SEYMOUR GLASS

IN THE FICTION OF J.D. SALINGER

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SEYMOUR GLASS AS A FIGURE OF HOPE IN THE FICTION OF J.D. SALINGER

By

SHEILA O'HEARN, B.A.

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AUTHOR: Sheila O'Hearn, B.A. (University of Toronto)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to show the development of J.D. Salinger's character, Seymour Glass, in the following works, and in the order in which they first appeared: "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" [1948], "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" [1955], "Seymour: An Introduction" [1959], "Hapworth 16, 1924" [1965].

Seymour Glass is a greatly misunderstood protagonist in modern literature, and I hope to shed some light on his important function. He is a character who possesses a remarkable intellect, and whose supposed saintliness is conceived by many critics as inconsistent with the fact that he commits suicide. I hope to show, nevertheless, that Seymour Glass is a figure of hope for modern North America, in particular, and not a figure of despair. I also hope to show that the charge made against Seymour's inconsistent and, therefore, incredible, unreliable character, reveals the insufficiently perceptive reading on the part of the critics, and not the inability of Salinger to create fine literature.

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INTRODUCTION

In J.D. Salinger's "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" [1948], "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters [1955], "Seymour: An Introduction" [1959], and Hapworth 16, 1924" [1965], the development of the character of Seymour Glass is a complex and controversial issue. Seymour is generally viewed by critics as the good man, saint, guru and master; but he is also perceived as the flawed man who commits suicide. His spiritual and intellectual endowments are hard to reconcile with his final act of self-destruction, even when that is regarded as a gesture of protest against the shallowness of society. Salinger has devoted himself as a writer to the endeavour of bridging this puzzling gap, a gap which is seen by many critics as detrimental to his art. Sally Bostwick says, for instance,

> But Salinger is trying to cruise a split stream in these later stories and it undermines his literature. The conflict between style and thematic message creates, in Hassan's words, 'Two warring impulses . . . one cries in outrage at a world dominated by shame and spiritual vulgarity; the other knows, as Seymour did, that Christ ordered us to call no man a Fool. Revulsion and holiness make up the rack on which Salinger's art still twitches.'[1]

Bostwick at least shows some appreciation of the difficulties under which Salinger strains in his attempts to unite these "two warring impulses". Alfred Kazin, however, does not trust Salinger's art form nor his thematic message, and severely criticizes his vision of the world. He charges Salinger with a lack of that universal respect and love for the world upon which the greatest masters of literature have based their own vision:

> But the love that Father Zossima in Dostoevsky's novel speaks for is surely love for the world, for God's creation itself, for all that precedes us and supports us, that will outlast us and that alone helps us to explain ourselves to ourselves. It is the love that D.H. Lawrence, another religious novelist, spoke of as 'the sympathetic bond' and that in one form or another lies behind all the great novels as a primary interest in everyone and everything alive with us on this common earth. The love that Salinger's horribly precocious Glass characters speak of is love for certain people only--forgiveness is for the rest; finally, through Seymour Glass's indoctrination of his brothers and sisters in so many different (and pretentiously assembled) religious teachings, it is love of certain ideas. So what is ultimate in their love is the love of their own moral and intellectual excellence, of their chastity and purity in a world full of bananafish swollen with too much food. It is the love that they have for themselves as an idea.[2]

Kazin says about the Glass children in general that they

> ...are beaten before they start; beaten in order not to start. They do not trust anything or anyone but themselves and their great idea. And what troubles me about this is not what it reflects of their theology but what it does to Salinger's art.[3]

According to Kazin, the Glass children are so blinded by self-love, and by their own brilliance and superiority, that they are not capable of loving in the broad universal sense that Dostoevsky's characters, for example, love and seek love outside themselves. The Glass children, in short, are unlovable, because of their overpowering precocity and egotism. As a consequence, Kazin cannot take these characters seriously. They each represent a mere idea for the purpose of criticizing society. There is no real development of character or attitude in Salinger's work, a development that might otherwise create empathy between reader and protagonist.

A careful study, however, of the development of Seymour's character, in particular, shows that the views of both Bostwick and Kazin are unfounded. I wish to argue that Salinger's "warring impulses" between revulsion and holiness are necessary in the construction of his complicated vision. A strong case can be made that Salinger breaks down the notion of the American Dream through his character, Seymour, in order to rediscover and revive the importance of the absolute value of being human. Kazin, in particular, underestimates the importance of Salinger's work when he contrasts it with the work of Dostoevsky and D.H. Lawrence. Salinger is working with the same set of values as Dostoevsky, even though the two writers create different kinds of characters. Many of Dostoevsky's protagonists are poor, deprived, and oppressed

individuals. They must seek for a spiritual quality of living in order to survive. Out of their immense pain and suffering, and out of a brute sense of survival, come meaning and profundity, and the inner strength, consequently, to overcome their meanness. They have been stricken with the meaning of love, responsibility, and spiritual humility. Salinger's characters are American upper middle-class men and women. The Glass children are able to get anything they want in a materialistic sense. They can readily fulfil the objectives of the American Dream. Seymour Glass is intellectually brilliant; as a youth, he performed on a radio quiz programme, entitled, "It's a Wise Child"; he became a professor of literature at an absurdly early age; he has the talent to become a great American poet. Salinger, however, has Seymour say "No" to his vast achievements, because they do not constitute the basis for fulfillment. Seymour's very existence and the way he chooses to lead his life break down these endowments as important in themselves. He recognizes that fulfillment is to be won through the individual's willingness to stop using his special talents for his own self-gratification, and to use them instead for the purpose of inspiring brotherhood among mankind. He instructs his brothers and sisters that love, responsibility and humility are the most important qualities a human being can possess and develop within himself, and he should direct his talents in such a way as to help create this sense of harmony.

Such an attempt to pursue truth as Seymour professes is immensely difficult for these characters, particularly for Buddy Glass, whom we shall also study in detail. The Goldsteins rightly argue about Salinger's Glass children in general:

> Their uniqueness, however, is their Achilles' heel, their burden in the search for enlightenment. Their remarkable endowments hinder them from reaching the pure state of the simple Russian peasant in the pea-green book Franny is so tormented by.[4] In one sense, the Russian peasant is to be envied for his lack of sophistication. Franny, Zooey, and Buddy are all very worldy, all very garrulous, all very academically inclined, all abundantly endowed intellectually and emotionally. Their very genius is their burden, their barrier toward the Way, but they know they must strive for it, for in their midst Seymour, despite his suicide, stands as the enviable sibling, the seer, guru, poet, master.[5]

Buddy, in particular, experiences the difficulty of living as Seymour teaches. Buddy is constantly distracted by his own set of endowments and is continually tempted to use them in the seeking out of fame and fortune, instead of using them for the perfecting of his being, and in such a way as to inspire in other individuals the light of truth which dwells in every human breast. As a writer, Buddy attempts to show off Seymour's superiority over others, instead of recognizing that Seymour's very life is based on the view that all men are good, and are capable of letting the virtues of being human emanate from themselves. This perception alone shapes Seymour into an extraordinary being. His need for people

and his recognition that they are sacred give his life profound meaning. Buddy, in the early stories, does not see where Seymour's greatness originates from. Seymour's suicide shatters Buddy who labours at the same time to comprehend his brother's philosophy. Buddy implies in the early stories, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" and "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters", that the shallowness and insensitivity of society have destroyed Seymour Glass. It is only through a long struggle with the self, particularly in "Seymour: An Introduction", that Buddy comes to see at last what Seymour sees: the beauty of the world. In this novelette, and to a lesser degree in "Hapworth 16, 1924", Buddy learns that people have not destroyed Seymour at all, but have helped him to live as fully as possible. In "Hapworth 16, 1924", Salinger attempts to show the beginning of Seymour's inner struggle in his endeavour to build the foundations of compassion and hope, foundations which are developed and complicated considerably in "Seymour: An Introduction". In the light of these complications, which we will study in detail, the implication is that Seymour's suicide is newly perceived by Buddy as an act not of self-destruction at all, but of self-renewal. His suicide can be explained as Salinger's symbol of the man who has completed himself and his work in this world. The suggestion is that Seymour re-incarnates himself through death, in order to begin living on a higher, more spiritual level of existence.

Buddy implies in the later works that Seymour surrenders himself, his very life, to the pursuit of truth. His suicide is meant to symbolize the idea of dying to the self, in order to rise up again renewed and reborn. St. John's statement,

> Verily, verily, I say unto you,
> Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground
> And die, it abideth alone:
> but if it die,
> It bringeth forth much fruit.[6],

can be compared to Seymour's idea of re-incarnation. Seymour's choice to die is meant to signify an act of total humility, and to dramatize his attempt to renew himself spiritually.

Buddy's growing awareness of Seymour is undoubtedly a painful experience. The suicide never ceases entirely to haunt Buddy. Nevertheless, it helps him to re-evaluate himself and his prejudices against the world in general, and it is in this very self-examination that we see Buddy's intense character-development. Once he is illuminated with regard to Seymour's purpose, his life and attitudes towards life change. It is not necessary, however, for Buddy to kill himself as Seymour has done. Buddy dies to himself in a different way: he kills his pride. He becomes humble, and comes to see that all people are sacred. He finds it necessary to seek a new direction in his writing which reflects his new found enlightenment. In this way, Buddy, like Seymour, abandons his old self, and sacrifices himself to the pursuit of truth, a truth which dwells deep within him.

The various allusions to Zen and re-incarnation scattered throughout the novelettes are significant not in terms of expressing Seymour's religious beliefs. More importantly, Salinger dramatizes through Zen redemption, hope, and rebirth of man's goodness, whether he is Christian, Buddhist or Jew. The fact that Buddy takes on Seymour's burdens, exemplifies the cycle of love and responsibility that can be carried on and continued by each successive person.

The tension of which Bostwick speaks between Salinger's revulsion from the world and his reverence for it, does not undermine his work at all, but is the very basis upon which he writes. Salinger creates a character like Seymour Glass, whose role is to make man aware of his capabilities in the enactment of love. Man's prime function is to act as humanly as possible, to use his talents and gifts not for his own self-gratification, not for purposes of fulfilling his own individual American Dream, but for purposes of discovering and celebrating the miracle of what it really means to live, love being a tool which brings about this meaning and fulfillment. In order to partake of truth or enlightenment, which Seymour recognizes in both Christ and Buddha, the individual must first become aware of the depth and the burden of responsibility towards others, and then more importantly, actualize that awareness by what he is and does in the world

wholeheartedly. Such wisdom is a reality, in Salinger's mind, that brings out the beauty all men possess within, a beauty that many critics have mistakenly viewed as sheer sentimentality on Salinger's part.

CHAPTER ONE

"A PERFECT DAY FOR BANANAFISH"

J.D. Salinger's early work, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish"[1], published in 1948, has been acclaimed by critics as one of the most simple, concise, and successful stories he has ever written. "Bananafish" is a neat, tight structure of three scenes which portrays three major protagonists vacationing in Florida. The first scene introduces Muriel, the wife of Seymour Glass, who engages in a banal telephone conversation with her mother. The second scene, set on the beach, displays the friendship between Seymour and a child, Sybil Carpenter. The third scene shows Seymour at the hotel where he commits suicide.

Despite the clear structure of "Bananafish", however, the relationships of Muriel and Sybil with Seymour, and the reasons for his suicide, have been the subject of considerable controversy among critics. James E. Bryan interprets Seymour's conflict, which eventually leads Seymour to choose suicide, as sexual. By being married to Muriel, he is fettered by sexual activity that prevents him from attaining complete spiritual enlightenment. Consequently, the scene on the beach with Sybil is meant to show how Seymour appropriates the child's innocence.[2] Warren French argues that Seymour's suicide is an act precipitated not by an external

cause, as Bryan claims, but by an irrational sickness within Seymour. His suicide is simply a childish, desperate act of the ego designed to get Muriel's attention. Seymour, specifically, wishes to disconcert her iron and well-balanced composure. His suicide, in effect, is an action meant to shock Muriel out of what Seymour interprets as her superficial way of life, and her neglect of the imagination.[3]

These representative views are difficult to substantiate. Not enough concrete evidence exists to show that Seymour's conflict is principally sexual, nor can Bryan's claim that Seymour seeks spiritual enlightenment be totally justified in this particular story. As far as French's argument is concerned, the story portrays a picture not of a well-composed Muriel, but rather of a crass and grossly undesirable human being.

I wish to argue that "Bananafish" is best understood as a demonstration of the different worlds of Muriel and Seymour that make communication between them impossible. I wish to show that Muriel's world is phony and superficial; Seymour's world is real and sensible. His suicide is caused by the fact that he does not wish to be a part of Muriel's milieu, which stifles him. Salinger, therefore, in "Bananafish", is suggesting that Seymour's suicide is caused by society. Salinger implicitly blames people like Muriel who fail to relate positively to Seymour, and to recognize him

as a respectable, imaginative, sensitive human being who, as his name suggests, "sees more".

If Seymour's death is tragic, or even worthy of being dramatized, it is not because he is crazy or deranged as the critic, French, argues, or as Muriel and her mother think, but precisely because he is very sane, and cannot bear to participate in the shallow, wasted lives of people who surround him. We suspect only after reading "Bananafish", however, that Seymour deserves much more than a self-inflicted death caused by the superficial and meaningless values of the "deranged" society Muriel represents. The author, for instance, takes great pains in later novelettes to reconstruct Seymour's character, and to show him in a better, more accurate light, which reflects his greatness. He ceases to be the tragic figure he appears to be in "Bananafish". Nevertheless, for the time being, let us examine "Bananafish" as it first appeared to its reader in 1948, before embarking on an explication of Seymour's significant development in the later works.

Antagonism of some sort, doubtless, exists between Muriel and Seymour, although the reason for it is not implicit in the story. Perhaps, as Bryan suggests, part of that antagonism is sexual, but not because Seymour engages in sexual activity, which distracts him from pursuing spiritual enlightenment. Instead, he simply does not "perform" as Muriel would like. Muriel and Seymour, for instance, are

supposed to be vacationing together in Florida. Muriel, however, is inside the hotel reading, curiously enough, a magazine article entitled "Sex is Fun -- or Hell".[4] The implication is that she is seeking, in a woman's magazine article, remedies to better her marriage, to make it more exciting. The other implication is that she is only capable of envisioning "Fun" or "Hell" as the only sexual alternatives. Such a basis for marriage is shallow, and stunts the growth of friendship and real understanding that they might, otherwise, have for each other as a couple. Seymour, on the other hand, is on the beach, alone and isolated from human contact. When the child, Sybil, approaches Seymour and asks where the "lady" is, presumably Muriel, he answers,

> 'The lady?' the young man brushed some sand out of his thin hair. 'That's hard to say, Sybil. She may be in any one of a thousand places. At the hair-dresser's. Having her hair dyed mink. Or making dolls for poor children, in her room . . . Ask me something else, Sybil.' [p.12]

Seymour appears to be mocking the double standards of his wife who can either dye her hair at the hair-dresser's in a ridiculous, extravagant fashion, or condescend to make dolls for poor children. Before he gets any more caustic, however, he gently asks Sybil to change the subject. His contempt for Muriel has emerged earlier, during her phone conversation with her mother, where she reveals that Seymour has called her "Miss Spiritual Tramp of 1948" [p.5]. This unpleasant title suggests that Muriel has prostituted herself to false and superficial ideals.

She lives up to this title fully when her attitude towards life is exposed by her confidences to her mother about Seymour. The telephone conversation shows just how insensitive, selfish, and even cruel Muriel and her mother are. They show little sincerity and compassion for Seymour, whom they regard as mentally ill. They discuss at random the incident in which Seymour drove a car into a tree because it was too beautiful to ignore, or the incident of " 'Those horrible things he said to Granny about her plans for passing away' ", or the incident of " 'What he did with all those lovely pictures from Bermuda -- everything' " [p.6]. They think it a "perfect crime" that the Army released him from the psychiatric hospital [p.6]. They do not fail to marvel at how "sad" Seymour's suggestion is to Muriel that she read the poems of a German poet, presumably Rilke, in the original language [p.6]. This discussion serves, of course, as a fictional device on Salinger's part that informs the reader of the two women's incapacity to deal sensitively with someone like Seymour, whose actions do not coincide with the standard "norm" of social behaviour. The disagreement which evolves from this conversation, however, shows more readily the women's exclusive self-concern. Muriel's mother is eager for Seymour to seek psychiatric care in order to shut out the inconvenience and embarrassment of having to deal with Seymour's unpredictable nature. Muriel, on the other hand, does not

want to have her vacation ruined by the intrusion of Seymour's illness, as this passage makes explicit:

> 'Muriel. My word of honour. Dr. Sivetski said Seymour may completely lose contr--'
> 'I just got here, Mother. This is the first vacation I've had in years, and I'm not going to just pack everything and come home,' said the girl. 'I couldn't travel now anyway. I'm so sunburned I can hardly move.'
> 'You're badly sunburned? Didn't you use that jar of Bronze I put in your bag? I put it right--'
> 'I used it. I'm burned anyway.'
> 'That's terrible. Where are you burned?'
> 'All over, dear, all over.'
> 'That's terrible.'
> 'I'll live.' [p.7]

It is devastating to think that they can discuss Seymour's mental condition and sun-tan oil all in the same breath!

Muriel's remoteness from Seymour's state of mind is demonstrated brilliantly in yet another passage. Muriel talks to her mother about a meeting she had at the hotel with a psychiatrist, whose name, incidentally, she does not even know. When her mother wonders how the psychiatrist knew at once that Seymour had been ill, Muriel responds apathetically,

> 'I don't know, Mother. I guess because he's so pale and all,' said the girl. 'Anyway, after Bingo he and his wife asked me if I wouldn't like to join them for a drink. So I did. His wife was horrible. You remember that awful dinner dress we saw in Bonwit's window? The one you said you'd have to have a tiny, tiny--'
> 'The green?'
> 'She had it on. And all hips. She kept asking me if Seymour's related to that

> Suzanne Glass that has that place on Madison Avenue -- the millinery.'
>
> 'What'd he say, though? The doctor.'
>
> 'Oh. Well, nothing much, really. I mean we were in the bar and all. It was terribly noisy.'
>
> 'Yes, but did -- did you tell him what he tried to do with Granny's chair?'
>
> 'No, Mother. I didn't go into details very much,' said the girl. 'I'll probably get a chance to talk to him again. He's in the bar all day long.' [p.8]

Muriel claims that she can go into the bar and talk to the doctor at any time, which is extremely ironic considering how "noisy" and distracting it is. It is also ironic that she would openly discuss Seymour's mental condition with a stranger, as though it were a topic on the same level as any mundane conversation. The colloquy with her mother, however, makes even more explicit that the doctor's wife's taste in clothes is an issue of more pressing importance, certainly of more interest to Muriel, than the issue of her husband's mental health.

The two women also discuss Seymour's "tattoo". Muriel suggests that he refuses to take off his bathrobe at the beach because he is so pale, and admits to being slightly baffled by Seymour's remark that "he doesn't want a lot of fools looking at his tattoo" [p.10]. Her mother's response is that "he needs the sun" [p.10]; he needs exposure, he needs a bottle of bronze to darken his body in order to hide his "paleness", his sickness, the tattoo that makes him different from everybody else on vacation in Florida. What becomes evident, however, as I will presently show, is that

Seymour does not "need the sun" which his mother-in-law proposes as a panacea. Muriel and her mother cannot understand that he is not talking about an imagined physical mark on his body. What Seymour calls his "tattoo" is a wry comment on his apprehension that people, including Muriel and her mother, see him as different, as freakish. He goes to the beach, presumably, to seek asylum, to hide from the judgments made against him, such as "pale" or "sick". These judgments burden him, just as Muriel and her mother are burdened by his unpredictable nature.

Seymour is no doubt an unusual person, but he is not presented as the "raving maniac" [p.9] Muriel's mother thinks he is. Instead, he is portrayed as possessing qualities of sensitivity and gentleness, which are brought out through the child, Sybil. She accepts Seymour as he is, and because of her acceptance, even at his most "eccentric" moments, she frees him. When he comments, for instance, on the bathing suit Sybil wears, which he pretends is blue [p.12] like his own [p.13], Sybil simply corrects him about the colour of her suit, which is yellow [p.12]. She does not grow distraught, or judge him as insane as Muriel and her mother, presumably, would.

When Seymour expresses his admiration for the inner qualities of Sharon Lipschutz, another small child, he also reveals his gentleness and appreciation for the kindness of others:

> 'What I like particularly about her is that she never does anything mean to little dogs in the lobby of the hotel. That little toy bull that belongs to that lady from Canada, for instance. You probably won't believe this, but some little girls like to poke that little dog with balloon sticks. Sharon doesn't. She's never mean or unkind. That's why I like her so much.' [p.15]

Perhaps Sybil herself likes to poke dogs with balloon sticks, a trait which would not be wholly incongruous with her nature. She displays jealousy, for instance, when she discovers that Seymour has allowed Sharon to sit by him at the piano in the hotel lobby [p.12]. Sybil suggests a good way for Seymour to get rid of her rival -- by pushing Sharon off the piano stool [p.13]. Seymour, however, wants Sybil to share his respect and love for Sharon. He holds up her kindness as an example for Sybil to follow [p.15].

Although this scene is limited in scope, it shows, nevertheless, that he is not as irresponsible and heartless as Muriel's mother thinks. In fact, Seymour's bananafish story that he relates to Sybil suffices to show that he thinks the society of Muriel and her mother is sad and tragic. By telling Sybil this story, Seymour allows her to see his "spiritual" nakedness, his internal "tattoo" he hides from the world of unimaginative and unsympathetic adults:

> 'Well, they swim into a hole where there's a lot of bananas. They're very ordinary-looking fish when they swim in. But once they get in, they behave like pigs. Why, I've known some bananafish to swim into a banana hole and eat as many as seventy-eight bananas . . . Naturally, after that

> they're so fat they can't get out of the hole again. Can't fit through the door.' [pp.15-16]

Some critics claim that Seymour is like the bananafish who die in this tragic way. Gary Lane says,

> ...the bananafish story is Seymour's parable of his defeat in life and decision for death: Seymour, coming into the world with a rare capacity for love, takes too much aspiration to it, becomes trapped by man's imperfect mortality, and must die.[5]

This argument reads too much into the story. Perhaps this claim is justified in the light of the subsequent novelettes that develop Seymour's character, but it is not evident at all upon reading "Bananafish" as a self-contained story. Seymour is not presented as having a "rare capacity for love". Instead, the bananafish fable, in particular, reveals his disappointment and disgust with the world. Seymour does not appear to be talking about himself in the tale, but about the people he has witnessed swimming into holes, and gorging themselves upon "Bananas", people such as Muriel and her mother, or even Mrs. Carpenter, Sybil's mother, whose conversational topic of silk handkerchiefs worn, presumably, as bathing suits [pp.10-11], would no doubt intrigue Muriel. These individuals fit the description of the banafish and its habits better than Seymour does. Muriel and her mother place too much importance on material possessions, and are not aware of the inward qualities that make a person human. They do not try to understand Seymour, as their telephone conversation makes evident. They even snub the psychiatrist's

wife because her taste in clothes is poor. Seymour envisions people like Muriel and her mother as "bananafish" who eventually destroy themselves by eating an overabundance of "bananas". They lead a "tragic life" [p.15] and "die" [p.16] because they are blind to their bloated, shallow attitudes of life, their "banana fever" [p.16] which terminates in a pointless, stupid death.

Sybil, as her name suggests, acts as a sort of seer when she reports to Seymour that she has spotted a bananafish with six bananas in its mouth [p.16], a sight Muriel and her mother would never see; they would, presumably, dismiss the entire fable as "sad", as further evidence of Seymour's "derangement". Sybil has the imagination to bring Seymour's tale to life. He kisses the arch of her foot [pp.16-17] by way of showing his appreciation for her imaginative insight.

The final scene takes place at the hotel. Seymour encounters a woman on the elevator who, unpleasantly enough, has zinc salve on her nose [p.17]. Seymour is upset with her because she will not admit that she has been staring at his feet [p.17]. When he says to the elevator operator,

> 'I have two normal feet and I can't see the slightest God-damned reason why anybody should stare at them.' [p.18],

he asserts once and for all that nothing is wrong with him. He is not merely talking about the normality of his feet. His strange comment signifies years of frustration with which he is tired of coping. His suicide, with which we sympathize

because of the antagonism he no doubt continually endures, as Muriel's telephone conversation exemplifies, is an act of escape from the corrupted world, from the "perfect day for bananafish" he does not wish to participate in. He looks at the sleeping Muriel for the last time in the hotel room, aims the pistol, and for a brief moment we suspect that he will perhaps shoot her. Surprisingly, however, he fires "a bullet through his right temple" [p.18], and makes his escape, however abominable and drastic, complete.

The tragedy of the death of Seymour Glass does not only include the fact that he is driven to suicide, but also the fact that the suicide itself will simply confirm Muriel and her mother in their belief that he did "lose control of himself", that he was indeed deranged, that he was the "raving maniac" Seymour's mother-in-law suspected he was all along.

The implied accusation against society through Seymour's suicide constitutes a weighty and serious charge. But this early story, however self-contained it appears, is not finished, and the reader's conception of it must change in the light of the subsequent novelettes concerning Seymour. It is a valuable exercise to see just how this present interpretation of "Bananafish" alters, and why Salinger, after a seven year interval, sought to build upon Seymour's character in other stories. In the comparison of

"Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" to "A Perfect Day for Bananafish", the need to re-evaluate this early story becomes crucial, as Seymour's character is considerably complicated.

CHAPTER TWO

"RAISE HIGH THE ROOF BEAM, CARPENTERS"

Two important conceptions of the relation between J.D. Salinger's 1955 novelette, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters",[1] and the earlier story, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish", have been fiercely debated by critics. Warren French claims that material from the later works about Seymour Glass should not be read into Salinger's early story. "Bananafish" is regarded by French as an immature vision, an embryonic vision, on Salinger's part, of what is to assume fuller form and substance in the later works. French argues that the Seymour of "Bananafish" is portrayed as mentally unbalanced[2], and is nothing like the Seymour of "Carpenters"[3] who is presented as extraordinary, ingenius, superhuman.

William Wiegand would oppose this view. He argues that Seymour's suicide only makes sense when read in the light of the later novelettes, especially "Carpenters":

> Without "Carpenters" the suicide which closes "Bananafish" appears motivated chiefly by Seymour's inability to put up with his bourgeois wife. With "Carpenters", however, we see Seymour as a man not deprived of, but rather surfeited with, the joy of life. Salinger's sole excuse for Seymour's desperate social irresponsibility is this same curious surfeit of sensation.[4]

I agree with Wiegand's claim that "Carpenters" sheds new light on "Bananafish", making alternative interpretations not only possible, but necessary. To say, however, that Seymour's suicide is due to a surfeit of joy is not plausible. I wish to show that "Carpenters", at best, reveals a time in Seymour's past, six years before his suicide, when he was joyful and hopeful in carrying out the task of spiritually fulfilling himself. Despite the fact that Seymour is alienated from Muriel in "Bananafish", his marriage to her, in "Carpenters", promises to be ideal for Seymour, as it gives him the chance to participate in society. It is conceivable, however, from the various suggestions and implications in "Carpenters", that perhaps a change of heart, a self-bitterness, and self-loathing overcame Seymour by 1948. It is conceivable that Seymour's marriage to Muriel in "Carpenters" simply prolongs the inevitability of Seymour's suicide. In the light of the complications in Seymour's character revealed by this novelette, it is also possible to re-evaluate the bananafish fable that Seymour relates to Sybil, not as an implied slur on society, but rather as a critique of Seymour himself. In one sense, he is the bananafish who "gluts" himself on individuals such as Muriel and Mrs. Fedder, whom he believes can restore him to health. It becomes obvious in "Bananafish" that his wife and mother-in-law have not helped him to lead the "normal" life he desires in "Carpenters". One very important fact is revealed in "Carpenters" about "Bananafish",

however: the two women are not to blame for his suicide. "Carpenters", as I will presently argue, exposes Seymour's self-struggle to live to his fullest potential. The novelette, in fact, exposes a grave human weakness within Seymour that we can at least suppose might have led to his self-destruction: ego, from which he cannot detach himself or purge himself. Like the bananafish, he gluts himself on his own ego, making attainment of spiritual perfection, which demands detachment from self, impossible.

French's arguments for dismissing "Bananafish" as a separate story seem irrelevant. The plain fact cannot be ignored that Salinger is building upon Seymour's already established character in subsequent novelettes. Buddy Glass, in "Carpenters", becomes Seymour's chronicler who candidly reminds us of the fact that Seymour committed suicide while vacationing in Florida with his wife[5], a reminder which pointedly recalls "Bananafish".

Rather than see "Bananafish" as portraying a particular character of Seymour that changes completely in "Carpenters", it makes better sense to see "Carpenters" as expanding upon Seymour's character, as complicating Seymour's relationship with the society described in "Bananafish". This new complexity, as a result, alters considerably our initial impression of "Bananafish". In the light of "Carpenters", "Bananafish" becomes much more than a self-contained story about a man fed up with society. "Bananafish" can be

seen more clearly as a framework upon which the author carefully builds in "Carpenters". It reveals Seymour as a sensitive human being who actually relies upon society in his search for perfection.

The structure of "Carpenters", divided into three major scenes, mirrors this complicated development of Seymour's character. In the first scene, we will meet Buddy Glass who has romantic conceptions of his brother, Seymour, whom he regards as infallible. In the second scene, we will see that Buddy's views are challenged by Muriel's Matron of Honour, who regards Seymour as irresponsible and in need of psychiatric help, because of the reasons he gives Muriel for not wanting to attend his own wedding. The final scene takes place in the apartment of Buddy and Seymour. Buddy, who reads Seymour's diary, learns that he is as ignorant of his brother's motives and actions as the Matron of Honour. I will argue that Seymour's diary makes it necessary for Buddy to re-evaluate Seymour's character that he thought he knew and could defend against the Matron of Honour's harsh accusations. Seymour's diary reveals to Buddy a man who is neither perfect nor insane. Instead he is revealed as a man with a vision of perfection, whose human weakness prevents him from attaining complete spiritual enlightenment, and makes him rely heavily upon society. This dependency baffles Buddy since he views society as mean, shallow, and destructive. Buddy is left haunted and speechless by Seymour's generous love and respect

for a society which, for Buddy, is far easier to condemn. Buddy realizes for the first time that Seymour's responsibility and burden in partaking of society are great and heroic.

In the opening scene, Buddy recounts a Taoist tale that Seymour once read to his ten month old sister, Franny. The tale is about a simple hawker who is able to choose the "superlative" horse by keeping in mind its "spiritual mechanism", its "inward qualities" [p.5], rather than its "general build and appearance" [p.4]. The story is meant to be a description of Seymour. Buddy regards his brother, Seymour, as that very hawker since he too is able to judge people not by their outward build and appearance, but by their inward qualities. Seymour is so superior to anybody else, in the eyes of Buddy, that no-one can ever take his place [p.5].

Buddy's attitude towards his brother, Seymour, is challenged by the very people whom Seymour considers "superlative", as his diary later reveals. When Buddy is asked by his sister, Boo Boo, to attend Seymour's wedding to Muriel Fedder [pp.8-9], he confronts opposition from people who do not value Seymour's existence as Buddy does. Seymour fails to come to his own wedding, and what follows is a tense, dramatic scene between Buddy and a car-load of sympathetic friends and relatives of the heart-broken bride. They are journeying to Mrs. Fedder's apartment-house.

The Matron of Honour, in particular, resembles Muriel and Mrs. Fedder of "Bananafish". She is opinionated and superficial, and is described by her husband as the "bloodthirstiest wench in six counties" [p.20]. The Matron claims that Seymour is cruel and irresponsible [p.22]. Her husband attempts to moderate her emotional outbursts, but she quickly justifies her feelings of resentment towards Seymour:

> 'Well, I'm sorry . . . But you haven't been in a room watching that poor kid [Muriel] cry her eyes out for a solid hour. It's not funny--and don't you forget it. I've heard about grooms getting cold feet, and all that. But you don't do it at the last minute. I mean you don't do it so that you'll embarrass a lot of perfectly nice people half to death and almost break a kid's spirit and everything! If he'd changed his mind, why didn't he write to her and at least break it off like a gentleman, for goodness' sake? Before all the damage was done.' [pp.23-24]

Buddy, for reasons unknown even to him, does not attempt to escape the Matron of Honour. He attributes his awkward position in the car to the fact "that the year was 1942, that [he] was twenty-three, newly drafted, newly advised in the efficacy of keeping close to the herd" [p.25]. He also mentions, in particular, that he felt "lonely" [p.25]. Buddy, however, also admits that he feels prejudice against Seymour for his "unexplained absenteeism" [p.29]. Buddy recognizes a genuine quality of sincerity in the Matron when she apologizes to Mrs. Silsburn, another passenger in the car, for her remark about Muriel's crazy aunts and uncles. Mrs. Silsburn is one of the aunts [pp.28-29]. For a brief

second Buddy thinks that she makes accusations against Seymour, not out of spite, but out of a real concern for the situation:

> I had a feeling that, for all her stagy indignation and showy grit, there was something bayonetlike about her, something not altogether unadmirable . . . The point is, however, that right then, for the first time, a small wave of prejudice against the missing groom passed over me, a just perceptible little whitecap of censure for his unexplained absenteeism. [p.29]

Buddy stays in the car in order to learn more about the situation involving his brother, Seymour. It is quite possible that he secretly entertains the thought that maybe the Matron of Honour is right about Seymour's irresponsibility. Buddy, in fact, does not immediately identify himself. Perhaps he is ashamed and afraid to admit to his company that he is Seymour's brother, whose actions elude even Buddy at this point.

Buddy's affinity for the Matron does not last long, however, especially in the face of her playing the role of Seymour's psychiatrist. It is in fact Buddy's nettled response to the Matron's analysis of Seymour's character that gives away his identity as Seymour's brother. The Matron of Honour seriously considers Mrs. Fedder's remark that Seymour is a "latent homosexual" [p.36], since he has never attempted to seduce Muriel, and that he is "basically afraid of marriage" [p.36]. The Matron speculates on another of Mrs. Fedder's notions that perhaps he is a "really schizoid

personality" [p.37]. The Matron argues that Seymour must be abnormal, that he should by rights "be stuck in some booby hatch" [p.39], because of the "absurd" reasons Seymour gives Muriel for desiring to postpone the wedding, despite the arrangements that have already been made:

> 'But what man in his right mind, the night before he's supposed to get married, keeps his fiancée up all night blabbing to her all about how he's too happy to get married and that she'll have to postpone the wedding till he feels steadier or he won't be able to come to it?' [p.39]

The next scene takes place in the apartment of Buddy and Seymour. Surprisingly, Buddy invites the car-load of individuals to come in and have a drink [p.52]. The Matron of Honour looks at the walls of the apartment which are filled with old pictures of children, including Seymour, who performed on a radio quiz show, entitled "It's a Wise Child". She concludes insensitively to Buddy that Seymour's childhood stardom was no doubt the cause of his present disorderly conduct:

> 'That's probably what's the matter with that brother of yours,' the Head said. 'I mean you lead an absolutely freakish life like that when you're a kid, and so naturally you never learn to grow up. You never learn to relate to normal people or anything. . . Your brother's never learned to relate to anybody. All he can do, apparently, is go around giving people a bunch of stitches in their faces. He's absolutely unfit for marriage or anything halfway normal, for goodness' sake. As a matter of fact, that's exactly what Mrs. Fedder said.' [pp.58-59]

The Matron's final condemnation marks the end of Buddy's tolerance, and he rushes to Seymour's defense. Buddy exclaims that he despises people, including the Matron of Honour, who fail to see through all the externalities that make up Seymour's existence [p.59], such as his performance on the radio programme. They fail to see who he really is, "A poet, for God's sake" [p.60]. Buddy resents individuals who have "a go at him" [p.59], who attempt to psychoanalyze him when they know nothing about him, and who regard him simply as a freak. Buddy says such attitudes might be justified

> '...if Seymour had just been some nasty little high-I.Q. showoff . . . but he hadn't ever been an exhibitionist. He went down to the broadcast every Wednesday night as though he were going to his own funeral. He didn't even talk to you, for God's sake, the whole way down on the bus or subway.' [pp.59-60]

Buddy's resentment is strong towards "normal" individuals who he feels are inferior in every way to Seymour. This particular scene of antagonism between Buddy and the Matron serves to arouse our curiosity as to who Seymour really is.

Seymour's diary, that Buddy takes into the bathroom with him to read, finally exposes Seymour's character, attitudes, and a philosophy of life hitherto unknown even to his brother, Buddy. The diary not only reveals to what extent Seymour is a poet, but it also clarifies Seymour's motives for acting in such a questionable fashion.

Boo Boo's haunting message written on the bathroom mirror for Seymour, " 'Raise high the roof beam, carpenters. Like Ares comes the bridegroom, taller far than a tall man. Love, Irving Sappho . . . Please be happy happy happy with your beautiful Muriel' " [p.65], perhaps strikes Buddy as particularly ironic and ill-timed, considering the attacks on Seymour which he has just witnessed. The diary shows, however, that Seymour is not crazy or irresponsible, but responsible enough to attempt to bridge the gap that lies between him and society. He humbly admits that he is different from others, and would like to minimize the difference. His humility contrasts with his brother's pride. Buddy at this point, for instance, is ready to toss his company out the door, but Seymour expresses, in his diary, a sincere need and love for these same people.

Seymour's thoughts on the approaching marriage to Muriel define how humble he is. He looks forward to what can be described as his self-surrender by marrying. For Seymour, marriage is not simply a means of achieving sexual union, as Mrs. Fedder or the Matron of Honour would, presumably, think, but also a means of becoming one in spirit. Marriage is a breaking down of imaginary boundaries and distinctions that prevent complete unity between male and female. Marriage then, for Seymour, is a spiritual condition that allows him to bestow upon Muriel the highest respect and reverence, by which they both are privileged to

> 'Elevate, help, teach, strengthen each other, but above all, serve. Raise their children honourably, lovingly, and with detachment. A child is a guest in the house, to be loved and respected -- never possessed, since he belongs to God. How wonderful, how sane, how beautifully difficult, and therefore true. The joy of responsibility for the first time in [Seymour's] life.' [p.91]

The idea of marriage that Seymour has adopted from an Indian miscellany of Vedanta undercuts the Matron's opinion that he is "unfit" for marriage. He even takes responsibility for the fact that he does not, and might not in future, make Muriel very happy,

> 'She worries over the way her love for me comes and goes, appears and disappears. She doubts its reality simply because it isn't as steadily pleasurable as a kitten. God knows it is sad. The human voice conspires to desecrate everything on earth.' [p.67].

Seymour is able to look beyond her sentimental concerns, and recognize that her unstable feelings of love, the fact that they are not as "steadily pleasurable as a kitten", are real and, therefore, all the more precious to him. He does not attempt to change her feelings, or mask them from himself. He simply wishes her to be at peace with them, to accept them, just as he has. He does not want her to "give to a thing more tenderness than God gives to it" [p.67], in this case, her love. She does not, for Seymour's sake, need to justify her feelings, to desecrate them through logic and words. Seymour responsibly grants her the greatest freedom: to act simply as she feels, without pretense or illusion.

As I have pointed out, Muriel's way of life, in "Bananafish", appeared despicable and shallow. In the light of "Carpenters", this conception is complicated by Seymour's moved response to her way of life that, in his opinion, is "so human-size and beautiful" [p.72]. Even though he expresses some disappointment in her mundane expectations of life, he is still touched by them:

> 'My one terrible consolation is that my beloved has an undying, basically undeviating love for the institution of marriage itself. She has a primal urge to play house permanently. Her marital goals are so absurd and touching. She wants to get a very dark sun tan and go up to the desk clerk in some very posh hotel and ask if her Husband has picked up the mail yet. She wants to shop for curtains. She wants to shop for maternity clothes. She wants to get out of her mother's house, whether she knows it or not, and despite her attachment to her. She wants children -- good-looking children, with her features, not mine. I have a feeling, too, that she wants her own Christmas-tree ornaments to unbox annually, not her mother's.' [pp.71-72]

He is won over by her simplicity that makes her goals not only tolerable to Seymour, but acceptable. She is like a child to Seymour, someone "to be loved and respected -- never possessed", since she too "belongs to God" [p.91].

Seymour not only accepts his future wife's attitudes, but his future mother-in-law's, a fact which also complicates our initial impression of her in "Bananafish". Muriel's mother is sentimental. Her expectations of life are shallow, as they were in "Bananafish". Seymour, however, does not regard her as a horrible person, but rather as a remarkable,

"superlative" individual, whose survival-instincts are overwhelming and admirable:

> 'A person deprived, for life, of any understanding or taste for the main current of poetry that flows through things, all things. She might as well be dead, and yet she goes on living, stopping off at delicatessens, seeing her analyst, consuming a novel every night, putting on her girdle, plotting for Muriel's health and prosperity. I love her. I find her unimaginably brave.' [p.72]

Rather than dwell upon, as Buddy would, Muriel's base "marriage motives", or the fact that Mrs. Fedder is "irritating" and "opinionated" [p.72], Seymour instead focusses upon their inward qualities. He is deeply impressed and moved by their driving force to find continually some purpose, however insignificant, in life. He says that Mrs. Fedder might as well be dead, because of the way in which she attempts to fulfill herself in the world, a way which is surely wrong and illusory. He seems, however, to be stressing the fact that she at least tries to live to the best of her ability. Maybe she does the wrong things in Seymour's mind; maybe she is undeniably superficial; maybe she might as well be dead. But what is more important, despite her weaknesses and character flaws to which, presumably, she would never admit, is the fact that she is alive and, in her own way, trying to live as best she can. This fact alone, is what moves Seymour, and to him, gives her life profound meaning. Despite any criticism that could easily be heaped upon her head, or Muriel's head, the women, nevertheless, take responsibility for themselves and

for each other in the world. In this light, Seymour, who once attempted suicide by slashing his wrists [p.70], is given the strength to be responsible for his own life, and is given the desire to participate in society. By keeping in mind its "spiritual mechanism", as he has Mrs. Fedder's, Seymour concentrates not on how dimly the light of society shines, in terms of fulfillment and meaning, but upon how brightly society shines, despite its dimness. Because he is so moved by the women, he is even willing to get "slightly overhauled" [p.75], or to seek psychiatric help for Muriel's sake. Although this way of showing his appreciation might seem perverse or perhaps even condescending, I think it is meant to signify his self-surrender, that is, the surrender of his ego and pride out of love and out of a real sense of kinship and brotherhood, as these qualities alone, to Seymour, illuminate the importance of man's function on earth.

A strange contradiction is revealed, however, in the diary, between Seymour's inability to participate actively and normally in society, and his desire to strive towards this involvement. This very contradiction is the key that brings together the Seymour of "Bananafish" and the Seymour of "Carpenters", whose character, as presented in each of the stories, has appeared incongruous to many critics. Seymour is told by the psychiatrist, Dr. Sims, that he has a perfection complex:

> 'Much talk from him, and quite intelligent,
> on the virtues of living the imperfect life,

> of accepting one's own and others' weaknesses. I agree with him, but only in theory. 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. But for a discriminating man to achieve this, it would mean that he would have to dispossess himself of poetry, go beyond poetry. That is, he couldn't possibly learn or drive himself to like bad poetry in the abstract, let alone equate it with good poetry. He would have to drop poetry altogether. I said it would be no easy thing to do.' [p.74]

Seymour is a discriminating man, a poet. In order to follow the way of the Tao, the "non-ego", he would have to dispossess himself of poetry altogether. He would have to detach himself from the "main current of poetry" [p.72] that flows through everything. It is no coincidence that his mother-in-law is portrayed by Seymour as a person deprived of understanding or taste for "poetry". Seymour does not regard this deprivation as undesirable. She is indiscriminating in the way she lives, and Seymour appears to admire her for that very quality of indiscrimination innate within her. Likewise, Muriel is admirable because of this same trait. Seymour, for instance, loves and needs her "undiscriminating heart" [pp.66-67]. He worships and relies upon "her simplicity, her terrible honesty" [p.73], which he describes in this way:

> 'Muriel sounded rather relieved that I couldn't get in tonight. Which amuses and delights me. Another girl, if she genuinely wanted an evening free of her fiancée, would go through the motions of expressing regret over the phone. M. just said Oh when I told her.' [pp.72-73]

Her honesty is a rare characteristic in a society whose "human voice conspires to desecrate everything on earth" [p.67]. In the following entry, for instance, he discusses Abraham Lincoln's famous "Gettysburg Address" which, to Seymour, only feigns to capture in words the real spirit and meaning of liberty. Seymour's attitude is that no words can ever depict truthfully enough the tragedy of this historic event, which resulted in death or injury for thousands of combatants; nor can words properly depict the profound awareness of the necessity of freedom and equality among men, an awareness which grew painfully out of the civil war:

> 'I'd said that 51,112 men were casualties at Gettysburg, and that if someone had to speak at the anniversary of the event, he should simply have come forward and shaken his fist at his audience and then walked off -- that is, if the speaker was an absolutely honest man.' [pp.73-74]

It might seem absurd to suggest that Seymour compares indirectly Muriel's artless form of expression to Lincoln's rhetorical style of speech-making. Nevertheless, the point can be argued that Seymour seems to be more moved by Muriel's honesty and simplicity of self-expression in the world, than even Lincoln's attempt to reach his people through a moving, elaborate speech. Seymour makes a very personal statement on the way in which Muriel and he quietly express their love and trust in one another. Seymour is imaginative enough to experience enlightenment in his participation in everyday living, which Muriel's life represents. Her very existence, in fact, reminds Seymour that his duty in fulfilling himself begins on

earth, complete with all its imperfections. Attainment of enlightenment does not simply constitute the making of brilliant speeches, wrought from terrible ordeals. It constitutes action -- that is, how much an individual is willing to give of himself actively unto all people, without discrimination or bias, without show or pomp, without expecting something in return. Seymour's discriminating ego is in fact an obstacle that could prevent him from attaining true enlightenment, because he is continually tempted to separate everyday human existence from spirituality or holiness. When Seymour is talking to Dr. Sims, he implies that he abhors imperfection and the shortsightedness of individuals. He also recognizes, however, that the way towards enlightenment can only be won through struggle and humility. Seymour realizes that he can discriminate in his poetry between what is good and real, and what is bad and illusory until doomsday. He also realizes more importantly, however, that loving actively and wholeheartedly, and participating in the lives of others, are the highest conditions of man. They are the most superior forms of real poetry, despite imperfection and folly. These conditions are difficult to obtain within the self and sustain, particularly for Seymour, who describes himself as the discriminating poet. They are, nevertheless, what he strives toward. Seymour can perhaps learn to be more indiscriminating through Muriel's example of the "undiscriminating heart" she possesses. I do not mean to imply that Muriel or her mother

have actually attained enlightenment. Their way of living simply reminds Seymour that if he really plans to seek enlightenment in his heart, the search begins by recognizing the light of truth which shines in every person to some degree, and binds all people together as one, whether they are rich or poor, intelligent or stupid, whether they are gifted like Lincoln, or shallow, like Muriel. Only an intelligent and imaginative man, like Seymour, could see beyond the superficiality in people like Muriel or Mrs. Fedder. He takes responsibility for both of them through his marriage to Muriel. In a large sense, this marriage signifies the responsibility he has towards society, a responsibility made only possible out of his growing awareness of brotherhood and real love he longs to share with others.

This idea of brotherhood and love is expounded in the deaf-mute, who is the bride's relative, and fellow passenger in the car. Buddy's affection for this "tiny elderly man" holding "an unlighted clear-Havana cigar" [p.17] is due to his kindly and radiant nature, who neither sides against Seymour, nor against the Matron of Honour. The deaf-mute is oblivious to any tension that exists among the people in the car or in the apartment. He is described as either sitting in the car "staring very severely straight ahead of him [p.17], or having an "enormous grin" [p.47] on his face when approached by an individual. He manages always to remain "sublimely out of touch" [p.33] -- that is, detached in a spiritual way, silent and at peace, responding only to matters of real importance,

such as being "Delighted" [p.49] when he is asked by the car-load of people to go out and have a drink with them. The reader also senses that the deaf-mute is "Delighted" at these individuals who set aside their differences temporarily, in order to quit the car and seek refreshment together. When the car-members search for a suitable restaurant, Buddy, in fact, describes each of them as innocent children [pp.51-54] who mean no harm, not even the Matron of Honour. Buddy, for instance, does not take offense when the Matron stares at him for having invited them to the apartment where Seymour and he reside, "unless", Buddy adds, "children's stares are rude" [p.53].

The deaf-mute's condition of being "sublimely out of touch" is ideally what Seymour is working toward in his own development as a human being, responding only to matters of real importance, and concentrating not on people's "homely details" [p.5] or their "external" being [p.5], but upon the "spiritual mechanism" [p.5] which operates in all people.

In the light of Seymour's complex attitudes in "Carpenters", there is reason to suspect that Seymour, in "Bananafish", did not loathe society or kill himself because of his intolerance for the mundane world of imperfection. Without "Carpenters", Seymour's comments to Sybil concerning his wife, or his bananafish fable might give such an impression. Because we learn in "Carpenters" that Seymour sees society's true value which is essentially good, we need not attribute society itself as the cause of his suicide. Seymour's ability

to see the absolute value of existence is won through his intense concentration and meditation upon the Tao. It takes the greatest effort, on the individual's part, to set aside his own ego in order to partake of this Oneness which unites all things, and makes them inseparable from each other. In "Bananafish", it is possible to view Seymour as having lost the impetus to sustain his concentration. Out of fatigue and frustration, he kills himself. It is possible, for instance, to regard his wry comment about Muriel, " 'She may be in any one of a thousand places. At the hairdresser's. Having her hair dyed mink. Or making dolls for poor children, in her room' "[6], as an indication not of loathing for his wife's double standards, but of his failure, in this particular instance, to see beyond her banality to the essential value of Muriel as a human being. It is possible to read the bananafish tale as a comment directed not against society, but against himself, a bananafish. His banana fever can be defined more clearly as his own weakness, his spiritual illness of a discriminating ego. The passage, in which Seymour records his discussion with Dr. Sims in "Carpenters", suggests that because Seymour is a discriminating man, he aims too eagerly and impatiently for the attainment of his desired goal of detachment and tranquillity. In "Bananafish" his spiritual illness becomes critical. Seymour, the bananafish, has glutted himself on the idea of achievement. His insatiable craving for perfection becomes, ironically, a violation

of the way of the Tao. He becomes anxious in his attempt to get rid of his ego. The more anxious he becomes, the more incapable he is of controlling his ego. He tries too hard, and instead of becoming peaceful within, he becomes restless and distraught. He is so intent upon his desired goal, and so obsessed and distracted by its end result, that he fails to succeed. He fails to concentrate upon the actual means of attainment. Aldous Huxley describes the difficult way towards enlightenment in terms which sound strikingly similar to Seymour's bananafish fable:

> The emotions connected with craving and aversion impair the normal functioning of the organs and lead, in the long run, to disease. Similar emotions and the strain which arises from the desire for success prevent us from achieving the highest proficiency not only in such complex activities as dancing . . . doing any kind of highly skilled work, but also in such natural psychophysical activities as seeing and hearing. Empirically it has been found that malfunctioning of the organs can be corrected, and proficiency in acts of skill increased, by inhibition of strain and negative emotions. If the conscious mind can be trained to inhibit its own self-regarding activities, if it can be persuaded to let go and give up its straining for success, the cosmic non-ego, the Tao that is immanent in all of us, can be relied upon to do what has to be done with something like infallibility.[7]

Seymour's discussion with Dr. Sims, in "Carpenters", suggests that Seymour's conscious mind has not been trained adequately enough to follow the way of the Tao, since he is a discriminating man. Seymour thinks that with Muriel, whose existence constantly reminds him of what is important, he can overcome

this problem. In "Bananafish", however, perhaps his depression is due to the fact that he has failed in his life's mission to achieve enlightenment. He dies, therefore, of banana fever. He kills himself because he can bear no longer the pain and the disappointment of his failure. The title, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish", can be read in the light of "Carpenters", as signifying the day Seymour actually dies and puts an end to his misery. It is interesting to note in support of this idea that, in "Carpenters", Seymour is described in his diary as being "too keyed up to be with people" [p.90]. He cannot marry on the set day because he is "too keyed up". He partially paralyzes Charlotte Mayhew, an actress-singer, because he is "too keyed up" with her beauty [p.89]. Even his attempted suicide is a result of being "too keyed up". His "normal functionings", in short, have been impaired by the emotional strain he continually puts upon himself in aiming too strongly for his goal. It is quite probable, that his suicide in "Bananafish" is also due to this same surfeit of emotional strain that causes "malfunctioning of the organs" (as Huxley puts it), and causes him to act desperately and, finally, destructively.

In "Carpenters", Seymour might be described as a "happy man" [p.91] at the prospect of marriage to Muriel, but he is never described as tranquil. His hopes of attaining tranquillity, we can only assume, become more and more disrupted, resulting finally in his tragic suicide.

We have seen, then, that our initial interpretation of "Bananafish" must alter, in the light of the complications in Seymour's character, revealed by "Carpenters". In the meantime, Buddy is left to cope with Seymour's puzzling revelation on the value of a society to which Muriel, Mrs. Fedder, and even the Matron of Honour, belong. Buddy must purge himself of his defensiveness and attachment to Seymour. He recognizes that Seymour is all the more heroic and extraordinary, not because he is perfect in a ready-made sense, but because he struggles to overcome his weaknesses, his disease of the ego, despite his suicide which suggests his failure. The wedding gift that Buddy thinks about sending to Seymour is significantly the little old man's "cigar, in a small, nice box. Possibly with a blank sheet of paper enclosed, by way of explanation" [p.92]. The cigar-end left in a pewter ashtray in the apartment is the only visible sign that the deaf-mute "had ever existed" [p.92]. The gift is meant perhaps to symbolize Buddy's apprehension of the deaf mute's complete selflessness, which Buddy also comes to recognize in Seymour. The gift is also meant to signify Buddy's quiet acceptance of Seymour's difficult role in life, and his sudden awareness of just how important Seymour's responsibility is towards society.

In the next novelette, to emerge in 1959, "Seymour: An Introduction", Buddy takes Seymour's struggles upon himself. He challenges himself as a writer, and is humble enough to let his readers and critics see his struggle and

vulnerability as an artist. Buddy is willing to suffer and participate in society, just as Seymour has. In his attempt to be honest with himself, and to re-evaluate himself and his goals, his relationship with Seymour matures. Buddy comes to recognize that the burden of responsibility Seymour accepted, and also his sufferings, make up the right and difficult path towards enlightenment. The issue of Seymour is no longer a question of why he commits suicide. The issue, at least according to Buddy, concerns a more essential matter: what Seymour's life expressed to others; what his life was able to teach; why the path he took, in the hope of fulfilling himself was the right path, despite his self-destruction during the walk along it.

CHAPTER THREE

"SEYMOUR: AN INTRODUCTION"

Salinger's "Seymour: An Introduction" is an extraordinary novelette for two reasons. First, Seymour's character is complicated further by Buddy's surprising repudiation of his treatment of the suicide, a repudiation pointed to in the two quotations from Kafka and Kierkegaard beginning "Seymour: An Introduction". Secondly, the relationship between the two brothers is complicated also when Buddy reevaluates his role as a biographer of Seymour. Buddy wishes to depict Seymour differently because he comes to the realization that he has not captured the heart, the true essence of Seymour, in the early stories, "Bananafish" [the authorship of which he now apparently claims] and "Carpenters". Buddy's present difficulty as a writer is due to his intense focus upon the suicide, which he now feels has obscured the greatness of Seymour. Anatole Grunwald discusses the nature of Buddy's shortsightedness as a writer:

> 'Seymour: An Introduction' is one of the masterly seriocomic performances of recent literature. But in it, Seymour's suicide no longer makes sense. Saints may be martyred, but they do not shoot themselves. If the suicide in the hotel room was the act of a man weakened to insanity, then the whole legend is meaningless; Seymour supposedly was the sanest and strongest of men. If it was the departure of a holy man from an unworthy world, it was out of character; Seymour taught his six disciples

> [the other Glass children] not only to love and forgive the world but also . . . to play their parts in the world wholeheartedly. The suicide was wrong, and, as Buddy now explains him, Seymour was not capable of a wrong act.[1]

Grunwald makes a good point, but he fails to explain such remarks of Buddy's as the following:

> I wholeheartedly fear that there is a type of reader who may find it somewhat winning of me to have lived to be forty; i.e., unlike Another Person [Seymour] on the page, not to have been 'selfish' enough to commit suicide and leave my Whole Loving Family high and dry . . . Not because I'm not a proper iron man but because to finish it right I'd have to touch on -- my God, touch on -- the details of his suicide, and I don't expect to be ready to do that, at the rate I'm going, for several more years.[2]

No doubt exists in my mind that the suicide of Seymour is to be regarded as an actual occurrence. I wish to argue that Buddy cannot come to terms with the suicide, precisely because it is so inconsistent with who Seymour was: a loving, gentle human being who respected all aspects of life, even the shallow views of Mrs. Fedder and Muriel [in "Carpenters"]. Buddy's problem as a biographer of Seymour can be defined in this way: How does he write about the good man, a near saint, like Seymour, when that man has in fact destroyed himself? Buddy comes to the realization that he has done wrong to Seymour by judging him on the basis of his suicide, his end result, rather than upon his good works, his attempt to fulfill himself, spiritually. Seymour's actual achievement, or failure to achieve, is not for Buddy to judge. Buddy must

wait to grasp the meaning of Seymour's death in time, which is somehow connected with the way Seymour lived. We are not at this time invited to share that connection, because of Buddy's inability as a writer to bring together and reconcile the grave inconsistencies in Seymour's character.

What I wish to show then, is Buddy's struggle to arrest his ego which previously strove too intently for a finished portrait of Seymour. Buddy, in his early writing, strained too hard to make sense of his brother, whose inconsistency of character becomes Buddy's stumbling block as a writer. Buddy's quest for a final estimate of Seymour has brought him nothing but anxiety. The fact that Buddy cannot pretend to understand Seymour's suicide has made it impossible for him to complete his portrait, and he becomes temporarily frustrated. Only when Buddy ceases to place importance on conclusions, is Seymour finally revealed to him. Buddy in "Seymour" literally slows himself down and relaxes, and finally learns that what is important as a writer is to be fully engaged in the present moment, in which glimpses of Seymour are revealed to him. Buddy ceases to ask where his description is going. The moment he ceases to ask, he is able to concentrate solely on the revelation of Seymour granted to him at particular moments. Buddy's ego, which looks forward to results, no longer distracts him from his present purpose which is to depict Seymour honestly. By getting rid of his ego, Buddy is able to let Seymour, his subject, fill him completely.

The repudiation of Buddy's treatment of the suicide, which I will show, can be viewed in itself as a technical device. It actually symbolizes Buddy's reconstruction of Seymour, Seymour's resurrection from a death that was too much for Buddy to bear. Buddy does not want us to concentrate on the fact that Seymour is dead; he wants him to live in the hearts of other individuals. Seymour gave a great deal of himself to others, particularly to Buddy, and these qualities alone -- his vitality, his wisdom, his love for life -- are what Buddy wants to pass on to his readers. Buddy is literally starting his description of Seymour again, by focussing upon the way he lived, and not upon his manner of death.

George Steiner has called "Seymour" a "piece of shapeless self-indulgence".[3] Such a judgment, however, fails to consider the way in which Buddy wrestles with his ego to become the writing itself, to become Seymour, to become, as Ihab Hassan suggests, "the incarnation of his subject in speech".[4] Bernice and Sanford Goldstein rightly view "Seymour" as

> ...a tour de force in organization: the supposedly 'irrelevant detail' or 'undue verbosity' takes on significant meaning in terms of the central process of creating.[5]

In order to show concretely Buddy's maturation as a writer, "Seymour", as the Goldsteins have suggested, can be divided into two main parts: before and after his hepatitis attack.[6] The first part of the novelette dwells upon Buddy's weakness as a biographer of Seymour, his attempt to come to terms

with what is expected of a true writer, and the difficulties he will have in fulfilling his demands. The second part of "Seymour", in which Buddy recuperates from his illness, focusses upon his process of becoming a true writer. The act of writing is inspired through Buddy's recollections of Seymour and what he taught. First, Buddy discusses Seymour's poetry and its superlativeness. Buddy's ineffectiveness as a writer is highlighted by means of memos from Seymour which criticize his work [The contrast between the two brothers' art can be adequately drawn by the reader]. When Buddy finally attempts to write a physical description of Seymour, however, he is illuminated as to the importance of his role as writer. He recalls Seymour's way of playing marbles, "Aiming but no aiming" [p.207]. Seymour shoots marbles the same way a Zen archer engages in archery:

> In the case of archery, the hitter and the hit are no longer two opposing objects, but are one reality. The archer ceases to be conscious of himself as the one who is engaged in hitting the bull's-eye which confronts him. This state of unconsciousness is realized only when, completely empty and rid of the self, he becomes one with the perfecting of his technical skill.[7]

According to the rules of Zen, it is wrong to play any game with the sole intent to win. Instead emphasis should be placed upon how one plays it. The game is a tool by which one reaches a higher, more spiritual level of existence, and not a tool by which the ego can be gratified. I wish to argue, therefore, that the example of marble shooting symbolizes, to Buddy, the process of becoming detached from the ego, and from

expectations of reaching an illusory goal in his writing. The description of Seymour ceases to be Buddy's target, his opposing object. He becomes one with his writing, by fully engaging himself in the moment he creates, by ceasing to distinguish between himself as the writer and his writing of Seymour, and by ceasing to distinguish between Seymour's life and Seymour's death. Only through Buddy's attaining this new insight and attitude towards writing is Seymour revealed in brief moments as the superlative human being whom Buddy had previously failed to capture.

The two quotations from Kafka and Kierkegaard point to the difficulties of writing that Buddy now confronts. The first quotation from Kafka,

> The actors by their presence always convince me, to my horror, that most of what I've written about them until now is false. It is false because I write about them with steadfast love (even now, while I write it down, this, too, becomes false) but varying ability, and this varying ability does not hit off the real actors loudly and correctly but loses itself dully in this love that will never be satisfied with the ability and therefore thinks it is protecting the actors by preventing this ability from exercising itself. [p.95],

can be compared to Buddy's own lack of ability to portray Seymour honestly. Buddy's portrait of Seymour in the early writings is "false" because of his attachment to Seymour. Buddy says in his review of "Carpenters", for instance:

> The details were served up with a fullness possibly just short of presenting the reader with a sherbet mold of each and every wedding guest's footprint to take

> home as a souvenir, but Seymour himself--the main course--didn't actually put in a physical appearance anywhere. [p.112]

This passage implies that Buddy is so possessive of his own character, Seymour, that he does not properly bring Seymour to life. Buddy takes it upon himself to do the walking and talking for his brother. He is so protective of Seymour that he even conceals the diary from the Matron of Honour by taking it into the bathroom and hiding it in the hamper. Buddy is so afraid that people will misunderstand Seymour's view and way of life that he feels he must take Seymour's place in the novelette in order to defend him, explain him, and rationalize his actions. In "Bananafish", Seymour does put in an appearance. A member of Buddy's immediate family, however, has pointed out that

> ...the young man, the "Seymour", who did the walking and talking in that early story, not to mention the shooting, was not Seymour at all but, oddly, someone with a striking resemblance to--alley oop, I'm afraid--myself. [p.113]

Buddy implies that he has put so much of himself into the story, that he has failed to give an accurate description of Seymour. Because of Buddy's own inability to accept the death of his brother, and because of his attachment to Seymour, Buddy, implicitly, blames Muriel as the cause of his death. Both Muriel and her mother, for example, are definitely portrayed as horrible people who appear to drive Seymour to his grave. In "Carpenters", however, Seymour's diary

informs us that Seymour not only loved Muriel and her mother, but that he was also deeply moved by what he considered to be their child-like attitudes toward life. Although "Carpenters" refers to an earlier period in Seymour's life than in "Bananafish", no further evidence exists in later works to show that Seymour grew to detest Muriel. In fact, in "Seymour: An Introduction", Buddy emphasizes Seymour's kindly and radiant nature that continued to develop throughout his life, as I will presently show. I can only suggest, therefore, that Buddy in "Bananafish" was too eager to protect Seymour's strange way of life which resulted in suicide. Buddy sought justification of Seymour's act by suggesting that Muriel's grim, bourgeois existence drove him to desperation. The story has completely backfired, however. Buddy has committed artistic suicide because he has destroyed the effect he was attempting to create: a portrait of Seymour as a superior human being. In the light of the quotation, from Kafka, Buddy implies that his treatment of the suicide was untrue. For all Buddy's protectiveness in "Bananafish", Seymour appears all the more weak and thin-skinned by committing suicide as a result of his inability to cope with society. It would appear that Buddy was attempting to rationalize Seymour's death, which undoubtedly shocked him, and haunts him even now:

> I can't forbear to mention that that particular story was written just a couple of months after Seymour's death, and not too very long after I myself,

> like both the "Seymour" in the story and the Seymour in Real Life, had returned from the European Theatre of Operations. [p.113]

In this light, the second quotation, from Kierkegaard, makes sense as Buddy's apology for his treatment of the suicide in "Bananafish", for his failure to "hit off the real actors loudly and correctly":

> It is (to describe it figuratively) as if an author were to make a slip of the pen, and as if this clerical error became conscious of being such. Perhaps this was no error but in a far higher sense was an essential part of the whole exposition. It is, then, as if this clerical error were to revolt against the author, out of hatred for him, were to forbid him to correct it, and were to say, 'No, I will not be erased, I will stand as a witness against thee, that thou art a very poor writer'. [p.95]

Buddy's "slip of the pen" [his treatment of the suicide] is seen, nevertheless, as an essential part of the whole exposition. It is the part that forces Buddy to re-evaluate and re-assess all that he has written. Buddy's "clerical error" is so serious that he cannot simply ignore its consequences. Instead, Buddy sees that it makes him painfully aware of himself as a writer, and of the subject he has violated, a violation he hopes to correct in the writing of "Seymour".

Buddy foregoes all his future plans for writing yet another story about Seymour, since his earlier attempts are now conceived as "false" in their failure to capture the real Seymour:

> My original plans for this general space were to write a short story about Seymour and to call it 'SEYMOUR ONE', with the big 'One' serving as a built-in convenience to me, Buddy Glass, even more than to the reader--a helpful, flashy reminder that other stories (a Seymour Two, Three, and possibly Four) would logically have to follow. Those plans no longer exist. [p.107]

The real Seymour, whom Buddy previously failed to capture, is now described as one who

> ...was all real things to us: our blue-striped unicorn, our double-lensed burning glass, our consultant genius, or portable conscience, our supercargo, and our one full poet. [p.106]

Buddy also describes Seymour as "our rather notorious 'mystic' and 'unbalanced type' " [p.106], one who "tallied with the classical conception . . . of a mukta, a ringding enlightened man, a God-knower" [p.106]. Buddy, as a short-story writer, is so much in awe of his brother, that he has difficulty in laying aside his emotional attachment to him. As a result, Buddy has difficulty in writing about Seymour objectively. Buddy resolves to stay away from the short-story form, and seek a different approach to capturing in words the heart of Seymour:

> I'm anything but a short-story writer where my brother is concerned . . . what I am, I think, is a thesaurus of undetached prefatory remarks about him. I believe I essentially remain what I've always been--a narrator, but one with extremely pressing personal needs. I want to introduce, I want to describe, I want to distribute mementos, amulets, I want to break out my wallet, and pass around snapshots, I want

> to follow my nose. In this mood, I don't dare go anywhere near the short-story form. It eats up fat little undetached writers like me whole. [p.107]

Buddy now attempts to focus on the process of creation, and is no longer concerned with the final product which is, as the Goldsteins argue, the story itself.[8] Buddy makes his intentions known to the reader who is, no doubt, waiting patiently for Buddy to move off the page, so to speak, and present a story. First, Buddy likens his reader to a bird-lover:

> ...you're someone who took up birds in the first place because they fired your imagination; they fascinated you because 'they seemed of all created beings the nearest to pure spirit--those little creatures with a normal temperature of 125°'. [pp.96-97]

The curlew sandpiper, for example, is just the type of bird that would fire someone's imagination. The nest of the bird, in particular, has been spotted by only a few people. Metaphorically speaking, Seymour is also a rare bird who is nearest to pure spirit and whose source of being, whose inner heart, like the sandpiper's nest, has been seen by perhaps three people. Buddy's difficult responsibility as a writer, not only towards Seymour, but towards the general reader, becomes evident when he says,

> It would be too much of a good thing to hope, of course, that my very own general reader should turn out to be one of the three people who have actually seen the curlew sandpiper's nest, but I feel, at least, that I know him--you--quite well

> enough to guess what kind of well-meant gesture might be welcomed from me right now. [p.97]

The well-meant gesture is, presumably, to take his bird-loving readers to the nest, and explain what it looks like through the appropriate means of language. Buddy, however, is not prepared to attempt such a feat. He is not prepared, in effect, to "get the hell on with his story" [p.99]. Instead his responsibility as a writer becomes defined as the exposing of his self-consciousness. He shows us the process of becoming aware of himself as a writer. He no longer gives us a finished product that pretends to impart knowledge with regards to his subject. Instead, he empties himself before the reader by exposing his ego. Having prepared the reader with his intentions for the writing of "Seymour", he says,

> In this entre-nous spirit, then, old confidant, before we join the others, the grounded everywhere, including, I'm sure, the middle-aged hot-rodders who insist on zooming us to the moon, the Dharma Bums, the makers of cigarette filters for thinking men, the Beat and the Sloppy and the Petulant, the chosen cultists, all the lofty experts who know so well what we should or shouldn't do with our poor little sex organs, all the bearded, proud, unlettered young men and unskilled guitarists and Zen-killers and incorporated aesthetic Teddy boys who look down their thoroughly unenlightened noses at this splendid planet where . . . Kilroy, Christ, and Shakespeare all stopped--before we join these others, I privately say to you, old friend . . . please accept from me this unpretentious bouquet of very early-blooming parentheses: (((( )))). [pp.97-98]

This passage suggests that Buddy himself rightly takes his place among the "grounded", the mere talkers who claim to be spiritually enlightened, when in reality they are not. Buddy is like these people, in a sense, because he thought he was enlightened with regard to Seymour. As Buddy has since pointed out, however, he did not really have a grasp of Seymour at all. By exposing his ego in this way, and his faults as a writer, he humbles himself before his reader. Buddy implies in this passage that he does not simply want to fire anybody's imagination, at the Real Seymour's expense, by producing another story. Instead, he painfully seeks a new way, a better technique of writing, in order to present Seymour accurately and honestly. The most honest way of fulfilling his demands is to give to the reader his "unpretentious bouquet of parentheses", to give a minute by minute account of what Arthur Schwartz calls, his "painful self-consciousness as a writer".[9] As he becomes more aware of his undetached and biased way of writing, he will then be more prepared to avoid it in his future writing. If he is able to develop an objective approach, only then will a clearer picture of the Real Seymour be revealed to him.

In Buddy's attempt to discipline himself as a writer, and his emotional recoiling from Seymour's suicide, he becomes more enlightened with regard to his brother's role in life. In his attempt to be open-minded, he comes to see that Seymour's death is paradoxical, because it reflects the climax

of Seymour's self-awareness as a poet. In other words, he died fully engaged in his role as poet; he died because of the weight of all that made him live and thrive. Buddy says,

> By every logical definition Seymour was an unhealthy specimen, he did on his worst nights and late afternoons give out not only cries of pain but cries for help, and when nominal help arrived, he did decline to say in perfectly intelligible language where it hurt. [p.104]

Seymour's pain, however, cannot be cured through psychoanalysis. His appearance of madness, in this state, cannot be understood by psychoanalysts who would be eager to take "a brain smear from him" [p.102] in their attempts to locate the pain and heal it. As Buddy points out,

> ...they don't listen properly to cries of pain when they come. They can't, of course. They're a peerage of tin ears. With such faulty equipment, with those ears, how can anyone possibly trace the pain, by sound and quality alone, back to its source? [p.104]

Seymour's pain cannot be cured because it is due to his role as "true poet" and "seer" [p.104]. Buddy, therefore, suggests that Seymour dies the death of a true poet:

> I say that the true-artist seer, the heavenly fool who can and does produce beauty is mainly dazzled to death by his own scruples, the blinding shapes and colours of his own sacred human conscience. [p.105]

Buddy suggests that Seymour dies because he cannot trace the source of his own pain. As a poet, he cannot express clearly enough through language the awesomeness and the beauty which flow through all things, and which are revealed to him by his

contact with and meditation on the Tao. I do not mean to suggest that his suicide results from his failure as a poet. On the contrary, Seymour is so gifted that he constantly sees infinite levels of truth within himself. This infinite source, as wonderful as it is to behold, is exhausting and painful for Seymour to endeavour to sustain at all times. But it is an endeavour to which he has devoted his entire life.

Buddy now begs us to re-read the passages from Kafka and Kierkegaard [p.105], because what he now endures as a writer is what Seymour has endured all of his life as a poet. Poetry is not just limited to words and rhythms on a page. Poetry exceeds these boundaries. Buddy is implying that in Seymour's eyes whatever an individual does, amounts to his poetry or his art. In other words, Poetry IS one's acting in the world. Acting is a tool, a means through which the individual strives to behold and sustain at all times the Source that made his acting possible in the first place. Buddy's previous "inability" as a writer was due to the fact that he distinguished between himself as the writer, and what he produced in his writing. He is now becoming aware of the fact that the story itself and his act of writing are one and the same. The pain he now experiences as a writer does not necessarily occur because he suffers disappointment in himself. He recognizes, through Seymour, that his pain is part of the process of becoming aware of himself as the actor, the writer. Buddy is in the process of engaging his

total being in his subject matter, in his acting, in which distinctions between himself as a writer, what he writes and how he writes, cease to exist. Seymour, for instance, is regarded by Buddy as the "Sick Man" [p.101] who was more "determined than ever to see his sickness run its course" [p.103]. Seymour's illness, however, or his pain, is vital, and is, paradoxically, healthy. It is possible to define this illness as a fever of the heart, the pain of concentration that strives to reach towards enlightenment. To take away such an illness, to propose healing it, through the logic of psychoanalysis, would be destructive to the true artist, because it is his only tool, his only means of becoming one with the Tao, of integrating his being with his acting.

Seymour's poetry --his acting, his sickness-- is indeed his companion "treacherous as it may sound" [p.103]. Buddy, previously, failed to see the huge purpose of Seymour, and his significance as a poet, as an actor. Buddy failed to see that Seymour lived fully as a poet and he died fully as a poet. No distinctions can be made between his life and death. No amount of logic can claim to understand this unity of being, or dissect it in order to understand it. His life and death stem from the same source that made his role as poet possible:

> However contradictory the coroner's report--whether he pronounces Consumption or Loneliness or Suicide to be the cause of death--isn't it plain how the true artist-seer actually dies? [p.105]

By showing Seymour's development as a poet, Buddy learns that publishing is not necessarily the culminating achievement of the artist. The function of the true poet is, as Seymour says, "not to write what he must write but, rather, to write about what he would write if his life depended on his taking responsibility for writing what he must" [pp.125-126]. In other words, if his writing is true to himself, if he is truly writing after his own heart, then he has become the accomplished writer, a master of his art, whether he actually publishes or not. To write honestly, however, is a life-long discipline which takes the utmost concentration of the artist upon his subject. Buddy recalls when he once urged Seymour, who was then twenty-two years old, to publish a large collection of poems which were modelled after oriental verse [p.124]. Seymour, however, refused to publish, because they were not properly finished, nor could he ever be sure that they would be finished. Seymour felt that the poems were no doubt good imitations of oriental poetry, but they lacked authenticity. Seymour's very being was not totally engaged in his subject matter. He, as the writer, was somehow separate and apart from his poetry:

> They were too un-Western, too lotusy. [Seymour] said he felt that they were faintly affronting. He hadn't quite made up his mind where the affronting came in, but he felt at times that the poems read as though they'd been written by an ingrate, of sorts, someone who was turning his back--in effect, at least--on his own environment and the people in

> it who were close to him. He said he ate his food out of our big refrigerators, drove our eight-cylinder American cars, unhesitatingly used our medicines when he was sick, and relied on the U.S. Army to protect his parents and sisters from Hitler's Germany, and nothing, not one single thing in all his poems, reflected these realities. Something was terribly wrong. [pp.124-125]

The "environment" that Seymour feels he has betrayed refers specifically to his vaudevillian ancestry [pp.144-149]. Vaudeville symbolizes the importance of acting and being simultaneously, of putting one's heart into everything one does. Seymour, however, as a descendent from this heritage, feels that he has failed to write poetry from his heart. Seymour recognizes that the true poet must be entirely egoless, and must not interrupt his creative process [his acting] with the conscious thought of what he is doing. To illustrate the point, a juggler does not think consciously of what he is doing. The moment he does, the objects he is juggling fly away from him. By participating fully in the movement, the rhythm and flow of the objects, the juggler is in control. He does not distinguish between himself and the objects, nor between himself and what he is doing. He does not interrupt the movement with conscious thought. He becomes egoless, and could be described as having reached that "state of unconsciousness" in which he becomes "one with the perfecting of his technical skill". Seymour's laterpoetry, however, is more impressive to Buddy because it reflects this idea of oneness between writer and subject that was lacking in the early

poetry. He participates, like the juggler, in the movement, rhythm and flow of his poetry. Buddy describes Seymour's later poetry as

> ...highly literate vaudeville--a traditional first act, a man balancing words, emotions, a golden cornet on his chin, instead of the usual evening cane, chromium table, and champagne glass filled with water. [p.148]

Poetry has become for Seymour a means of acting: of keeping the moment in motion by becoming one with his subject, by allowing the material to choose him, and not he it [p.121].

Buddy calls Seymour's later poetry a "double haiku", which is a "six-line verse" of "thirty-four syllables, or twice the number of the classical haiku" [p.127]. What especially strikes Buddy is the honesty of expression in Seymour's poems: "nothing in any of the hundred and eighty-four poems . . . is much like anything except Seymour himself" [p.127]. Buddy gives two samples of his brother's poetry. The first poem he describes is about a young married woman and mother. She returns home from seeing her lover and finds a balloon on her bed [pp.128-129]. The second poem is about a young suburban widower in pajamas and robe who sits on his front lawn to look at the moon. A bored white cat bites his left hand [p.129]. Buddy's point is not to attempt to explain or analyze the poems, nor to analyze Seymour himself through his poems, a procedure which Buddy considers useless and "mere grist to psychologists' mills" [p.133]. Instead, Buddy's intent is to demonstrate "the queer personal force that has gone into [them]" [p.131]. The queer personal

force alludes to Seymour's intensity of concentration upon his subject matter. He has become totally egoless by allowing the subject, the poem itself, to take him over completely. Buddy says that a "first-class poet might work up a fine elegy" [p.133] on the theme of the second poem. This type of poet would, presumably, analyze his motives for writing about a widower in the first place. The poet would make a conscious attempt to make the poem relate to him personally. Seymour, however, does not analyze. He literally lets himself go and does not succumb to the temptation of interfering with his creative process by thinking about what he says. The poem simply appears without question from the poet, and without the poet forcing himself upon the subject. Buddy says

> ...that the more personal Seymour's poems appear to be, or are, the less revealing the content is of any known details of his actual daily life in this Western world. [p.133]

The more Seymour participates in his subject, and ceases to distinguish between himself and his writing, the more "honest", and the more personal his subject-material becomes to him.

The last poem that Seymour, significantly, writes directly before his suicide, "briefly tells of a little girl on an airplane who has a doll in the seat with her and turns its head around to look at the poet" [p.134]. This poem, in particular, marks a moment of illumination and detachment from ego for Seymour. Even a doll, to Seymour, is as sacred a subject for poetry as any other element of life. He sees that the doll's head is a fitting subject for poetry because

he ceases to place things in order of importance. All aspects or all objects of life have equal importance in revealing the intensity and the miracle of life. Seymour recognizes that God, or the Tao, or however an individual conceives of the great power that flows through everything, dwells and shines even in the humblest of objects. The poem marks the state of pure consciousness that Seymour has attained as a poet. Seymour's illumination can be compared to R.H. Blyth's concept of the poet as formulated in terms of Zen Buddhism:

> The poetical and the religious are identical states of mind, in which every thing is seen to have its real value, that is, an absolute value, which cannot be compared to that of any other thing. To the religious, all things are poetical --eating, drinking, sleeping, going to the lavatory -- not one more than another. To the poetical, all things are religious, every blade of grass, every stick and stone, the butterfly and the intestinal worms. The surgeon and the doctor achieve this condition in their own sphere. To them no part of the body is clean, no part is dirty, all have equal interest. To the musician there is this same universality of outlook; the second violin is just as important as the first, the drum and the piccolo no whit inferior to any other instrument.[10]

This Zen consciousness that Seymour possesses is not meant to exclude Seymour from being a vibrant participant in the Western world. He is, in fact, one of the few "nonexpendable poets" [p.135] the Western world has. Because western consciousness places so much importance on the value of analytical thinking, which contrasts with Seymour's endeavour to grasp

the "suchness", or the absolute value and wholeness, of an object, Buddy suspects that Seymour's verses will not be recognized for a long time:

> It's my guess, my perhaps flagrantly over-considered guess, that the first few waves of reviewers will obliquely condemn his verses by calling them Interesting or Very Interesting, with a tacit or just plain badly articulated declaration, still more damning, that they are rather small, sub-acoustical things that have failed to arrive on the contemporary Western scene with their own built-in transatlantic podium, complete with lectern, drinking glass, and pitcher of iced sea water. Yet a real artist, I've noticed, will survive anything. (Even praise, I happily suspect). [p.135]

Buddy gives humorous examples of three types of reader who place importance on analytical thinking as a means of attaining wisdom and knowledge. Such a procedure proves to be hazardous and fruitless for the understanding of Seymour's poetry. The first type of reader is so eager to learn about a particular poem that he rushes to secondary sources for quick answers. He robs himself of the endeavour to develop his own insights into what the artist reveals by his art: "if he or she can't see Shelley plain, [they] will make do with seeking out manufacturers of inferior but estimable products" [p.137]. The second type of reader suffers from what Buddy calls "academicitis" [p.137]. Such readers are, in Buddy's opinion, pseudo-intellectuals who have grand illusions of becoming famous critics [pp.137-138]. The third type of reader indulges more in the life-histories of poets,

rather than their art. This "gusto" for "livid" or "partly livid" [p.140] detail concerning the private lives of poets, is the worst affliction the reader possesses. He fails, ironically, to concentrate on the poet's soul revealed through his poetry. A reader of this sort separates the poet's being from his work, which, in the case of Seymour and his poetry, should not be done. Buddy, as a biographer of Seymour, suffers severe consequences from this third type of reader, a type which includes everybody to some degree [p.140]. Buddy suspects that his readers will be more fascinated by the fact that Seymour committed suicide than by his actual works as a poet. Buddy attempts desperately to make the reader see how terrible and false to Seymour his "slip of the pen" really was. The reader is tempted, through Buddy's "poor" writing, to measure Seymour's greatness according to his degree of insanity or alienation, instead of measuring him by his endeavour to be and act what he was totally -- "A poet, for God's sake":

> It seems to me indisputably true that a good many people, the wide world over, of varying ages, cultures, natural endowments, respond with a special impetus, a zing, even, in some cases, to artists and poets who as well as having a reputation for producing great or fine art have something garishly Wrong with them as persons: a spectacular flaw in character or citizenship, a construably romantic affliction or addiction -- extreme self-centeredness, marital infidelity, stone-deafness, stone-blindness, a terrible thirst, a mortally bad cough, a soft spot for prostitutes, a partiality for grand-scale adultery or incest, a certified or uncertified weakness

> for opium or sodomy, and so on, God have mercy on the lonely bastards. If suicide isn't at the top of the list of compelling infirmities for creative men, the suicide poet or artist, one can't help noticing, has always been given a very considerable amount of avid attention, not seldom on sentimental grounds almost exclusively, as if he were . . . the floppy-eared runt of the litter. [pp.141-142]

Buddy briefly recapitulates the direction his writing has taken in "Seymour". He comes to realize that he has been struggling so violently to get hold of the right words to describe what he wants to do as a biographer of Seymour, and has been so intent upon directing the reader in how to read properly, that he literally becomes sick; he reports that he has been extremely ill with hepatitis, and that he has written nothing for nine weeks [p.150]. This illness represents a time of crisis, a breakdown for Buddy, but it proves to be of great value. In this incapacitated and, certainly, humbled state, Buddy is forced to confront himself and his ego with regard to his role as writer:

> I found that I'd lost not my afflatus but my wherewithal to continue to write about Seymour. He'd grown too much while I was away. It was hardly credible. From the manageable giant he had been before I got sick, he had shot up, in nine short weeks into the most familiar human being of my life, the one person who was always much, much too large to fit on ordinary typewriter paper--any typewriter paper of mine, anyway. [p.151]

Buddy's hepatitis attack can be directly compared to his acute awareness of his role as writer, an awareness which sheds still more light on his "slip of the pen". In the

first part of the novelette, Buddy was attempting to empty himself, purge himself of his fear of failure and of his inhibitions as a writer. The breaking point really comes, however, when Buddy rediscovers an old memo written by Seymour, part of which reads,

> 'One of the few things left in the world, aside from the world itself, that sadden me every day is an awareness that you get upset if Boo Boo or Walt tells you you're saying something that sounds like me. You sort of take it as an accusation of privacy, a little slam at your individuality. Is it so bad that we sometimes sound like each other? The membrane is so thin between us. Is it so important for us to keep in mind which is whose?' [pp.157-158]

Buddy realizes that he has been straining too much to be an "authentic" writer, like Seymour. Ironically, Buddy's authenticity was prevented by his fear of sounding like Seymour, of copying his poetic technique and language. This fear, this inability to let go of himself, consequently, prevented him from writing honestly about Seymour. Buddy was afraid to be consumed by his character, or his subject, because he thought it meant having to give up what made him a unique writer. Buddy, in effect, has failed to grasp the real significance of being a writer. Writing is not merely measured by how different the artist can sound from somebody else, but by how much of his own heart, how much of his very being has gone into the act of creating. Seymour points out that to die like a "celebrity" [p.160], to base the value of writing upon the illusion of being famous and successful, is

not important [p.160]. Buddy is under a great delusion if he pursues his role as writer in this way:

> 'Since writing is your religion, do you know what you will be asked when you die? But let me tell you first what you won't be asked. You won't be asked if you were working on a wonderful, moving piece of writing when you died. You won't be asked if it was long or short, sad or funny, published or unpublished. You won't be asked if you were in good or bad form while you were working on it. You won't even be asked if it was the one piece of writing you should have been working on if you had known your time would be up when it was finished.' [p.160]

The effort that the writer puts into his writing is alone significant. The artist's business is not to seek results. The only questions relevant to the true artist, according to Seymour, are, " 'Were most of your stars out? Were you busy writing your heart out?' " [p.160].

The physical description of Seymour that Buddy undertakes is his attempt to write with all his "stars" out. It is written

> ...by somebody who isn't in an all-fired hurry to get [Seymour] off his chest-- in a properly shameless word, myself. [p.162]

Buddy is no longer hastening towards a final product. He is acting his role as writer, and is no longer interested in simply being a "writer of rattling good stories" [p.155]. Instead he allows himself to be consumed by his character. He allows the material to choose him, and not he it:

> If I push for Selectiveness with a description, I'll quit cold again before I start. I can't sort out, can't clerk with this man. I can hope that some things will be bound to get done here with passing sensibility, but let me not screen every damned sentence, for once in my life, or I'm through again. [p.162]

Buddy admits that he always wants to publish [p.164], but he is more interested in the way he wishes to submit his material to the magazine. By concentrating solely on the writing, by perfecting his method and style, he hopes that his description will be so real, so after his own heart, that it will literally carry a life of its own, as Seymour's poetry does, and send itself out to the publisher:

> It has more to do with the way I want to submit it to the magazine. In fact, it has everything to do with that . . . I want it to get down there without my using either stamps or a Manilla 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. [p.164]

Buddy becomes increasingly aware of himself as a writer when he finally begins his physical description of Seymour. He discusses Seymour's smile, his ears, eyes, and nose, and remarks that he is an "Attractively Ugly Man" [p.179]. This description, however, falls short of Buddy's ideal image. He has difficulty capturing his brother's face in words. Buddy, therefore, reminds himself to be patient and to grow slowly into his character. Instead of continuing with the description, he stops himself and humbly admits his present shortcomings as a writer:

> Perhaps I feel less concerned than I ought to feel about the possibility of going overboard on this subject of his face, his physical face. I'll concede, readily, a certain absence of total perfection in my methods. Perhaps I'm overdoing this whole description. For one thing, I see that I've discussed almost every feature of his face and haven't so much as touched on the life of it yet. That thought in itself--I hadn't expected it--is a staggering depressant. [p.181]

Buddy does not continue the description of Seymour's face for fear that it will mature into a lie, "An artistic lie, maybe, and sometimes, even, a delicious lie, but a lie" [p.182]. He does not wish to give an inaccurate or false representation. Instead, Buddy moves on to describe Seymour's hands [p.182], his skin [p.184], his clothes [pp.187-188], even his stairs-bounding [p.189].

Buddy's most difficult task is to describe Seymour as the Athlete. This vignette, however, proves to be the most valuable exercise to Buddy as a writer, because it represents his detachment from ego. At first, Buddy attempts to figure out a way to make his description follow consecutively from his previous discussion of Seymour's physical appearance. He compares his awkward predicament as a writer, in this particular instance, to a small, but crucial incident when Seymour and he were children in Central Park one afternoon playing baseball. Curtis Caulfield, a young boy, threw the ball clumsily, as if he had "two left hands" [p.193], and Buddy began to laugh at him. Seymour, however, gave Buddy a look of chastisement "at the sound of his critical horse-laugh,

stallion-laugh" [p.194] . Buddy suddenly realizes that, as a writer, he is no different from the boy with the "two left hands". Buddy is also clumsy. More significantly, however, Buddy learns that this awkwardness does not mean that he is a poor writer. Instead, it means that the material, or the subject matter, has chosen him, and not he it. Rather than attempt, for instance, to fit in his description at some other moment by means of a clever technical device, he lets that particular moment when Seymour appears before him as the athlete, overtake him completely. Buddy continues without further restraint to discuss Seymour's formlessness at games. This very formlessness reflects the way in which Buddy now writes, and foreshadows Buddy's final illumination of what Seymour taught, "Aiming but no aiming". First, Buddy says,

> Only one of Seymour's crimes, when he excelled at games, was Formlessness, but it was a major one. [p.198]

This "Formlessness" is, nevertheless, an effective way of controlling the game. Buddy attempts to depict the effectiveness and importance of formlessness, when he discusses Seymour's marble shooting:

> ...When [Seymour] was coaching me, from the curbstone across the street, to quit aiming my marble at Ira Yankauer's -- and he was ten, please remember -- I believe he was instinctively getting at something very close in spirit to the sort of instructions a master archer in Japan will give when he forbids a willful new student to aim his arrows at the target; that is, when the archery master permits, as it were, Aiming but no aiming. [p.207]

Archery, for instance, is a means of becoming egoless. An individual who masters archery is he who is able to move out of himself, and purge from himself the illusion of winning or losing, hitting or not hitting the target. D.T. Suzuki explains the consequences of insisting upon consciously aiming at the target:

> Zen is the 'everyday mind', as was proclaimed by Baso (Ma-tsu, died 788); this 'everyday mind' is no more than 'sleeping when tired, eating when hungry.' As soon as we reflect, deliberate, and conceptualize, the original unconsciousness is lost and a thought interferes. We no longer eat while eating, we no longer sleep while sleeping. The arrow is off the string but does not fly straight to the target, nor does the target stand where it is. Calculation which is miscalculation sets in. The whole business of archery goes the wrong way. The archer's confused mind betrays itself in every direction and every field of activity.[12]

The emphasis in archery, therefore, is placed upon becoming one and inseparable from the act itself. The illusion of winning or losing no longer exists, because the individual gives himself up entirely to the way he acts, or, to the moment in which he acts. The target ceases to be the opposing object, because the ego, which alone perceives opposition, ceases to exist. Seymour's marble shooting takes on this same significance. Emphasis is not placed upon winning or upon hitting the opponent's marble, which is the end result, the illusory goal, but upon the way the individual plays:

> ...after Seymour himself 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. And it's also a fact that someone almost invariably had to pick up the marble he'd won and hand it to him. [p.209]

Marble shooting, to Seymour, is a tool by which the individual practices complete concentration upon what he is doing. It is a way of fusing his being with his acting, and ultimately with the universe itself. This state of unconsciousness is illustrated brilliantly by D.T. Suzuki:

> Man is a thinking reed but his great works are done when he is not calculating and thinking. 'Childlikeness' has to be restored with long years of training in the art of self-forgetfulness. When this is attained, man thinks yet he does not think. He thinks like the showers coming down from the sky; he thinks like the waves rolling on the ocean; he thinks like the stars illuminating the mighty heavens; he thinks like the green foliage shooting forth in the relaxing spring breeze. Indeed, he is the showers, the ocean, the stars, the foliage.
>
> When a man reaches this stage of 'spiritual' development, he is a Zen artist of life. He does not need, like the painter, a canvas, brushes, and paints; nor does he require, like the archer, the bow and arrow and target, and other paraphernalia. He has his limbs, body, head, and other parts. His Zen-life expresses itself by means of all these 'tools' which are important to its manifestation. His hands and feet are the brushes and the whole universe is the canvas on which he depicts his life for seventy, eighty, or even ninety years.[13]

Buddy now recalls another important incident involving a Davega bicycle, which exemplifies this same idea of "Aiming but no aiming", and which illuminates Buddy even more as to his role as writer. One afternoon, in Central Park, Buddy's brother, Waker, gave away a new bicycle to a small boy who

simply asked for it. Waker's parents recognized that his action was "very nice" and "generous" [p.206], but they thought that a "nice, long ride" [p.206] on the bicycle would have sufficed. Waker, however, interjects:

> The boy didn't want a nice, long ride, he wanted the bicycle. He'd never had one, the boy; he'd always wanted one. [p.206]

Despite the parents' claim, Buddy stresses the fact that Waker's action was right because it was spontaneous and was done without thought of consequence, without thinking. Waker was, in a sense, egoless when he gave away the bicycle. He did not think of the bicycle as his possession only. Buddy suddenly realizes that Seymour is his Davega bicycle to give away; Seymour is not merely Buddy's brother, but everybody's brother. The Goldsteins rightly explain the Davega bicycle incident as providing

> Buddy with an awareness of the importance of acting without acting, of writing without the self-consciousness of writing, without the ego-strident consciousness of the writer who hurls himself between the concentrated moment of creation and his own self-contained identity.[14]

Buddy's last " 'physical' notation" [p.209] is crucial to his overall theme. The anecdote recalls Buddy's illusion that he was the "Fastest Boy Runner in the World" [p.209]. He is pursued and overtaken by Seymour, an event which makes Buddy the "Second-Fastest Boy Runner in the World" [p.211]. This anecdote is a metaphor which illustrates that Buddy is finally the writer who is pursued by his art. He for once is not pursuing it. Because the creative process is infinite,

Seymour will always continue to grow beyond Buddy. If he is the Second-Fastest Boy Runner, however, he is not far behind Seymour. Buddy is in the process of becoming one and inseparable from his brother, from his character. Seymour ceases to be Buddy's opposing target. Buddy is beginning to master Seymour, the same way a student of Zen archery begins to master his art, with emphasis only upon the way he pursues his role as writer, and not upon whether he actually succeeds or fails.

By getting into a state of mind in which the ego ceases to be important, the heart of Buddy, his pure being, is able to fuse completely with the pure act of writing. In this state, achievement or failure as a writer no longer make sense. What becomes real and absolute is the act itself, the creative process of the writer, and nothing else. Buddy now sees that his role as teacher is as significant as his role as writer. All his actions as a human being, in fact, are vital, because he now experiences an intensity in life he has never really known before:

> ...but I can't be my brother's brother for nothing, and I know--not always, but I know--there is no 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. [pp.212-213]

Buddy, who is now more conscious of the good, and the real, sees that everybody shines. He is detached enough from his

own ego, and from other people's egos, to see the superlative qualities, the absolute value, the true heart of every person, even, presumably, Muriel and Mrs. Fedder:

> They may shine with the misinformation of the ages, but they shine. This thought manages to stun me: There's no place I'd really rather go right now than into Room 307. Seymour once said that all we do our whole lives is to go from one little piece of Holy Ground to the next. Is he never wrong? [p.213]

The fact that Buddy is able to put away his "unfinished" description of Seymour for now, and go to class wholeheartedly [p.212], and the fact that he is able to publish "Seymour" as an introduction only, go to exemplify Buddy's crucial emphasis upon acting. Buddy has managed to capture the heart of Seymour, his philosophy, and his way of life, by following Seymour's path in his own role as writer. Buddy becomes Seymour, in a sense, by ceasing to distinguish between himself and his character, by taking Seymour's struggle to become the true artist-seer upon himself.

As we have seen, Seymour's suicide is no longer the main focus of Buddy's attention. Instead he takes great pains to centre chiefly upon his brother's life, which he comes to see as essentially good and meaningful.[15] Nevertheless, in the light of Seymour's complicated character in "Seymour", our initial response to the suicide must alter. As Buddy now understands him, Seymour was, without doubt, strong in mind and wise. Buddy implies that the suicide resulted from Seymour's noble desire to get rid of his ego. In other

words, his act of death is viewed, implicitly by Buddy, as his means of becoming totally selfless, a view which was won only through Buddy's intense concentration to become emotionally detached from his brother.

This theme of death and selflessness is expanded and complicated further in "Hapworth 16, 1924" [1965] by Seymour himself. In the light of these complications, which I will presently show, conclusions to this controversial issue of Seymour's suicide can be drawn with more precision.

CONCLUSION

"HAPWORTH 16, 1924"

In summation, immense changes have taken place in the creation of Seymour's character, or more properly speaking, in Buddy's approach, as a writer, to the task of drawing an accurate portrait of Seymour. In the light of "Seymour: An Introduction", we learn that Seymour does not commit suicide simply as an act of escape from the dim-witted world, as he appears to do in "Bananafish". Buddy also erases the idea that Seymour has some spectacular character flaw that makes attainment of enlightenment impossible, as "Carpenters" seems to suggest. Instead, Seymour in "Seymour: An Introduction" is depicted as the enlightened man, a conception which Buddy illustrates in his own attempt to follow Seymour's path as the artist. Upon recognizing Seymour's teachings that all men are artists, whose function it is to shape their souls according to the amount of spiritual light they see, Buddy becomes more tolerant of other individuals. Like Seymour, Buddy comes to see that all men shine to some degree in their own capacity, even the "terrible Miss Zabel", even presumably, Muriel and Mrs. Fedder, whom he detested in the earlier stories, "Bananafish" and "Carpenters". Like Seymour, Buddy in "Seymour: An Introduction" takes responsibility for those individuals who are blinded by their own insidious egos. As a teacher, Buddy

sees that he can guide such individuals toward this liberation of enlightenment that he has finally allowed himself to experience. Buddy can bring out the best in a human being because he now recognizes that a "best" exists within all human hearts. By the end of "Seymour", he is less condescending and critical towards people he might otherwise consider "stupid", because he now realizes that somewhere deep within them, they are capable of shining as brilliantly as any saint.

In my estimation, "Seymour: An Introduction" is the most important novelette about Seymour because it clearly emphasizes the significance of his role as artist-seer. Salinger has managed to create a character whose personality, and attitudes towards life, reach universal dimensions.

One other novelette has since appeared concerning Seymour, entitled "Hapworth 16, 1924" [1965].[1] This work reveals the difficulty and the hard work Seymour actually had to confront in his lifetime in order to become the person of whom Buddy speaks in "Seymour: An Introduction". Seymour is not merely born a near saint. His elevated station is acquired through sheer hard work and concentration. In "Hapworth", Seymour is already the poet, prophet, and brilliant scholar, even though he is a mere boy of seven, but he is also critical, bitter and even sneering towards those he considers inferior to himself, traits omitted from Buddy's description in "Seymour". In "Hapworth 16, 1924", Seymour is significantly a child who has not yet learned how to purge

himself of his prejudices towards others, his over-emotional tendencies, and his pride of intellect. By the time he reaches the later stages of life depicted in "Seymour", we can presume that these tendencies have been curbed. In "Seymour", he is depicted as having reached a stage of development in which he can look beyond people's shallowness and see their essential value as human beings. In "Hapworth", we see the beginning of this development in his search for truth, which sheds considerable light on the very human side of his being, and which makes his extraordinary personality in "Seymour" all the more credible.

The forty-six year old Buddy informs the reader that he is now in possession of a letter of Seymour which he has never seen. The purpose of revealing this letter is to shed

> ...some light on the short, reticulate life and times of my late, eldest brother, Seymour Glass, who died, committed suicide, opted to discontinue living, back in 1948, when he was thirty-one.[2]

The letter gives a detailed description of the camp life which Buddy and Seymour share when they are children.

Seymour begins by discussing his attempt to write a letter based on "superb or suitable construction of sentences" [p.32]. Even though Seymour is only seven years old, writing is already used as his tool in the attainment of enlightenment. His construction of sentences is important not only for the purpose of writing correctly, but for the purpose of using language to the fullest so that it accurately reflects what he is feeling and thinking. Like Buddy in "Seymour: An

Introduction", Seymour does not wish to write for the sake of being sensational and dramatic. Instead, he is attempting to write his letter from the heart. The fact that Seymour is so conscious of himself as a writer at seven years of age is indeed remarkable. More importantly, however, Seymour sees himself as a mere child who has a great deal of work to accomplish. He is concerned about the fact that he is too affected by the world, and too critical of it. As a true poet, he knows that he must strive to curb his emotional, reactionary responses to people, and struggle to see their real value, their inner being:

> Also frankly, while my penmanship will improve a little as I grow older, looking less and less like the expression of a demented person, it is mostly beyond redemption. My personal instability and too much emotion will ever be plainly marked in every stroke of the pen, quite unfortunately. [p.33]

Despite the fact that he is highly endowed with intellect and even the power to prophesy, as I will presently show, he says that ninety-eight percent of his life has nothing to do with the "dubious pursuit of knowledge" [p.33]. His task is to seek an enlightenment beyond such superficial, self-directed gifts. Seymour's intellect, however, is one faculty he must learn to control, and subordinate to his pursuit of truth. Seymour speaks of his intellect as a distraction that leads him away from his goal. His conflict lies between his disgusted awareness of the limited horizons of many of the human beings around him, and his struggle to come to terms with

their narrow-mindedness and stupidity. Seymour has not yet reached that state of unconsciousness in which everybody "shines", as in "Seymour: An Introduction":

> The majority of young campers here, you will be glad to know, could not possibly be nicer or more heartrending from day to day, particularly when they are not thriving with suspicious bliss in cliques that insure popularity or dubious prestige. Few boys, thank God with a bursting heart, that we have run into here are not the very salt of the earth when you can exchange a little conversation with them away from their damn intimates. Unfortunately, here as elsewhere on this touching planet, imitation is the watchword and prestige the highest ambition. It is not my business to worry about the general situation, but I am hardly made of steel. Few of these magnificent, healthy, sometimes remarkably handsome boys will mature. The majority, I give you my heartbreaking opinion, will merely senesce. Is that a picture to tolerate in one's heart? On the contrary, it is a picture to rip the heart to pieces. The counsellors themselves are counsellors in name only. Most of them appear slated to go through their entire lives, from birth to dusty death, with picayune, stunted attitudes toward everything in the universe and beyond. This is a cruel and harsh statement, to be sure. It fails to be harsh enough! You think I am a kind fellow at heart, is that not so? God reward me with hailstones and rocks, I am not! No single day passes that I do not listen to the heartless indifferences and stupidities from the counsellors' 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! [pp.33-34]

Seymour, at this stage, can only see people's spiritual failure. He feels that their shallowness betrays their deeper natures. Seymour, however, does not yet see the true "spiritual mechanism" within individuals, as he does in

"Carpenters" and "Seymour: An Introduction". Like the camp counsellors, for instance, Muriel and Mrs. Fedder could easily be described as going through "their entire lives, from birth to dusty death, with picayune, stunted attitudes toward everything in the universe and beyond". Seymour, however, loves these women deeply, because, despite a limited intellect, they try as best they can to fulfill themselves. In "Hapworth", Seymour [the child] can barely tolerate such people, and wishes he could bash a "few culprits over the head". He does not yet have compassion for others, that he obviously possesses in "Carpenters" and "Seymour".

Despite his lack of compassion, he struggles, nevertheless, to see what real love is. In his condemnation of "charming lusts of the body" [p.36], he does not mean to suggest that he has sexual "hang-ups", or perversions he cannot control, but suggests instead that he already sees, at the tender age of seven, that people often confuse real love with self-love and vanity. Seymour implies that he objects to individuals who use sex, not as a tool in the attainment of a higher understanding of life[3], but as a means of self-gratification and indulgence. He implies that Mrs. Happy, one of the camp counsellors, is corrupted by "carnality" [p.36]. She thinks that she is a sensitive, generous, loving person [p.37], but in reality, Seymour points out that she has no idea of what it really means to give love. She is not even aware of the simple inner needs of a child who craves affection and reassurance, as this passage makes explicit:

> One burns with impatience toward her delusions when one is not secretly coveting her beauty! She does not even know enough on occasion to pick up a little child like your son Buddy, far from his mother and other loved ones, and give him a decent kiss that will resound through the surrounding forest! She so easily has no human idea of the terrible need for ordinary kissing in this wide, ungenerous world! A flashing, charming smile is quite insufficient. [p.38]

Seymour then exposes her faulty ideas by criticizing her ridiculous romantic conceptions of herself as a lover. In reality, her enchantment is merely self-indulgence, which has nothing to do with her confused desire to seek out real love:

> If I am powerless to be of slight use to her as conversationalist before the summer is over, this lovely beauty is in future danger of immorality; a quite subtle downfall and dégringolade from mere flirtation and girlish conversation is foreseeable. With her unaffection and great depths of ungenerosity, she is growing prepared to make delirious, sensual love to an attractive stranger, being too proud and hemmed in by self-love to share her countless charms with a real intimate. [p.38]

This sort of "carnality" or "sensuality", Seymour talks about, is not just limited to sex, but involves all that an individual does, whose acting is performed in this world merely for purposes of self-gratification. When Seymour says, contemplating Mrs. Happy's delusions,

> Unfortunately, my position is utterly false at moments of conversational crisis, being torn between good, sensible, merciless advice and corrupting desire to have her open the door in the raw. [p.38],

he is perhaps speaking metaphorically. He is tempted, for example, to seek out Mrs. Happy, or mere happiness, which is

ephemeral, and short-lived. He is tempted not to search beyond the immediate gratification of the ego, beyond happiness, to pursue Truth where peace and joy, as difficult as they are to obtain within the self, reign supreme over any worldly, superficial happiness.

Self-control, to which Seymour alludes in his discussion of his preoccupation with sex, is later clarified as the individual's ability to control the ego, and avoid distraction by its wants and demands. Seymour relates another incident at camp which disgusts him, but which he freely confesses to expose further his inability to control his emotions and his pride. The immense intellectual abilities of both Seymour and Buddy have been a source of gossip among the counsellors. Mr. Whitney Pittman, the head counsellor, tries to make a fool out of Buddy, which causes Seymour to say with irony and bitterness,

> In all fairness and fascination, he has a remarkable gift for increasing his own prestige at some child's expense; an intelligent scavenger and conversational parasite. He is the same person, a fellow twenty-six years of age, no spring chicken to be sure, who said to Buddy in the midst of a throng of strangers: 'I thought you were supposed to be such a witty kid'. [pp.42-44]

Seymour cannot tolerate such stupidity and insensitivity in a grown man, such as Pittman, towards a child who, despite his intellectual prowess, is still only five years old. Seymour tells Pittman,

> ...that I would kill him or myself, possibly before nightfall, if he spoke to this chap again in that manner, or any other five-year-

> old chap, in my presence. I believe I could have curbed this criminal urge at the crucial moment, but one must painfully remember that a vein of instability runs through me quite like some turbulent river; this cannot be overlooked; I have left this troublesome instability uncorrected in my previous two appearances, to my folly and disgust; it will not be corrected by friendly, cheerful prayer. It can only be corrected by dogged effort on my part, thank God. [p.44]

This instability, or his difficulty in leaving "a wide margin for human ill-will, fear, jealousy, and gnawing dislike of the uncommonplace" [p.44], is something he will attempt to confront and work out throughout the rest of his life. He reveals his hopes for the future, hopes which Buddy will also attempt to fulfill in "Seymour: An Introduction":

> I am hoping, however, that as we continue to improve and refine our characters by leaps and bounds, striving each day to reduce general snottiness, surface conceits, and too damn much emotion, coupled with several other qualities quite rotten to the core, we will antagonize and inspire less murder, on sight or repute alone, in the hearts of fellow human beings. [p.56]

Seymour does not merely separate the follies of the world from himself. Instead he takes the world upon his own shoulders in an effort to understand and love it. His function as a human being is not a matter of attempting to change the world, or to be some sort of saviour, but a matter of attempting to change and perfect himself by taking responsibility for others. In this task of responsibility, he puts tremendous effort into bringing the best out in himself as a human being, an effort which is also intended to bring out the best in all

other individuals with whom he comes into contact. In his short life, he hopes to bring to the attention of others the importance of love and devotion:

> Piled on top of all this good fortune, what else does one find? A capacity to make many wonderful friends in small numbers whom we will love passionately and guard from uninstructive harm until our lives are finished and who, in turn, will love us, too, and never let us down without very great regret, which is a lot better, more guerdoning, more humorous than being let down without any regret at all, be assured. [p.58]

Seymour, however, does not regard himself as a saint or as an extraordinary person made of superhuman stuff. He too is not without faults. He realizes that he is, at times, proud and overbearing:

> ...among many, onerous things, it is all too easy for a boy of my dubious age and experience to fall easy prey to fustian, poor taste, and unwanted spurts of showing off. As God is my judge, I am working on it, but it is a taxing struggle without a magnificent teacher I can turn to with absolute abandon and trust. [p.62]

In this passage, he suggests that his intellect and ability to prophesy is as much his handicap if he uses his powers for his own ends, as it can be his aid in the attainment of enlightenment. In this respect, he has as much work to do on earth as anybody else. He seems to welcome such work, however. When he considers his own imperfection [pride], he can feel assured that, despite his great powers of intellect, he is as human as others, and must struggle just as intensely in order to make his life purposeful. He realizes that he

has a responsibility toward life, simply because he is human. He discusses all that he is capable of accomplishing on earth, not as some sort of saint, or extraordinary individual, but simply by being as human as he can:

> When the light . . . is insuperably strong, I go to sleep in absolute assurance that we, yourson Buddy and I, are every bit as decent, foolish, and human as every single boy or counsellor in this camp, quite tenderly and humorously equipped with the same likable, popular, heartbreaking blindnesses. 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! With just a little steadfast devotion to uncommon beauty and passing rectitudes of the heart, combined with our dead certainty that we are as normal and human as anybody else, and knowing it is not just a question of sticking out our tongues, like other boys, during the first, beautiful snowfall of the year, who can prevent us from doing a little good in this appearance? Who, indeed, I say, provided we draw on all our resources and move as silently as possible? [pp. 58-60]

He informs his parents that he "personally will live at least as long as a well-preserved telephone pole, a generous matter of thirty (30) years or more" [p. 60]. If this prophecy tends to disturb Seymour's parents, they have at least two sources of consolation. First of all, Buddy will live to a much older age [p. 60]. Secondly, and most importantly, Seymour will not let the fact of his death at a young age distract him from his present function as a human being: to do as much good work as he can with his whole heart engaged in it. He can at least promise that both Buddy and he will "depart in good conscience and humour for a change, which [they] have

never entirely done in the past" [p.60], that is, in previous appearances or incarnations. Seymour prepares himself to live a life which reflects the truth and beauty that flow through all things, and which does not centre simply on accumulating material possessions. He does not need to possess anything, because he is all things, and all things in turn are him. He recognizes that man's worthwhile endeavour on earth does not include the illusory concept of what he can gain for himself. Emphasis once again is placed upon a man's action, or how much of himself he is willing to give freely unto others. This condition of acting is difficult for a man, however, because the gifts he receives in turn for his goodness, are invisible--that is, spiritual. In Seymour's mind, many people do not know how to be spiritually naked before others, nor do they realize that this very nakedness is crucial in order to inspire harmony and trust in the world. Seymour suggests that because people constantly depend on what they can visibly see, hear, and gain for themselves, they, unknowingly, cut themselves off from that spiritual side of life that ensures the peace and harmony they desire:

> 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. Do you call that a superb criterion? I do not! It is very touching, without a shadow of a doubt, but it is far, far from superb. It is utter, blind reliance on heartrending, personal agencies. [p.72]

Seymour also implies that he feels sorry for such people:

> I am hopelessly touched to the quick at the bravery of every magnificent human being accepting this charming, flimsy information every heartrending moment of his life! My God, human beings are brave creatures! Every last, touching coward on the face of the earth is unspeakably brave! Imagine accepting all these flimsy, personal agencies at charming, face value! [p.72]

He is touched by the absurdity of the lives of others. They constantly stray from their desired goal of peace, and of trying to establish a meaningful life. Seymour seems to imply that they have the potential to lead worthwhile lives, but are ignorant of how to use that potential to the fullest. Instead of acquiring truth that would inevitably give people solace, they end by accumulating facts, figures, or material possessions. Seymour calls this illusion by which many men are enslaved, "a vicious circle" [p.72], and wishes that just one person had the power to break from it [p.72]. Seymour will at least try to break from this circle with all his effort: "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" [p.72].

The second part of the novelette is Seymour's instructions to his family at home. Basically, he insists that all the members of his family work on being themselves wholeheartedly, and use their talents to the fullest of their ability in the making of themselves in the world [pp.78-85].

He then asks his family to send him a huge list of books [pp.86-111] with which he plans to instruct Buddy "in all areas of human interest" [p.102], in order to prepare him for the world. Seymour concludes his list by requesting the books of religious writers from China, a request he feels will meet with disapproval from his librarians, Mr. Fraser and Miss Overmann. They feel that he will disrupt his own chances of becoming a "splendid, American poet" [p.105] by paying too much attention to these writers:

> They are quite fearful, one and all, that my consuming admiration for God, straightforward and shapeless, will upset the delightful apple cart of my poetry; this is not stupid; there is always a slight, magnificent, utterly worthy risk that I will be a crashing failure from the word go, disappointing all my friends and loved ones, a very sober, rotten possibility that brings the usual fluid to my eyes as I bring the matter into the open. [p.105]

His librarians fear that Seymour will perhaps become removed from Western experience, by getting involved in some cult which will strip him of his originality and personality, his sincerity and spontaneity as a poet. Seymour regards what they have to say seriously. He does not want to write poetry for religion's sake, or for any purpose that would threaten to turn his poetry into somebody else's propaganda. Nor does he wish to receive "charming, personal commands from God" [p.105]. He wants to write for the purpose of writing alone, by wholly engaging himself in the pure act of creating. Seymour implies that if he were to receive "commands" from God, he would then be denied the privilege of living truly after

his own heart:

> I am an emotional youth, frankly mortal, with innumerable experiences under my belt of mortal favoritism; I cannot stand the sight of it; let God favour us all with charming, personal commands or none of us! If you have the stomach to read this letter, dear God, be assured that I am meaning what I say! Do not sprinkle any dubious sugar on my destiny! Do not favour me with charming, personal commands and magnificent short cuts! Do not ask me to join any élite organization of mortals that is not widely open to all and sundry! Recall quite fervently that I have felt equipped to love Your astonishing, noble Son, Jesus Christ, on the acceptable basis that you did not play favourites with Him or give Him carte blanche throughout his appearance! [pp.105-106]

Seymour says that just because he is extraordinarily gifted from birth does not mean that he should be granted any special favours from God. His strong emotional response to God betrays his youth, but more importantly, it emphasizes the importance of struggling and suffering which, in an individual life, ultimately, bring about enlightenment and finally peace.

In conclusion, "Hapworth 16, 1924" reveals Seymour's critical attitudes, and his brilliant intellect, which are as much a stumbling block for him, as they have been for Buddy in "Seymour", a story in which Buddy is obliged to make peace with his wit. Paradoxically, Seymour proves to be extraordinary because he is so human, because his purpose in living is to bring out his full potential as a human being. He has much of his own ego to purge from himself before he can experience the total weight of what it means to be human.

In "Hapworth", Seymour candidly reveals what he has to do and what he must confront. The letter, I think, serves as a clarification of what Buddy felt Seymour finally accomplished as the artist-seer in "Seymour: An Introduction".

In an earlier [1976] study of J.D. Salinger, J.A. Bishop concluded that Seymour's life was spent as

> ...an unhappy tension between the part of him which aspires to non-discrimination, and that which aspires to poetry--he is never capable of reconciling the two. He could not relinquish his search for God by concentrating solely on poetry, nor go beyond poetry by following the pure way of non-discrimination. The sexuality and malicious urges enumerated in "Hapworth 16, 1924" show that Seymour was haunted by personal problems and the ambivalence of his own desires. He must have realized that the complete liberation of enlightenment would be denied him in this existence; his powerful desires and overactive intellect would keep him bound to the wheel of Karma. He may have believed that suicide would simply accelerate his progress toward the next incarnation, and the death is most satisfactorily understood in the light of a god-lover's intense desire to reach his goal. In this sense the suicide would neither be sinful nor the ultimate expression of failure, but merely signify the ending of one appearance to begin another. However, Seymour himself noted that weaknesses may only be corrected by "dogged effort"; he knew that God permits nobody to take a short cut.[4]

I agree that the suicide signifies neither sinfulness nor an expression of failure. I do not think, however, that Seymour's suicide is meant to suggest his intense desire to reach his goal. Instead, I regard the suicide as an action of a man who has completed what he had to do in his present

appearance. "Hapworth" takes great pains to show the reader the incredible amount of work confronting Seymour. In this short work, the tension, of which Bishop speaks, between the part of Seymour "which aspires to non-discrimination, and that which aspires to poetry", is wholly evident. In "Seymour: An Introduction", however, Seymour's recent poetry exemplifies his detachment from ego. He is able to act freely: that is, to write with his entire being absorbed into, and inseparable from, his subject-matter. He recognizes his oneness with all objects. He has, therefore, reached a condition of mind and being, which Buddy attempts to reach in his effort to produce a written portrait of Seymour.

Seymour's progress as a poet can be shown concretely from the time he was seven years old up until his death. Seymour's letter in "Hapworth" is verbose, definitely experimental, and to a degree, shapeless. In "Seymour: An Introduction", Seymour's later poetry is described by Buddy as "bare" and "ungarnished".[5] He has managed to refine his poetry stylistically to the shape of a "double haiku"[6], a remarkable feat for a "non-stop talker"[7]. His last poem about the doll, written immediately before his suicide, can be viewed as a definite progress in refinement, since it is only a three-line haiku[8], rather than his usual six-line haiku. My point is basically to show that Seymour talks less as he grows older. The brevity of his poems perhaps illustrates his growing awareness of what Vivekenanda said, "see Christ, then you are a Christian; all else is talk"[9]. As

Seymour grows to be more accepting of people, he also becomes more quiet and peaceful within. I think that the brevity of the poems reflects this quietude. He sees "Christ", or sees the light of truth which dwells in all men, and makes them sacred. Perhaps Seymour's act of suicide is meant as a poetic gesture of consuming silence or peace.

No doubt exists that the subject of Seymour's suicide is disturbing to many readers, a subject that Salinger himself has not yet settled in his own mind. But in tracing the development of the works, there is great reason to suspect, as I have hoped to show, that the suicide is not meant to be a desperate act of a pathetic Seymour. Buddy Glass becomes less and less haunted by his brother's suicide. In "Seymour: An Introduction", Buddy implies that Seymour's suicide is somehow positively connected with his endeavour to attain enlightenment. Buddy focusses upon Seymour's good works in life, and chastises himself dearly for the way in which he represented Seymour's death in the early stories. Throughout "Seymour: An Introduction", Buddy implies that all of Seymour's acts were noble, even his act of death. Like Christ's death on the cross, perhaps Seymour's suicide is best understood as his total surrender of self to the purpose he set himself and seems to have completed in his lifetime. The suicide is best seen as Seymour's means of becoming selfless and egoless. Instead of viewing Seymour as someone bound to the wheel of Karma, as Bishop suggests, his life

epitomizes the struggle of men who are all capable of going beyond that wheel at some point, in some appearance, in their own individual capacity. Nevertheless, it does not make sense to speculate upon whether Seymour achieved complete enlightenment or not, because in reality the creative process of becoming never ends. The suicide itself reflects such a process. He does not die, for example, with the intent to destroy himself, but with the intent to move "from one little piece of Holy Ground to the next[10]. He re-incarnates himself through death to the next level of being, since he has finished his work in the world in the appearance of Seymour Glass.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

[1]Sally Bostwick, "Reality, Compassion, and Mysticism in the Works of J.D. Salinger", Midwest Review, V [1963], 36-37. The quote which she uses to support her arguement is from Ihab Hassan's essay, "The Rare Quixotic Gesture" in Salinger, ed. Henry Anatole Grunwald, p.162.

[2]Alfred Kazin, "Everybody's Favorite" in Salinger: A Critical and Personal Portrait, ed. Henry Anatole Grunwald [New York, 1962], pp.50-51.

[3]Ibid., p.51.

[4]In "Franny" [1955], Franny is the sister of Buddy and Seymour, who leaves school and plans to abandon her promising acting career because she thinks they are fraught with superficiality and phoniness. She plans to devote herself to the Jesus Prayer, which is a prayer of meditation, originally uttered by a Russian peasant. She thinks that by saying this prayer repeatedly to herself she will be magically endowed with a vision of truth and holiness. What she does not realize, and what Zooey, her brother, in "Zooey" [1955], finally brings to her attention is that fulfillment can only be won by her willingness to strive to love and participate as fully and sincerely as she can in the world, to take responsibility for others, and also for the way she acts in the world. Only then, can the Jesus Prayer be truly uttered and understood.

[5]Bernice and Sanford Goldstein, "Zen and Salinger", Modern Fiction Studies, XII [Aut., 1966], 315.

[6]John, 12:24.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

[1]In following the example of the majority of critics, I will, henceforth, refer to "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" simply as "Bananafish".

[2]James E. Bryan, "Salinger's Seymour's Suicide", College English, XXIV [1962], 228-229.

[3]Warren French, "The Desired Effect" in J.D. Salinger [Boston, 1976], pp.79-84.

[4]J.D. Salinger, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" in Nine Stories [New York, 1971], p.3. Please note that all subsequent references to this text only will be incorporated in the body of Chapter One.

[5]Gary Lane, "Seymour's Suicide Again: A New Reading of J.D. Salinger's 'A Perfect Day for Bananafish' ", Studies in Short Fiction, X [1973], 31-32.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

[1]In following the example of the majority of critics, I will, henceforth, refer to "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" simply as "Carpenters".

[2]Warren French, "The Desired Effect" in J.D. Salinger [Boston, 1976], pp.84-85.

[3]Warren French, "Recollection" in "Search for the Seer", Op. Cit., p.149.

[4]William Wiegand, "Seventy-eight Bananas" in Salinger: A Critical and Personal Portrait, ed. Henry Anatole Grunwald [New York, 1962], p.123.

[5]J.D. Salinger, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" in Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction [New York, 1971], p.5. Please note that all subsequent references to this text only will be incorporated in the body of Chapter Two.

[6]J.D. Salinger, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" in Nine Stories [New York, 1971], p.12.

[7]Aldous Huxley, "Notes on Zen" in Anthology of Zen, ed. William A. Briggs [New York, 1961], p.35.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

[1]Henry Anatole Grunwald, "The Invisible Man: A Biographical Collage" in Salinger, A Critical and Personal Portrait [New York, 1963], p.17.

[2]J.D. Salinger, "Seymour: An Introduction" in Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction [New York, 1971], pp.168-169.
Please note that all subsequent references to this text only will be incorporated in the body of Chapter Three. I will, henceforth, refer to the title simply as "Seymour".

[3]George Steiner, "The Salinger Industry" in Salinger, A Critical and Personal Portrait, Op. Cit., p.83.

[4]Ihab Hassan, "Almost the Voice of Silence: The Later Novelettes of J.D. Salinger", Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, IV, i [1963], 14.

[5]Bernice and Sanford Goldstein, " 'Seymour: An Introduction'--Writing as Discovery", Studies in Short Fiction, VII [1970], 250.

[6]Ibid., 250.

[7]D.T. Suzuki, "Introduction" in Eugen Herrigel's Zen in the Art of Archery [New York, 1964], p.10.

[8]Bernice and Sanford Goldstein, Op. Cit., 249.

[9]Arthur Schwartz, "For Seymour--With Love and Judgment" Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, IV, i [1963], 93.

[10]R.H. Blyth, "Religion is Poetry" in Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics [Tokyo, 1942], p.33.

[11]J.D. Salinger, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters", Op. Cit., p.60.

[12]D.T. Suzuki, Op Cit., p.11.

[13] Ibid., pp.11-12.

[14] Bernice and Sanford Goldstein, Op. Cit., 255.

[15] Seymour, of course, has always been Buddy's "hero", so to speak. It must be recalled, however, that Buddy was at times disconcerted by some of Seymour's actions. In "Carpenters", for example, Buddy is uncomfortable with Seymour's reasons for not attending his own wedding [p.29]. Buddy also has a difficult time at first in accepting Seymour's generous views of people, like Muriel or Mrs. Fedder [see p.72, and also p.76 where Buddy says, with regard to Seymour's diary, "I remember closing--actually, slamming it shut--after the word 'happy' ". Buddy reacts strangely to Seymour's statement which says that he suspects "people of plotting to make (him) happy". The implication is that Buddy can only see people wanting to destroy him, and take away his unique character by sending him to a psychiatrist. Buddy's reaction to Seymour's diary implies that he thinks Seymour is naive].

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

[1]I will, henceforth, refer to "Hapworth 16, 1924" simply as "Hapworth".

[2]J.D. Salinger, "Hapworth 16, 1924", The New Yorker, XLI [June 19, 1965], 32. Note that all subsequent references to this text only will be incorporated in the body of the Conclusion.

[3]Recall, for instance, what Seymour says in "Carpenters" concerning the role of marriage partners which he undertakes when he marries Muriel: to "Elevate, help, teach, strengthen each other, but above all, serve" [p.91]. In "Hapworth", however, his youth is betrayed when he implies that he finds many people's sexual motives base and intolerable. In "Seymour", he grows to have much more tolerance towards those individuals, whose marriage motives, such as Muriel's [p.72] are undeniably shallow, but views that he accepts, nevertheless.

[4]J.A. Bishop, Religious Dimensions in the Fiction of J.D. Salinger [M.A. thesis, McMaster Univ., Hamilton, 1976], pp.98-99.

[5]J.D. Salinger, "Seymour: An Introduction", p.129.

[6]Ibid., p.127.

[7]Ibid., p.109.

[8]Ibid., p.133.

[9]Ibid., p.109.

[10]Ibid., p.213.

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