Franny becomes isolated— isolated from the Jesus Prayer itself because she has "distorted notions of Jesus."⁵⁷ Rather than praying to the Jesus of the New Testament, Franny prays to a Jesus who, as Zooey says, is more "loveable," a "Jesus and St. Francis and Seymour and Heidi's grandfather all in one" (F&Z, p. 165). And by becoming so absorbed in the prayer, she isolates herself from the mainstream of life. As Zooey points out: "I'd like to be convinced—I'd love to be convinced—that you're not using it [the Jesus Prayer] as a substitute for doing whatever the hell your duty is in life, or just your daily duty" (F&Z, pp. 167-168). It is at this time that Zooey has blasted Franny out of her piousness by attacking her reasons for saying the prayer and attacking her conception of Jesus, and now has prepared her for the story of the Fat Lady.⁵⁸

At the end of Zooey's speech to Franny, he sees that he is not getting through to her completely: "In an instant, he turned pale—pale with anxiety for Franny's condition, and pale, presumably, because failure had suddenly filled the room with its invariable sickening smell" (F&Z, p. 171). Realizing his failure to reach Franny on any level other than an intellectual one, Zooey turns elsewhere for help. As Sam Baskett tells us, Zooey is limited in his ability to help Franny because he is still unable to break down the barrier between himself and the environment he works in but judges and rages

⁵⁷Miller, p. 32.

⁵⁸Ibid.

against. "Because of his limitations, he is unable really to help Franny, despite his carefully calculated efforts; but he has other resources than himself. . . . And, in effect, it is through Seymour that Zooey saves Franny."⁵⁹ Indeed, Zooey turns to his older brothers for help.

After entering Seymour and Buddy's old room and reading the many quotations on the beaverboard, Zooey sits down and calls Franny, trying to imitate Buddy's voice. Although he is unsuccessful at keeping up the pretense, Franny does not hang up on him. Instead she listens as he gives her much the same advice Buddy gave him in the four-year-old letter:

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. . . . 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. (F&Z, p. 197)

Still, though, Franny does not realize that in acting the "actress loses her self in her creation"⁶⁰ and in this way achieves egolessness. It is here that Zooey relates to Franny the story of Seymour's Fat Lady.

As Zooey was going out the door bitching one night on his way to the radio program "It's A Wise Child," Seymour told him to shine his shoes. Zooey at first refused, stating that all the audiences, announcers, and sponsors were morons and could not see his shoes anyway.

⁵⁹Sam S. Baskett, "The Splendid/Squalid World of J. D. Salinger," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, 4 (Winter 1963), 54.

⁶⁰Goldstein, "Bunnies and Cobras," p. 102.

Seymour answered that he should shine them for the Fat Lady, and he did the first time because Seymour "had a very Seymour look on his face" (F&Z, p. 199). But later, after forming a very clear picture of the Fat Lady—a pathetic figure, sitting on her porch all day, listening to the radio, probably having cancer—Zooney shines his shoes because "it seemed goddam clear why Seymour wanted me to shine my shoes when I went on the air. It made sense" (F&Z, p. 199). Franny, astonished, admits that Seymour told her to be funny for the Fat Lady once and that her picture of the Fat Lady is just like Zooney's. Zooney brings about the final revelation, saying:

"There isn't anyone anywhere that isn't Seymour's Fat Lady. Don't you know that? Don't you know that goddam secret yet? And don't you know—listen to me, now--don't you know who that Fat Lady really is? . . . Ah, buddy. Ah, buddy. It's Christ Himself. Christ Himself, buddy." (F&Z, p. 200)

It is through this story that Zooney via Seymour makes his appeal for breaking down the dichotomies and discriminations Franny has made among people. Ultimately, it is an appeal for universal love. It is "the intuitive knowledge that at last replaces Franny's revulsion with joy. . . ." ⁶¹ And, through this revelation, Franny's crisis is overcome.

Zooney solves not only Franny's crisis by this revelation but his own as well. That he is in a state of crisis is indicated by his rereading of Buddy's four-year-old letter. He has ulcers presumably because he cannot totally accept LeSage and some of the phonies in show business, yet he knows he is wrong not to accept them. He still

⁶¹ Miller, p. 33.

judges people and as he says, "I make everybody feel that he doesn't really want to do any good work but that he just wants to get work done that will be thought good by everyone he knows . . ." (F&Z, p. 137). Even Bessie tells him that he is cynical, suspecting everyone's actions of ulterior motives. Also she tells him, "You can't live in the world with such strong likes and dislikes" (F&Z, p. 99). From this evidence, it is clear that he is in much the same predicament as Franny. Franny even notices this similarity: "I mean we're not bothered by exactly the same things, but by the same kind of things, I think, and for the same reasons. At least, it sounds that way" (F&Z, p. 143). Indeed, "Zooey understands Franny so well because he has 'been there' himself. . . ." ⁶²

Therefore, as Tom Davis tells us, "Franny with her 'Jesus Prayer' comes straight out of Zooey's past to upset his uneasy truce; he is compelled to think through the dark night of his own soul." ⁶³

Zooey's attempt to see Franny through her crisis, then, is also an attempt to find solid footing for himself; "he is renewing himself at the same time he is saving Franny." ⁶⁴ It is important to note, however, that Zooey becomes effective only when he has Seymour's intervention. Through his own words, he can move Franny on an intellectual level. Through Buddy's words, he can appeal to Franny to rejoin the world. But only through Seymour's words can Zooey move

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Davis, p. 46.

⁶⁴Miller, p. 33.

Franny on an intuitive level by appealing to her own experience with the Fat Lady. As we learn earlier from Buddy, Zooey is the only one of the Glasses who really understands and forgives Seymour's suicide. This is perhaps why he can call on Seymour for guidance.

Seymour's role in Franny and Zooey, then, is ultimately that of Bodhisattva. However, because Seymour is dead, he must function through others. We learn through Buddy's letter that Seymour felt that Franny and Zooey should first understand satori before pursuing any other kind of knowledge. As this is the cornerstone of Zen, what more likely place would the Bodhisattva or Zen master start in leading others to enlightenment? Also through Buddy's letter, it is clear that the blending of "illusory differences," another Zen principle resulting from satori, is foremost in what Seymour teaches his brother. And finally, through the story of the Fat Lady, Zooey makes an ultimate appeal for the blending of dualities and for seeing that everyone is the Fat Lady. This particular instance is most important because it is not simply a doctrine accepted on an intellectual level. Rather, Franny and Zooey accept this koan-like story intuitively because it appeals to their experience. They both shined their shoes for the Fat Lady in the past, not really understanding why, but acting out of faith in Seymour's instructions. And, both Franny and Zooey formed similar pictures of the Fat Lady in their minds. Consequently, they both relate to the Fat Lady intuitively instead of rationally.

It is important to note here that the experiences of Buddy at the meat counter and of Franny and Zooey in relation to the story of the Fat Lady do not necessarily constitute enlightenment or satori. Instead, as the Goldsteins remark, these experiences lend an increased Zen "awareness" to Franny and Zooey's lives.⁶⁵ And, because satori must be achieved solely through one's own efforts,⁶⁶ we can see that Franny and Zooey are not totally enlightened in this sense. Clearly, they both have had outside help. Buddy (through Seymour) has taken on the role of Bodhisattva and has pointed out the Way to Zooey in his letter. Zooey (via Buddy and Seymour) takes on the role of the Bodhisattva in relation to Franny. In both instances the Way is made clear and need only be accepted. In true satori, the Way must be worked out for oneself with the minimal efforts of the Zen master's koan to be relied upon for help.

Indeed, Franny and Zooey have been able to find a manner by which they can reconcile what they have learned from Seymour and Buddy with their great intelligence. Through the lesson of the Fat Lady, they learn the blending of dualities through universal love; and through the advice of Buddy, they learn that they can re-enter the world through their vocations, blending themselves into their work—the practical ideal of the Mahayanists.

⁶⁵Goldstein, "Bunnies and Cobras," p. 103.

⁶⁶Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism, p. 61.

CHAPTER IV

RAISE HIGH THE ROOF BEAM CARPENTERS; AND

SEYMOUR: AN INTRODUCTION

Like Franny and Zooey, Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters; and Seymour: An Introduction, published in 1963, originally appeared as separate short stories: "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" in The New Yorker, November 19, 1955, and "Seymour: An Introduction" in The New Yorker, June 6, 1959. The first story is an account of Seymour's wedding day, June 4, 1942, retold by Buddy Glass. The second is a narrative by Buddy, who attempts to present the reader with a detailed picture of his dead brother Seymour. Although these two stories are read as companion pieces, the reasons for this are not as clear as in the case of "Franny" and "Zooey." Gordon E. Slethaug believes that "'Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters' is the parable or situation which 'Seymour: An Introduction' explains," just as "Zooey" explains "Franny."⁶⁷ However, the second story is not as much an explanation of the first as it is a further illumination of Buddy's character and the effect Seymour has had on that character. As James E. Miller remarks, Buddy fails to suppress himself as he did in narrating the earlier stories and indeed "tends constantly to become his own main character,"⁶⁸ even though it is Seymour he says he will focus on in these stories. In fact, just as the crisis in Franny and Zooey

⁶⁷Slethaug, p. 116.

⁶⁸Miller, p. 36.

is as much Zooey's as Franny's, Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters; and Seymour: An Introduction is as much about Buddy as Seymour. And, just as Franny and Zooey illustrates the effects and subsequent realizations produced in Franny and Zooey by Seymour, so does Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters; and Seymour: An Introduction show us this same type of effect and realization produced in Buddy by Seymour.

"Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters"

In "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" Buddy gives an account of Seymour's wedding day, as we learn that he is the only member of the Glass family able to attend. Seymour is marrying Muriel Fedder, whom he met in Monmouth the winter before. After waiting an hour and twenty minutes for Seymour to appear at the wedding, the bride is escorted back down the aisle and out of the building. The guests all get in waiting cars and Buddy ends up in the car with the Matron of Honor, the bride's aunt, and the bride's great uncle, a deaf-mute. In the car, the Matron of Honor begins berating Seymour for his behavior, unaware that Buddy is his brother. She relates to those in the car that Mrs. Fedder thinks Seymour is a latent homosexual and a schizoid personality, while she herself believes that Seymour is just plain crazy or someone who has never grown up. She is possessed of several half-truths about Seymour's past as a regular on the radio program "It's A Wise Child" and about his past relationship with Charlotte Mayhew. Stuck in traffic, Buddy suggests they all go to the apartment that he shares with Seymour which is nearby. There, Buddy defends Seymour and reads Seymour's diary while the Matron of Honor phones the Fedders. She learns that Seymour was waiting for Muriel at the Fedders

and that Seymour and Muriel have eloped. Everyone except Buddy and Muriel's great uncle leaves to attend the reception.

From the story, then, the most important or significant details we learn about Seymour come from the preface, what the Matron of Honor tells us, which is further explained in Seymour's diary, and what we learn about Seymour's past relationship with Charlotte Mayhew. First, the story is prefaced by a Taoist tale which Seymour read to Franny when she was just ten months old. In the tale, Kao, a young man, is sent out to look for a superlative horse in the stead of an older man, Po Lo. After three months, the young man reports that he has found a dun-colored mare which is a superlative horse; yet, when the horse finally arrives, it turns out to be a coal-black stallion. The moral of the tale is that the young Kao "keeps in view the spiritual mechanism . . . intent on the inward qualities, he loses sight of the external. . . . So clever a judge of horses is Kao, that he has it in him to judge something better than horses" (RH&S, p. 5). Buddy tells us that he relates this tale to us because what follows is the account of Seymour's wedding day, and because since Seymour's death, he cannot think of anyone he would care to send out looking for horses in his stead. The preface implies that Seymour possessed this special quality for seeing into the spiritual mechanism, and within the realm of this story it is Buddy who sees "the difference in perceiving essentials and externals,"⁶⁹ for Buddy knows the truths behind the comments and evaluations made regarding Seymour's character.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 37.

Next, we learn from the Matron of Honor and Seymour's diary that Muriel's mother thinks Seymour is a latent homosexual; she thinks that there is something "wrong" with him because he has not seduced Muriel. She thinks he is a schizoid personality as he fails to relate well to other people. Mrs. Fedder's opinion of Seymour is important because, as Seymour writes, "M.[uriel] can only hear me when her mother is listening, too, poor baby" (RH&S, p. 87). Therefore, Muriel cannot be truly happy with Seymour unless her mother is too. Yet, even though her mother is never completely satisfied with Seymour's mental state or behavior (this is still clear years later in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish") Muriel does marry Seymour and refuses to leave him.

Why then does Muriel marry Seymour? From Seymour's diary we learn that he is happy with Muriel but feels that she is not really happy with him:

"Oh, God, I'm so happy with her. If only she could be happier with me. . . . on the whole I don't make her really happy. . . . My one terrible consolation is that my beloved has an undying, basically undeviating love for the institution of marriage itself." (RH&S, p. 83)

How, then, can Seymour, who obviously sees "the main current of poetry that flows through things, all things" (RH&S, p. 84) marry someone with such a shallow understanding? Seymour questions whether or not Muriel's motives are despicable, but then answers himself: "'In a way, they [her motives] must be [despicable], but yet to me they seem so human-size and beautiful that I can't think of them even now as I write this without feeling deeply, deeply moved'" (RH&S, p. 84). Earlier he remarks, "'How I love and need her indiscriminating

heart'" (RH&S, p. 77). And later he reflects, "'How I worship her simplicity, her terrible honesty. How I rely on it'" (RH&S, p. 85). It appears then that the qualities Seymour is drawn to are Muriel's obvious human-ness, her childlike indiscrimination and honesty. Although Seymour is aware of the negative possibilities of these qualities, he overlooks them and sees only the positive benefits. As Miller puts it, Seymour sees the potential of Muriel's "spiritual mechanism."⁷⁰ Therefore, although Muriel's motives may appear shallow and self-seeking on the surface, Seymour finds in them some of the basic Zen-like qualities that he as Bodhisattva strives to perfect in all humans.

Also clearly Zen-like is the conversation he has with Mrs. Fedder's psychiatrist after dinner one night. Dr. Sims diagnoses Seymour as having a "perfection complex of some kind" and extols to Seymour "the virtues of living the imperfect life, of accepting one's own and other's weaknesses" (RH&S, p. 86). Seymour agrees that this is fine in theory, but tells Dr. Sims:

I'll champion indiscrimination till doomsday, on the ground that it leads to health and a kind of very real, enviable happiness. Followed purely it's the way of the Tao, and undoubtedly the highest way. (RH&S, p. 86)

Indeed, Seymour's attitude is that of a perfectionist. As a Bodhisattva, he realizes that every one of us is possessed of the Buddha-nature, and he sets out to see that it is fully realized in each of us. In

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 38.

gaining this perfection, the Bodhisattva himself gives up the opportunity to achieve Nirvana.⁷¹

Seymour's own diagnosis of his condition is, "'Oh, God, if I'm anything by a clinical name, I'm a kind of paranoiac in reverse, I suspect people of plotting to make me happy'" (RH&S, -p. 88). After reading this passage of Seymour's diary, Buddy slams the diary shut and "with an almost vicious wrist movement, literally thr[ows] Seymour's diary" into the laundry hamper. It is not clear here why Buddy is almost violent in throwing Seymour's diary into the hamper. One possibility is that he is angry with the other insensitive people, the Matron of Honor or Mrs. Fedder, who cannot or will not try to understand his brother who is so loving. Or, another possibility is that Buddy is angry or frustrated with Seymour, who practices indiscriminate love for those who cannot or will not understand him. Whatever the case is here, it is clear that Buddy feels compelled to defend Seymour to the others.

Buddy's first defense of Seymour comes when the Matron of Honor accuses Seymour of being "a little exhibitionist" as a child on "It's A Wise Child." Buddy says that, instead of being an exhibitionist, Seymour went to the studio as if he were going to his own funeral. Indeed, Seymour showed no pride in his ability to answer the radio show questions. If anything, he was almost extreme in his humility. And, Buddy relates, since the age of ten, Seymour had been scrutinized by all the professionals in the country and:

⁷¹Suzuki, Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra, p. 219.

Not one God-damned person, of all the patronizing, fourth-rate critics and column writers, had ever seen him for what he really was. A poet, for God's sake. . . . If he never wrote a line of poetry, he could still flash what he had at you with the back of his ear if he wanted to. (RH&S, p. 69).

This is the first time Buddy refers to Seymour as a poet. Later in "Seymour: An Introduction," Buddy will explore the full implications of Seymour's identity as a poet.

Finally, after everyone except the deaf-mute has left, Buddy makes his final defense of Seymour's behavior. He explains why Seymour when he was twelve years old threw a stone at Charlotte Mayhew, causing her nine stitches and a crooked smile:

"What happened was, she sat down in the middle of our driveway one morning to pet Boo Boo's cat, and Seymour threw a stone at her. . . . He threw it at her because she looked so beautiful sitting there in the middle of the driveway with Boo Boo's cat. Everybody knew that, for God's sake—me, Charlotte, Boo Boo, Waker, Walt, the whole family." (RH&S, p.104)

However, immediately after making this statement, Buddy reflects that he is indeed a liar, as Charlotte never did understand why Seymour threw the stone at her.

This incident is important in understanding Seymour and in understanding Buddy's interpretation of his action as well. Earlier we learn that Seymour and Buddy met Charlotte one day as she dropped marbles on them from her twelfth story apartment. In addition, she was a contestant on "It's A Wise Child" with the Glasses, and "She usually arranged things so that she sat next to . . . Seymour at the broadcasting table, and whenever he said anything on the show that delighted her, she used to step on his foot. It was like a hand squeeze,

only she used her foot" (RH&S, p. 94). Often, Buddy says, Seymour went home with a limp because of Charlotte's overzealousness. In each of these instances something joyful is communicated through something painful—the stomp on the foot replacing the squeeze of the hand. It makes sense then that all Seymour intended to do was to let Charlotte know how beautiful he found her by throwing a stone at her, as pain seemed to be the medium of communication between them. The incident is seen by one critic as "the affirmation of the effort for expression and communication even at the expense of exposure and pain."⁷² It is important to note that only the other Glasses understood why Seymour threw the stone at Charlotte but that Charlotte did not understand. This is yet another instance in which Seymour is able to communicate with his family but is unable to reach others.

"Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" closes with Buddy reading the final entry in Seymour's diary. In this last entry is perhaps the true explanation for why Seymour could not marry Muriel in front of the other guests but chose instead to elope. Seymour writes: "'I'm too keyed up to be with people. I feel as though I'm about to be born'" (RH&S, p. 106). The joy of marrying Muriel and the prospect of raising children is almost too much for Seymour to bear. From reading Vedanta he sees that he will be taking on a responsibility for the first time in his life—the responsibility of serving Muriel and the responsibility of remaining detached in loving their children, while realizing foremost that their children are God's.

⁷²Wiegand, "Seventy-Eight Bananas," p. 16.

After reading this entry, Buddy does not throw the diary down violently. Rather, he places the diary back in Seymour's bag and goes to sleep. Just as Franny's sleep at the end of "Zooney" indicates that she is over her crisis, this sleep of Buddy's marks a turning point for him too. Indeed, as we shall see from "Seymour: An Introduction," Buddy is not fully over his crisis; in fact, his crisis may have just begun here. But his sleep indicates that he has finally accepted his brother's attitude. Buddy understands now that Seymour truly does love Muriel, and that his indiscriminate love for others is the code Seymour lives by. Instead of being frustrated with Seymour for loving those who cannot love him back in the same manner, instead of being angry with those who cannot understand Seymour's motives, Buddy accepts and sleeps. And when he wakes, he sees the deaf-mute's cigar end, which he thinks should be forwarded to Seymour as a wedding present with a blank sheet of paper by means of explanation. Perhaps Buddy feels this way because the little man was pleasant throughout the ordeal of the "non-wedding" as the others were not. He was sufficiently detached and had the proper attitude about the wedding. In this, Buddy has also accepted Seymour and tries himself to see the positive in the situation and in other people. So, the cigar end would need no explanation as Seymour would willingly accept it as a positive symbol.

"Seymour: An Introduction"

"Seymour: An Introduction" is Buddy's account of his coming to terms with Seymour once he has accepted him. On the surface, this story

is Buddy's attempt at writing an introduction to Seymour. Yet, for the most part, this introduction tells us more about its narrator, Buddy, than it does about its supposed central figure. Nevertheless, there are many important clues and details of Seymour's life that should not be overlooked here. In addition to being misled by the title, the reader may also be misled by the form of the story. James E. Miller perhaps best describes the form as "not so much a story as an assemblage of notes, observations, anecdotes, and irrelevancies . . . much like Buddy's (or Salinger's) journal, from which a story might one day be made."⁷³ In this wordy hodgepodge, however, Buddy does come to grips with Seymour and Seymour's influence on his life. Just as Zooey solved his crisis in addition to Franny's through his vocation—acting, taking on the role of Buddy and/or Seymour verbally—Buddy must solve his own crisis through his writing. For Buddy, though, writing is not just a vocation, a profession, but as Seymour tells him, "It's never been anything but your religion" (RH&S, p. 186).

Most of the criticism of "Seymour: An Introduction" has been negative, primarily as a result of the dispute over what its purpose really is and what its form contributes to or detracts from the story. Is this really Buddy's or Salinger's attempt to paint a portrait of Seymour Glass, the central spiritual figure in the past three Glass stories? If this is the case, then the story fails. Theodore Gross finds "Seymour: An Introduction" unsatisfactory to both Buddy and the

⁷³Miller, p. 41.

reader: "Buddy can scarcely introduce his brother, much less write about him in detail, because he exists as an ideal in his mind."⁷⁴ William Weigand tells us that Salinger has succeeded in creating an effect, yet has failed in his purpose.⁷⁵ And, Max Schulz finds Seymour's portrait unformulated and incomplete.⁷⁶ Other critics find fault with the manner in which this story is presented. Ernest Johannson argues that "because Salinger has given his fictional author so little distance from his own hand and mind that the literary illusion is difficult to sustain and thus, the whole purpose of the subject is threatened before it can be fulfilled."⁷⁷ Likewise, Warren French finds that this same lack of distance between Salinger and Buddy, and between Salinger/Buddy, and the audience, causes the story to fail as a piece of art or literature, for it tends to replace our experience instead of explaining our experience.⁷⁸

In response to these criticisms of the story's purpose and form, it is my contention that Salinger wants the reader to believe that Buddy Glass did indeed write "Seymour: An Introduction" and that Buddy did indeed intend for it to be an introduction of his brother.

⁷⁴Gross, p. 460.

⁷⁵William Wiegand, "The Knighthood of J. D. Salinger," The New Republic, October 19, 1959, p. 22.

⁷⁶Max F. Schulz, "Epilogue to Seymour: An Introduction: Salinger and the Crisis of Consciousness," Studies in Short Fiction, 5 (1968), 130.

⁷⁷Ernest J. Johannson, "Salinger's Seymour," The Carolina Quarterly, 7 (Winter 1959), 51.

⁷⁸French, p. 160.

However, along the way, Buddy produces something different from what he set out to do, hence the title which describes what is not truly the story. Instead of an introduction to Seymour, this becomes the story of a writer in the process of writing. We are focused not on this as a unity, a body of written material as a whole; rather, "the key to the story . . . becomes process, change, and eventual illumination. . . ." ⁷⁹ This illumination which Buddy achieves is quite similar to what Franny and Zooey achieve in "Zooey," and ironically, this is the story of how Buddy comes to accept his own advice to Zooey via Seymour. As for the form of the story, I contend that the lack of distance between Salinger, Buddy, and the audience is not a flaw in the narrative but a device used by Salinger to bring across a final message to the reader.

Instead of a koan, a letter, or a Taoist tale, "Seymour: An Introduction" is prefaced by two quotations regarding the nature of writing. The first is from Kafka and deals with the author's inability to write the truth about his characters because he writes about them "with steadfast love." This love is never satisfied with the author's ability, and this love "thinks it is protecting the actors [characters] by preventing this ability from exercising itself" (RH&S, p. 111). The second quotation is from Kierkegaard and states that an author's slip of the pen can become conscious of itself and can revolt against him, forbidding him to correct it, thus standing as a witness of the

⁷⁹ Bernice and Sanford Goldstein, "'Seymour: An Introduction'—Writing as Discovery," Studies in Short Fiction, 7 (1970), 249.

author's poor ability to write. As Buddy tells us, "By and large, I've reproduced the two passages to try to suggest very plainly how I think I stand in regard to the over-all mass of data I hope to assemble here . . ." (RH&S, p. 118). It is immediately clear from these quotations that the focus of the story is on the writing process.⁸⁰ In addition, the entire "credo"⁸¹ is addressed to the reader, or Buddy's conception of the reader, and Buddy addresses him in an entre-nous spirit of familiarity and confidentiality. Furthermore, in telling the reader that he will digress "when I see something off the beaten plot line that looks exciting or interesting" (RH&S, p. 116) and in telling those readers "who seriously require only the most restrained, most classical, and possibly deftest methods of having their attention drawn" to leave, Buddy treats the reader as though he were looking over his shoulder as he types each page of this story. In this manner, Buddy not only creates the sense of the author in the process of writing, but he tends also to break down the formal barrier between author and audience.

In the next section we are introduced to Seymour as seer and poet. Buddy describes what Seymour was to the members of the Glass family: "our blue-striped unicorn, our double-lensed burning glass, our

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Warren French breaks down "Seymour: An Introduction" into five parts: (1) the credo, (2) introduction of Seymour as seer and poet, (3) Seymour as critic of Buddy's writing, (4) the physical description of Seymour, (5) Buddy's revelation. I will use these divisions in discussing the story, as they make the bulk of the work more manageable.

one full poet . . ." (RH&S, pp. 123-24). More importantly, Buddy tells us that Seymour was "a mutka, a ringding enlightened man, a God-knower" (RH&S, p. 124). All of this description fits with the portrait of Seymour as Bodhisattva, the enlightened man attempting to enlighten others. And Buddy tells us that since early in 1948, he has been "sitting on" some 148 short poems written by Seymour in the last three years of his life. Most of these poems, we learn, are haikus, or Seymour's own invention, the double-haiku. It is not unusual for Seymour to be attracted to the haiku, for the aim of the poet in a haiku is "to render directly and concretely the vision he has had. . . ." ⁸² Also, the haiku possesses Zen-like qualities in its "immediacy of perception, the link between reader and experience, and the avoidance of intellect . . . ":

The haiku itself has connotative associations and extensions for the reader, so much that the experience becomes the reader's as much as the poet's. The reader merges with the poem and completes it beyond its formulation of seventeen syllables. ⁸³

Therefore, Seymour can use his poetry, his haikus, to enlighten others if he chooses, for these haikus break down the barrier or duality between author and reader and by creating an experience make a direct appeal to the reader. As we will see later, these comments regarding the link between reader and the written material are important in understanding

⁸² Kenneth Yasuda, The Japanese Haiku (Rutland and Tokyo, 1957), pp. 50-51, quoted in Bernice and Sanford Goldstein, "Seymour's Poems," Literature East and West, 17 (1973), 337.

⁸³ Goldstein, "Seymour's Poems," pp. 338-339.

what Salinger/Buddy attempts through the form of "Seymour: An Introduction."

Between the section on Seymour's poetry and the next, two and a half months have elapsed, as Buddy has been ill with hepatitis and unable to write. While he has been away from this introduction, he tells us, Seymour has grown too much for him to continue writing, and he has spent the last five nights panicking because of this. However, just as Zooey turned to Buddy's four-year-old letter during his crisis in "Zooey," Buddy turns to a lengthy memo written by Seymour regarding his opinion of Buddy's latest short story. Through the memo, which is Seymour's advice to Buddy about his writing in general, Buddy is able to find the strength or courage to continue this introduction.

The memo covers two important points about Buddy: (1) his relationship to Seymour and (2) his relationship to his writing. First, Seymour comments that Buddy cannot stand for anyone to point out how much like Seymour he is. Seymour tells him that he should not take such a comment as a slam at his individuality:

The membrane is so thin between us. . . . That time two summers ago when I was out so long, I was able to trace that you and Z.[ooey] and I have been brothers for no fewer than four incarnations, maybe more. Is there no beauty in that? For us, doesn't each of our individualities begin right at the point where we own up to our close connections and accept the inevitability of borrowing one another's jokes, talents, idiocies? (RH&S, p. 183)

From this passage we gain a new perspective on these three Glass brothers. They are, if Seymour is right, more than just brothers but are brothers mystically linked through time. Seymour also points out

that until Buddy accepts this, accepts the similarities, the closeness, and ultimately the core of his identity in being linked to Zooey and Seymour himself, he cannot become an individual. He must accept Seymour's role as his brother without becoming angry or frustrated.

What follows this revelation is the advice he gives Buddy. First he tells Buddy that writing is not just his profession but is his religion, and because of this, he will be asked two questions when he dies: "Were most of your stars out? and Were you busy writing your heart out?" (RH&S, p. 187). In other words, "Were you writing with all your might?" Seymour tells Buddy that to write with all his stars out he must simply "sit very still and ask yourself, as a reader, what piece of writing in all the world Buddy Glass would most like to read if he had his heart's choice. . . . You just sit down shamelessly and write the thing yourself" (RH&S, p. 187). In addition, he tells Buddy to trust his heart, and he tells him that he would give anything to see something Buddy has written while following his heart.

The advice Seymour gives Buddy about his writing we recognize is quite similar to the advice Buddy gave Zooey in the four-year-old letter: "Act . . . with all your might" (F&Z, p. 68). Blend yourself with your creation to achieve a state of egolessness.⁸⁴ Yet, not only will Buddy blend with his creation by following Seymour's advice, but the role of author and reader will blend as well. The writer becomes his reader, is his reader, and the roles are no longer separate as this

⁸⁴Goldstein, "'Seymour: An Introduction,'" p. 251.

writer/reader is in the process of creating. Indeed, Buddy has followed Seymour's advice in writing "Seymour: An Introduction." For what would Buddy like more than to read a story which calls up intimate details about his brother Seymour, which helps him come to grips with Seymour's influence on his life, and which helps him find a way to live what his brother has taught him?

Following the reproduction of the memo, Buddy begins a rather extensive and detailed physical description of Seymour, which he introduces by asking himself what he wants from it and what he wants it to do. He wants it to be published; but then he always wants to publish. Really, he wants the description to get down to the magazine without stamp or envelope: "If it's a true description, I should be able to just give it train fare, and maybe pack a sandwich for it and a little something hot in a thermos, and that's all. The other passengers in the car must move slightly away from it, as though it were a trifle high" (RH&S, p. 191). From this account, we must believe that Buddy wants his description to have powers of its own, in essence, to possess a spirit of its own. He describes this spirit as: "High, I think, like someone you love coming up on the porch, grinning, grinning, after three hard sets of tennis, victorious tennis, to ask you if you saw that last shot he made" (RH&S, p. 91).

The significance of Buddy's expectations are brought out in the next episode he describes—Seymour's advice on marble shooting, which in

extended form becomes in fact his same advice to Buddy about writing. Seymour tells Buddy to try not to aim so much at the marbles, his reasoning being that if Buddy aims, he will be glad if he hits a marble; and, if he is glad, then he must not have expected to hit it; and, if he really did not expect to hit the marble, it must be pure chance or luck that he did. Thus, by eliminating the goal, Buddy can rule out fate as a factor in his marble shooting.

In writing this introduction, Buddy has his mind on one goal, "on the end, the words on the page, the successfully published artist."⁸⁵ However, it is not only publication which Buddy focuses on instead of on the writing itself. In other memos commenting on Buddy's stories, Seymour writes: "Please make your piece with your wit. . . . To dump it on your own advice would be as bad and unnatural as dumping your adjectives and adverbs because Prof. B. wants you to" (RH&S, p. 179). About another story Seymour writes: "It sounded like the beginning of something your arch-enemy Bob B. calls a rattling good story. . . . It sounds much more like something that you think is universally considered very funny" (RH&S, pp. 179-80). And about another: "I know what the dangers of getting into sentimentality must have been. You got through it fine. Maybe too fine. I wonder if I don't wish you'd slipped up a little" (RH&S, p. 180).

In each instance, Seymour is getting at the idea that Buddy is too studied in his aim. He works too hard at eliminating wit; he writes

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 254.

what he thinks others will find funny or good; and he tries too hard to avoid sentimentality, making his writing unnatural. Instead of writing from the heart, with simply the act of writing as his "goal," he has been writing what he thinks others expect of him. As Seymour tells him, because his writing is his religion, when he dies he will not be asked if the story he is working on is "long or short, sad or funny, published or unpublished" (RH&S, p. 186). Indeed, if Buddy is writing with all his stars out, he will be too caught up in the process of the writing itself to know what the end result, the goal, is.

As a result of revealing Seymour's advice on marble shooting, Buddy becomes "incapacitated," he says, because he realizes that Seymour is his Davega bicycle. He explains that Walt and Waker, his younger twin brothers, were each given an expensive bicycle on one of their birthdays from Davega's Sports Store. While riding in Central Park, Waker was approached by a young boy who asked him if he could have the bike, as he had never had one himself and wanted one. Waker handed the bicycle over to him without another thought. In this sense, Seymour is Buddy's Davega bicycle by which "will and action [are] merged without thought of consequences."⁸⁶ Here the emphasis is on the process of the action or the act itself rather than on the goal or consequences.

Yet this leads Buddy back to an important point he wants to make about Seymour's marble shooting. He adds: "[A]fter Seymour himself

⁸⁶ Ibid.

shot a marble, he would be all smiles when he heard a responsive click of glass striking glass, but it never appeared to be clear to him whose winning click it was. . . . someone almost invariably had to pick up the marble he'd won and hand it to him" (RH&S, p. 244). Indeed, Seymour would be unaware of winning because he had eliminated the goal.

In Buddy's final revelation, we can see this same inability to grasp victory. He ends the introduction by confessing that he has an impulse "to say something mildly caustic about the twenty-four young ladies" who await him in Room 307. However, he tells us that he cannot finish this introduction:

without being conscious of the good, the real. . . . I know—not always, but I know—there is so single thing I do that is more important than going into that awful Room 307. There isn't one girl in there, including the Terrible Miss Zabel, who is not as much my sister as Boo Boo or Franny. (RH&S, p. 248)

In essence, Buddy has come to terms with Seymour's indiscriminate love for others if he can see these young ladies as sisters. Like Seymour's marble shooting, Buddy is simply (he thinks) closing this introduction, without realizing the victory of understanding Seymour and of practicing the same type of indiscriminate love that Seymour did.

As for the purpose of "Seymour: An Introduction," we see that Buddy sets out to introduce Seymour, but actually achieves a self-awareness through him.⁸⁷ He does realize the truth behind Seymour's advice on writing, and he understands more clearly how Seymour could

⁸⁷Schulz, p. 133.

practice indiscriminate love and how this same indiscriminate love can make life bearable. For now he can go into Room 307 without worrying whether or not his young ladies will understand "Ozymandias." More important is just teaching, no matter what the outcome may be.

As for the form of the story, Buddy breaks down the barrier between himself and the reader not only in the "credo," but throughout the story. Constantly, Buddy speaks to the reader directly through his parenthetical comments: "(This is a warmup, frankly. I see no point in disclaiming it, though I probably should.)" (RH&S, p. 178). Or, he uses his parenthetical comments to reprimand himself on matters of style, which in reality serve to remind the reader that Buddy is in the process of writing: "The barbershop was at 108th and Broadway, nested verdantly (stop that, now) between a Chinese restaurant and a kosher delicatessen" (RH&S, p. 189). Or he tells us that his barber "[p]robably passed on, these many years, of an overdose of garlic, the way all New York barbers eventually go. (All right, cut that out. Just manage to nip that stuff in the bud, please.)" (RH&S, pp. 189-90). In addition, the barrier between Buddy and Salinger is thin as well, as Buddy claims to have written stories which we know Salinger to have written.

Anatole Grunwald comments that in this vein of constant familiarity with the reader, "Salinger is trying to destroy the proscenium. . . . he is attempting to bring the audience completely into the action. . . ." ⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Henry Anatole Grunwald, ed., Introd., Salinger: A Critical and Personal Portrait (New York: Harper, 1962), p. xxiv.

To this, Warren French responds, "The only reason for breaking down the aesthetic distance between writer and reader is that the writer wishes to establish the kind of rapport that will make the reader share the narrator's feelings."⁸⁹ In fact, to make Buddy's experience the reader's experience does seem to be Salinger/Buddy's purpose. Though French regards this purpose negatively because he believes literature should explain our experience rather than replace it, I contend that Salinger has a more far-reaching purpose within the context of the story.

Part of what Salinger/Buddy attempts here is suggested by what James Lundquist says about Buddy's relation to Seymour. Lundquist sees that in this introduction "Buddy must struggle with the differences between himself and Seymour, the differences between poetry and fiction."⁹⁰ If we examine the link between reader and experience in poetry, or in Seymour's haiku, and then examine this same link in what Buddy attempts through his fiction, it becomes clear how similar this link is. In the haiku, we find that "the experience becomes the reader's as much as the poet's. The reader merges with the poem. . . ."⁹¹ And accepting that the proscenium has been destroyed, we can see that in "Seymour: An Introduction," the same tenents are true. Not only has Buddy accepted Seymour's advice to write with all his stars out, but he has reached the reader in the same manner that Seymour did through the haiku.

⁸⁹French, p. 155.

⁹⁰Lundquist, p. 145.

⁹¹Goldstein, "Seymour's Poems," p. 339.

To complete the analogy between Seymour's haiku and Buddy's introduction, let us look at the haiku as a record of satori. If the haiku captures this moment of enlightenment and puts it into words, then what better way to enlighten the reader if this same experience of enlightenment becomes the reader's? And, if we accept that what Buddy/Salinger writes replaces our experience, then what we read could be a means of enlightenment as well. As Sam Baskett comments, Salinger attempts "to make the reader see the seer seeing."⁹² And through Buddy's accounts of Seymour we do indeed see Seymour seeing. But not only do we see Seymour seeing, we see moments of partial satori or enlightenment achieved by the other Glasses. It follows that if what Buddy writes breaks down barriers so that we gain experience, then the reader can achieve enlightenment through the medium of fiction. I contend that this is just what Salinger attempts in "Seymour: An Introduction."

⁹²Baskett, p. 50.

CHAPTER V

"HAPWORTH 16, 1924"

Salinger's last story in the Glass family saga, "Hapworth 16, 1924," appeared in the June 19, 1965, issue of The New Yorker; since then, Salinger has published nothing. Instead of creating another narrative about Seymour, Salinger has Buddy reproduce a letter written by Seymour when he was seven years old and spending the summer at Camp Hapworth in Hapworth, Maine, with Buddy. Buddy limits himself to a four-paragraph introduction of the letter, briefly introducing himself to the reader and commenting:

for a good many years of my life—very possibly, all forty-six—I have felt myself installed, elaborately wired, and, occasionally, plugged in, for the purpose of shedding some light on the short, reticulate life and times of my late, eldest brother, Seymour Glass. . . .⁹³

Indeed, Buddy's reproduction of this letter will shed more light on Seymour's life, just as Buddy's previous narratives have, but this time from the perspective of the seven-year-old Seymour.

The other point Buddy makes about the letter is that it was sent to him by his mother Bessie, and that until four hours ago he had never read it. More significant, however, is why Bessie sent him the letter. Last week, Buddy tells us, he was talking to Bessie on the phone and mentioned that he was in the process of writing a long short story

⁹³J. D. Salinger, "Hapworth 16, 1924," The New Yorker, 19 June 1965, p. 32. All further references to this work appear in the text as "HAP."

"about a particular party, a very consequential party, that she and Seymour and my father and I all went to one night in 1926" ("HAP," p. 32). He remarks that this particular piece of information has "marvellous relevance" to the letter at hand. Most certainly it does, for a reading of the letter reveals that Seymour predicts two years before it takes place this same party and also predicts that Buddy will eventually write about this party.

The letter itself is quite long (Time counted it at 28,000 words), and it resembles to a degree "Seymour: An Introduction"⁹⁴ with Seymour's many digressions, comments about his own nature, comments about his own writing, and many invitations for Les to leave and to let Bessie tell him about the letter later. From the letter we are able to distinguish many important characteristics of the young Seymour. Repeatedly, he makes references to "appearances" and "glimpses." These "appearances," we learn, are lives—the previous lives of others and of himself. In his "glimpses," he can predict the future and can see what people were like in their previous "appearances." The letter mentions constantly the weaknesses which he is trying to rid himself of or trying to improve upon. The final portion of the letter is concerned with advice he gives to his family and a request for an extremely lengthy list of books to be sent to camp for Buddy and him to read for the remainder of the summer.

One of the first questions that comes to mind even before we have finished reading Seymour's letter is: Is Seymour already enlightened

⁹⁴Harper, p. 84.

at the age of seven? The Goldsteins contend that he is already enlightened on the basis of his ability to see into the past and into the future, his downplay of intelligence or knowledge, and his excitement and participation in each moment of experience.⁹⁵ They regard his faults as a sign that he is still growing in awareness and is trying to reconcile living the life of the enlightened individual in an unenlightened world.⁹⁶

However, Anthony Quagliano, the author of the only other substantive article on this story, contends that Seymour is not yet enlightened, reasoning that if he were, he would have been enlightened for the remaining twenty-four years of his life with little or no change, "for satori is permanent, there is no regression for a bodhi-sattva."⁹⁷ Indeed, Suzuki presents the Bodhisattva as "a sentient being . . . who is disciplining himself for the realisation of Bodhi or enlightenment."⁹⁸ Yet, once enlightened, "he [the Bodhisattva] is then completely emancipated from such individualising ideas as are created by the mind. . . ."⁹⁹ Thus, the Bodhisattva works towards enlightenment and the enlightenment of others; and, once enlightenment is attained, he does not return to a state of seeing individualities or distinctions between things. Hence, it is certainly plausible to

⁹⁵ Sanford and Bernice Goldstein, "Ego and 'Hapworth 16, 1924,'" Renascence, 24 (1972), 159-161.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 164.

⁹⁷ Anthony Quagliano, "'Hapworth 16, 1924': A Problem in Hagiography," University of Dayton Review, 18 (1971), 42.

⁹⁸ Suzuki, Lankavatara Sutra, p. 345.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 227.

argue that if Seymour is already enlightened, there is no further development for him.

My belief, placing the question of further development aside, is that Seymour is not yet enlightened, based on the presentation of his faults. His major fault, his critical attitude, places him outside the realm of enlightenment, for as we have learned earlier, criticism both enlarges and isolates the ego,¹⁰⁰ further delineating the duality between self and other. If Seymour were already enlightened, he would not perceive dualities, which his critical nature constantly reminds him of.

One of the first faults he mentions is his attitude towards the camp counsellors:

No single day passes that I do not listen to the heartless indifferences and stupidities passing from the counsellor's lips without secretly wishing I could improve matters quite substantially by bashing a few culprits over the head with an excellent shovel or stout club! ("HAP," p. 34)

Likewise, Seymour is critical and almost violent in his attitudes towards Mr. Happy, Miss Culgerry, and Mr. Pittman, the head counsellor.

Not only is he highly critical of others, but he is highly critical of himself as well. He chastises himself for being overly emotional: "I am working daily on this emotional tendency while I am here, but I am doing poorly" ("HAP," p. 34). He finds fault with his penmanship: "My personal instability and too much emotion will ever be plainly

¹⁰⁰Goldstein, "Bunnies and Cobras," p. 104.

marked in every stroke of the pen . . ." ("HAP," p. 33). He wants to eliminate the fustian in his writing; and he wants to control his highly sensual nature. Furthermore, he is conscious of all this criticism: "My opinions are all too frequently too damn harsh for words. I am working on it, but I have given way to harshness too often this summer to stomach" ("HAP," p. 52).

In each of these quotations, Seymour is just as critical of self and others as Franny in Franny and Zooey. The dichotomies of good and evil, right and wrong, physical and spiritual, and intellectual and spiritual are all too clear to him. Seymour is struggling here between what he knows is right and his overt reactions to what he experiences, much like Franny. Quagliano defines this struggle as Seymour's inability "to reconcile the contradictory impulses, so fatal to spiritual perfectionists, to embrace the whole world in harmonious love, and also to inform everyone how to improve the quality of their lives."¹⁰¹ Ultimately, Seymour's struggle is with the physical, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of life, and, he appears to be working towards an integration of these three aspects in order to lead the spiritual life, in order to become the Bodhisattva.

Most evident in Seymour's letter is his struggle with the physical. At seven years, he is strongly physically attracted to Mrs. Happy, the pregnant wife of one of the camp counsellors. He reveals to Less and Bessie:

¹⁰¹Quagliano, p. 36.

I must admit, in all joviality, to moments when this cute, ravishing girl, Mrs. Happy, unwittingly rouses all my unlimited sensuality. . . . I have looked forward with mounting pleasure to the possibility, all too slight for words, of her opening the door, quite unwittingly, in the raw. ("HAP," p. 35)

Indeed, these are rather strong and frank admissions for a seven year old.

Seymour attributes his own premature sensuality, along with Buddy's, to Les and the "telltale ridge of carnality just below your own [Les's] heavy, sensual, bottom lip . . ." ("HAP," p. 36). Once he has acknowledged his early-blooming sensuality, however, he states:

I for one do not look forward to being distracted by charming lusts of the body, quite day in and day out, for the few, blissful, remaining years allotted to me in this appearance. . . . I would cheerfully prefer to die an utter dog's death rather than be distracted at crucial moments by a gorgeous, appealing plane or rolling contour of goodly flesh. ("HAP," p. 36)

Seymour sees his sensual nature as a burden, a hindrance to more important duties in life and vows to work on this problem "without ceasing."

In regard to knowledge and intellect, he also admits a struggle or at least the awareness of a problem. In one of his many references to Miss Overman, his good friend and librarian, he regrets that he has led her astray:

I suspect I got us off on quite the wrong foot when I was younger by allowing her to think I am a very serious boy simply because I am an omnivorous reader. Unwittingly, I have left her no decent, human notions that ninety-eight per cent of my life, thank God, has nothing to do with the dubious pursuit of knowledge. ("HAP," p. 33)

The pursuit of knowledge in Seymour's opinion is not only dubious, but in addition, is only worth devoting 2 percent of his life to.

Another reference he makes to intellect is in telling Bessie that he and Buddy both "were quite firmly obliged, as well as often dubiously privileged, to bring our creative genius with us from our previous appearances" ("HAP," p. 58). However, Seymour makes it clear that their genius should not set them apart from others. He explains in a mystical fashion about their genius:

It [the light] is insuperably strong after taps up here, I find, when one's ridiculous brains finally lie down and behave themselves and the entire, decent mind is at long last quiet and not racing around in the slightest; in that interlude, one watches it [genius] play in the magnificent light I mentioned to you privately last May, Bessie. . . . When the light mentioned above is insuperably strong, I go to sleep in absolute assurance that we, your son Buddy and I, are every bit as decent, foolish, and human as every single boy or counsellor in this camp. . . . My God, think of the opportunities and thrusts that lie ahead when one knows without a shred of doubt how commonplace and normal one is at heart! . . . who can prevent us from doing a little good in this appearance? ("HAP," p. 58)

Again, Seymour downplays genius, intellect, stating that it is valuable only in aiding him to realize how alike every other person he really is, in helping him to understand there is no separation between self and others. Yet at the same time, we notice that one of the faults Seymour works on is eliminating fustian from his writing. He must try not to flaunt his intellectual prowess by using pretentious language. His voluminous reading sets him apart from others, especially those his age, making him appear to search for "dubious" knowledge.

We also see that fact and opinion, or what we interpret in the brain as fact from sensory information presents problems for Seymour. Here the struggle or the dichotomy of the brain—the intellect, and the senses—the physical, is clear:

For the dubious satisfaction of calling anything in this beautiful, maddening world an unassailable, respectable fact, we are quite firmly obliged, like good-humored prisoners, to fall back on the flimsy information offered in excellent faith by our eyes, hands, ears, and simple, heartrending brains. . . . It is utter, blind reliance on heartrending, personal agencies. . . . even the human brain is a charming go-between! ("HAP," p. 72)

He proceeds to call all humans "unspeakably brave" for accepting the information of the senses as fact. We are all faced then with the dilemma he describes as a vicious circle:

I am sadly convinced that it would be a gentle, durable favor to everybody if someone broke through this vicious circle. One often wishes, however, there were not such a damn rush about it. . . . Unfortunately, there is a great rush about it in my own case; I am quite referring to the shortness of this appearance. What I am seeking, with the very ample but in some ways quite scrawny amount of time left in this appearance, is a solution to the problem that is both honorable and unheartless. ("HAP," p. 72)

Certainly it seems that Seymour wishes to find another means by which humans can determine fact, without having to rely upon the senses and an unreliable go-between, the brain, to interpret sensory information. What he is left with, then, if he cannot rely upon either the senses or the intellect, is the spiritual. Perhaps it is only through the spirit, intuitively, that humans can be certain of anything.

Throughout the letter, the many references made to God and the many speculations made regarding His relation to humans clearly shows a great interest on the part of Seymour for religion, the spiritual. Just as the intellect should not make one human being different from others, so Seymour regards God and religion:

Vulgarly speaking, the whole possibility of getting charming, personal commands from God, . . . stinks to high heaven of sheer favoritism! Let God raise one human being up over another, lavishing handsome favors on him, and the hour has struck to leave His charming service forever, and quite good riddance! ("HAP," p. 105)

In discussing spiritual matters, Seymour admires most the efforts of Swami Vivekananda of India, whom Seymour refers to as one of the "best equipped giants of this century" ("HAP," p. 92). Vivekananda (1863-1902) was a Hindu monk¹⁰² whose main aim was to propagate "a religion that will be acceptable to all minds. . . ."¹⁰³ This religion is to be obtained by Yoga, the Sanskrit for union. There are four divisions of Yoga, or four different means by which Yoga may be obtained: (1) Karma-Yoga, union through work; (2) Bhakti-Yoga, union through love; (3) Raja-Yoga, union through mysticism; and (4) Jnana-Yoga, union through philosophy.¹⁰⁴

In his letter, Seymour asks that he and Buddy be sent two of Vivekananda's books, Raja-Yoga and Bhakti-Yoga. From an examination of precepts of Raja-Yoga we see a definite similarity between what Vivekananda teaches and what Seymour has already stated. Vivekananda teaches that there are three instruments of knowledge: instinct, reason, and inspiration.¹⁰⁵ Instinct is the lowest instrument, working

¹⁰²Swami Nikhilananda, Preface, Vivekananda: A Biography (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1953), p. v.

¹⁰³Swami Vivekananda, "The Ideal of a Universal Religion," in Selections from Swami Vivekananda (Calcutta: Avaita Ashrama, [1963]), p. 192.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 194-195.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, p. 195.

mainly on animals. Reason works in humans:

Reason can go only a little way and then it stops, it cannot go any further. . . . Logic becomes argument in a circle. Take for instance the very basis of our perception—matter and force. What is matter? That which is acted upon by force. And force? That which acts upon matter.¹⁰⁶

The similarity between Vivekananda's circle of logic and Seymour's "vicious circle" of accepting information gained through the senses and interpreted by the brain is striking. It is no wonder that Seymour is interested in reading Vivekananda's book on this subject once again.

Vivekananda's answer to this circle is inspiration, the instrument which takes us beyond reason. Seymour too talks about breaking out of this vicious circle himself during this appearance, finding a "solution to the problem that is both honorable and unheartless" ("HAP," p. 72). Seymour conceives such a solution as going beyond the senses and beyond the intellect as does Vivekananda in suggesting that the answer to this dilemma is mystical. What Vivekananda refers to as inspiration, for Seymour in his later life becomes satori, a going beyond the intellect to discover the unity of all things.

Another interesting parallel between Seymour and Vivekananda is the allusion Seymour makes to the lights he sees just before falling asleep. In regard to the "magnificent lights" he mentions privately to Bessie, Seymour tells us that Vivekananda was fully acquainted with these previously mentioned lights. From Vivekananda's biography we learn of these lights:

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 194-195.

At this time he [Vivekananda] daily experienced a strange vision when he was about to fall asleep. Closing his eyes, he would see between his eyebrows a ball of light of changing colours, which would slowly expand and at last burst, bathing his whole body in a white radiance. Watching this light he would gradually fall asleep. Since it was a daily occurrence, he regarded the phenomenon as common to all people, and was surprised when a friend denied ever having seen such a thing. Years later, however, Narendra's [Vivekananda's] spiritual teacher, Sri Ramakrishna, said to him, "Naren, my boy, do you see a light when you go to sleep?" Ramakrishna knew that such a vision indicated a great spiritual past and an inborn habit of meditation.¹⁰⁷

From this close association with Vivekananda, then, Salinger must mean for us to assume that Seymour is capable of the same kinds of mystical experiences as Vivekananda and implies that Seymour as well has a "great spiritual past and an inborn habit of meditation."

In the Bhakti-Yoga, Vivekananda tells us that this way to religious union is "for the man of emotional nature, the lover."¹⁰⁸ Seymour alludes to his highly emotional nature throughout his letter, indicating that this division of Yoga would be greatly suited to him as well as the Raja-Yoga. Furthermore, "Bhakti-Yoga teaches them [those of emotional natures] how to love, without any ulterior motives, loving God and loving the good because it is good to do so . . ."¹⁰⁹ It also teaches:

Wherever there is love, it is He. . . . Where the husband kisses the wife, He is there in the kiss; where the mother kisses the child, He is there in the kiss; where friends clasp

¹⁰⁷ Swami Nikhilananda, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰⁸ Swami Nikhilananda, p. 198.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 199.

hands, He, the Lord, is present as the God of Love. When a great man loves and wishes to help mankind, He is there giving freely His bounty out of His love to mankind.¹¹⁰

Although Seymour does not yet love in this indiscriminate manner, seeking and recognizing love in all relationships, he does show signs of having the potential to love others in this way. One indication is the great love he has for his family. Throughout the letter, he interrupts with declarations of love for his parents, brothers, and sister, and complains of missing them all terribly. Also, he shows potential for indiscriminate love in his attitudes towards Griffith Hammersmith, a constant bed-wetter, and towards John Kolb, a potential alcoholic (or so Seymour thinks). In both these cases Seymour wants to do everything he can to help these young boys overcome their weaknesses. Yet, he has not been able to show such concern for the camp counsellors and campers who display great insensitivity towards others.

Throughout the letter, then, Seymour struggles with his sensuality and his great intelligence in trying to direct himself towards a spiritual life. I contend that Seymour, despite his youth and spiritual immaturity, has been awakened to the "thought of enlightenment." To be awakened to the "thought of enlightenment means to take interest in the teaching of Mahayana Buddhism and to wish sincerely for the realisation of its truth."¹¹¹ This awakening is the first step in the career of the Bodhisattva, and once thought is directed towards

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 200.

¹¹¹Suzuki, Lankavatara Sutra, pp. 103-104.

enlightenment, it must be attained later.¹¹² It is this same "thought of enlightenment" that Seymour awakens Franny and Zooey to when he takes over their education and teaches them first of the frame of mind necessary for achieving satori. From examining the parallels between Vivekananda's works and Seymour's behavior, we can see the qualities Seymour wants to perfect in becoming like his spiritual idol—a going beyond intellect and reason, and a participation in indiscriminate love.

Finally, instead of trying to show us a Seymour already enlightened and striving to find a way to exist as the enlightened man in the unenlightened world,¹¹³ I believe that what Salinger wants to stress here is Seymour in the first stages of Bodhisattvahood, working to attain enlightenment. And, as Anthony Quagliano states, "there are still the 24 missing years within which anything may have happened, including enlightenment." Hopefully, Salinger intends to fill in these years, enriching our picture of Seymour Glass.¹¹⁴

¹¹²Ibid., p. 104.

¹¹³Goldstein, "Ego and 'Hapworth 16, 1924,'" p. 165.

¹¹⁴Quagliano, p. 42.

CONCLUSION

This study has been concerned with providing a clearer understanding of Seymour's function in Salinger's Glass stories and, in particular, it has been concerned with Seymour's role as Bodhisattva. Buddy as narrator/author of the Glass stories gives us many clues which indicate that Seymour is enlightened and is striving to lead his siblings to enlightenment. That Seymour no longer perceives dualities is seen in his comment to Buddy: "that all legitimate religious study must lead to the unlearning of the differences, the illusory differences, between boys and girls, animals and stones, day and night, heat and cold" (F&Z, p. 67). Also, he tells Dr. Sims that he will "champion indiscrimination till doomsday, on the ground that it leads to health and a kind of very real, enviable happiness" (RH&S, p. 86). Finally, from the haiku Seymour leaves on the desk in the hotel room in which he shoots himself, we see he no longer perceives dualities:

The little girl on the plane
Who turned her doll's head around
To look at me.
(F&Z, p. 64)

The little girl and her doll have exchanged places, so that it is the doll who turns its head around to look at Seymour.

Seymour is seen leading others to enlightenment throughout these later stories. He takes over Franny's and Zooey's education and teaches them first "to conceive of a state of being where the mind knows the source of all light" (F&Z, p. 65). In other words, Seymour

wants them to be able to conceive of the frame of mind necessary in order to achieve satori before they learn anything else. This awakening to the thought of satori is the first step towards enlightenment.¹¹⁵ We see Seymour himself in this first stage of Bodhisattvahood in "Hapworth 16, 1924."

After his suicide, although he does not function physically, Seymour leads his siblings towards enlightenment through their memories of him. It is by recalling Seymour's story of the Fat Lady that Zooey can lead Franny out of her spiritual crisis. Making her aware that everyone is the Fat Lady, Zooey has also brought Franny to an awareness of indiscriminate love. For Buddy as well, Seymour makes "the good, the real" clearer. Buddy recalls: "Seymour once said that all we do our whole lives is go from one little piece of Holy Ground to the next" (RH&S, p. 248). From this statement Buddy realizes that all ground is holy once distinctions are done away with, and he realizes that even Room 307 with the Terrible Miss Zebel is Holy Ground.

In addition to his leadership role, Seymour's function as Bodhisattva accounts for the form of poetry he chooses to write, the haiku. The haiku is immediate in its perception, breaking down the barrier between author and reader so that the experience described becomes the reader's as much as the author's.¹¹⁶ Because satori must be achieved by appealing directly to the individual's experience, the haiku is especially well-suited to leading others to enlightenment.

¹¹⁵ Suzuki, Lankavatara Sutra, pp. 103-104.

¹¹⁶ Goldstein, "Seymour's Poems," pp. 338-339.

This same phenomenon, the breaking down of the barrier between author and reader, is seen in "Seymour: An Introduction." Through his many parenthetical comments addressed to the reader and to himself, Buddy is able to imitate through the medium of his fiction what his brother achieved in the form of the haiku. Thus, Buddy's (ultimately Salinger's) fiction is capable of leading the reader towards enlightenment.

The Goldsteins question that the Glass children are led towards satori through the use of words. "This may be a contradiction-in-terms, for to experience the liberation of Zen by a second-hand conscious verbal overflow is not the usual way of deriving enlightenment."¹¹⁷ In answer to this question, the Lankavatara Sutra, one of the foremost doctrines of Mahayana Buddhism states that language does not provide the ultimate truth; "by means of speech one can enter into the truth, but words themselves are not the truth."¹¹⁸ Meaning is distinct from words, yet meaning must be gathered by means of words. Words are a guide to the answer, but are not the answer itself.¹¹⁹ Hence, it is not a contradiction that Salinger's characters, as well as his readers, may be led towards enlightenment by means of words.

From this examination of Seymour's function and the function of Salinger's fiction, we are reminded of the Taoist tale which Seymour

¹¹⁷Goldstein, "Zen and Salinger," p. 324.

¹¹⁸Suzuki, Lankavatara Sutra, p. 244.

¹¹⁹Ibid., pp. 108-109.

reads to Franny when she is ten months old. Po Lo, advanced in years, sends Kao to look for horses in his stead. Kao returns assuring Duke Mu that he has indeed found a superlative horse. Although Kao is totally mistaken as to the sex and color of the horse, he has focused on the "spiritual mechanism" in judging the horse, indicating to Po Lo that "he [Kao] has it in him to judge something better than horses" (RH&S, p. 5). And although Buddy claims that since Seymour's death he has not found anyone he would care to send looking for horses in his stead, all the Glass children are bound to Seymour to look for horses in his stead. For they all must perfect their abilities to see into the spiritual mechanism of all things as Seymour did, and, ultimately they are bound to see the unity of all things in enlightenment.

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