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SEEING THROUGH THE GLASS:
PSYCHOANALYSIS AND J.D. SALINGER

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines J.D. Salinger's Glass family dynamics through the application of psychoanalysis. Salinger told stories of the Glass family through various short story installments, such as *Franny & Zooey*, *Nine Stories*, *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction* and other installments not found in collections. Through reviewing these works as well as various criticisms, it became evident that Seymour's influence was far more profound than originally anticipated.

J.D. Salinger created Seymour with the idea of an individual who possesses spiritual omnipotence. Seymour took it upon himself to educate his siblings at young ages in order to teach them about the world and what should be valued. The siblings did not escape unscathed; although blessed to have received such an innovative education, it ultimately also caused them the inability to assimilate into society. Seymour's influence continued on as well when he committed suicide. Since Seymour was already the causation of various issues that his siblings possessed, his suicide provided no relief from their struggles.

This thesis concludes by arguing that Seymour's influence was not only eternal, but also scarring. Seymour's death invoked suffering at a new level, thereby causing and at times enhancing post traumatic stress. It is obvious that Seymour was the most important Glass sibling, but could not be fully understood until his siblings were examined as well.

Through the examination of the seven Glass siblings, it became obvious that they did in fact suffer from post traumatic stress as seen through their inability to assimilate into society, repressing memories and ideas, and various attempts at escape, all brought on by Seymour.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

By today's societal standards, eccentricities are considered to be the norm. None other than J.D. Salinger's Glass family has defined and illustrated the importance of those eccentricities. Raised in a family of child prodigies, each child has faced his or her own issues with being unique, and the need to come to terms with being one in a series of seven. Each Glass child performed on a children's radio show entitled *It's a Wise Child* that embraced the precocious children of America and inadvertently created fame for a family of geniuses who went by the pseudonym Black. Through critical works it is evident that each Glass embodies a different gift and flaw that ultimately characterizes them. Through my investigation of each sibling separately in the order that they appear in Salinger's texts and also in conjunction with their eldest sibling Seymour, it is obvious

that the survival of the identities of the Glass children relies solely on Seymour in examining each Glass.

Salinger first created the oldest and most significant Glass sibling, Seymour, the most intellectually capable and vulnerable. Seymour is, in fact, the most gifted of the Glass children. He possesses an innate ability to see beyond the corrupt world and focus on the innocent beauty of life, such as the child-like appreciation of wax and olives (Salinger, "A Perfect Day For Bananafish" 10). This appreciation allows him to not only determine what is important in life, but also his intelligence gives him the ability to convey these ideas to his siblings. Seymour wants his siblings to be successful in life, especially from a spiritual standpoint. He encourages his brothers and sisters to turn away from the secular life and embrace the concept that knowledge for the sake of knowledge is the key to a higher level of awareness and spirituality. Because of these beliefs, Seymour develops "the curriculum", a way of what he believes is edifying his siblings based on world cultures and ideas. Seymour believes that it isn't what a person believed in that matters, but rather the idea that they believe in something. To Seymour, having faith is far more important in life than having a particular belief system. Because Seymour's mindset is so innovative and often unusual, he finds it difficult to adjust to daily life outside of his family and struggles with adapting. Seymour commits suicide, thereby intensifying his important role in his siblings' lives. Seymour is the most gifted of the Glass children, primarily because before his death he discovers the true importance in life: the concept that a belief is all that is needed for a successful spirituality. Since Seymour made this discovery, he feels it safe to make his escape through his suicide.

Salinger made it clear that Seymour is the most important Glass sibling, especially when examining the works in order of their publication. The Glass family has always been published in the magazines *The New Yorker* or *Harper's*, first and then later as a part of various collections. Salinger first published "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" as the introductory piece of the Glass family in 1948 and later it appeared as the first short story in the collection *Nine Stories*. Not all of the stories Salinger published with *The New Yorker* that were later collected for *Nine Stories* dealt with the Glass family, and those that did sometimes did so loosely, at best. In "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" Salinger began with the most important sibling, Seymour, and paradoxically focuses on Seymour's death. In starting at the end, Salinger achieved not only an interest that ordinarily may not pique readers' interests, but also enhanced the spiritual and emotional voyage of the Glass family. However, beginning with Seymour's death also suggests that Salinger had no immediate plans for the Glass family after Seymour's suicide. For the surviving Glass siblings as well as the readers, Seymour's absence came many unanswerable questions; without the presence of the all-knowing educator, the remaining siblings must cope with not only his absence, but the emotional scars that Seymour inflicted upon them. Although physically absent, Seymour is so important that his siblings' identities actually revolve around him, in part, due to post-traumatic stress.

Salinger published the Glass works out of chronological order, most likely in an effort to pique interest. The next publication, "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut" is vague in its Glass reference, in which a woman tells of her former and peculiar love interest. It wasn't until later that it is evident that her old love is Walt Glass. "Down at the Dinghy" features Boo Boo Glass in her role as a mother. Her Glass ties are somewhat vague, and

only made obvious when she identifies herself as a Glass and tells of the owner of goggles. These two aforementioned works suggest the possibility that Salinger was simply writing and the Glass undertones were unclear. The next five works are obviously Glass tales; “Franny”, “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters”, “Zooney”, “Seymour: An Introduction” and “Hapworth 16, 1924” in that each story possesses at least one Glass character.

The Glass works traditionally surround Seymour in some way, even if he is not directly referenced. Seymour’s influence is clearly seen through the remaining siblings’ behaviors. It seems as though the Glass parents are unimportant or irrelevant to the remaining siblings in that there is no intervention when Seymour educates his siblings. It appears as though Seymour was not only educator, but served as a sort of parental figure as well. Without opposition, Seymour educates his siblings seemingly in preparation for their appearances on *It’s a Wise Child*. Unquestioningly, Seymour’s influence is the most important, but each sibling was impacted through their appearances on the show also. Each child learned to perform and communicate their ideas in intelligent ways, inadvertently learned of Seymour’s concept of spirituality and also learned to deny themselves as Glasses. Each sibling followed in Seymour’s footsteps in appearing on the show, which also added to the benefit of their appearances.

The ties with Seymour continued on after *It’s a Wise Child* in that their education continued and their performances linked them all together. Seymour’s influence and involvement in their lives is what makes his influence and their loss of him all the more traumatizing. Because of their awareness, extreme intelligence and the fact that they were groomed by a man who lacked most social abilities, the Glass siblings suffered

immensely when their oldest brother died. Through Seymour's absence and the siblings' varying measurements of grief, it became clear that they suffered from post traumatic stress because of their continued issues with assimilation.

Initially having read *Franny and Zooey*, one of Salinger's final Glass family installments, I became intrigued by the Glass family, as most readers probably were upon reading *Franny* first, which focused only on a young woman's emotional frailty. The Glasses, a family of prodigies is a rarity and unconventional, yet were still realistically portrayed by Salinger through specific familiar traits. Out of sheer interest, I found every Glass family story and read them several times over in order to attempt to understand where they came from and what they stand for in their original context, as well as a modernized one. I realized that although they initially may not have been intended to be linked, they ultimately created a saga of complex and interwoven characters. The Glasses, like their creator, J.D. Salinger, are especially difficult to understand, thereby further piquing my interest. It became obvious that Seymour was of the utmost importance to the Glass family, not only because of his martyr-like suicide, but also because he exposed his siblings to a mindset completely foreign to them, thereby justifying his label as "seer." This is also what makes Seymour so important to me; he edified and reassured me as an individual constantly questioning life and religious affiliation. Seymour possesses the spiritual knowledge that people often ultimately strive for, and his family recognized it. Through this profound connection I realized I needed to know more, and began examining various criticisms based on the Glass family. Since so little is known about Salinger himself and Warren French has likened Salinger to both Buddy, and at times, Seymour, the characters become more intriguing. Ultimately, it is

necessary to understand the historical context of the Glass family also, when Salinger penned these works at a time when national pride was not on the incline. The Glass family stories were written as the United States was recovering from World War II. Paranoia and cultural self-doubt were fairly common and the need to improve the status of the country, obtain the American dream, and anxiety about the presence of communists within the country created an unstable and uneasy society. Without a clear identity, Salinger saw the readers' world around him in a constant state of uncertainty, therefore, it seems Salinger created the Glass family, who at least possessed the spiritual wisdom that the country seemingly lacked in an effort to create a profound connection between himself and his readers.

Traditionally, Salinger criticism only examines *The Catcher in the Rye*, Salinger's great American bildungsroman and most successful work, but through more research I discovered that there is something to be uncovered about the Glass family. Criticisms on the Glass family stories focused on Seymour as an educator, rather than Seymour the influence. In taking the perspective that Seymour's act of suicide made him important to the siblings, it became obvious that they began as infatuated with their older brother because of his epiphanies as highlighted in Seymour's haikus, as indicated in Martin Bidney's "The Aestheticist Epiphanies of J.D. Salinger: Bright Hued Circles, Spheres, and Patches; 'Elemental' Joy and Pain" and then became obsessed with him afterwards, primarily because of his significant absence, as analyzed by William Wiegand in "The Knighthood of J.D. Salinger." Examining those works allowed me to conclude that when Seymour died, the rest of the siblings died as well. It became clear that the siblings were reliant on their brother and ultimately, the education that he forced them to digest. Each

examined criticism explored not only the relationships between the siblings, but their ultimate relationship with Seymour. Janet Malcolm's "Justice to J.D. Salinger," argued that Seymour was driven to suicide because of his role in the family, and in his life, as illustrated in his own perceptions of his spirituality. Although Malcolm's argument is feasible, more than Seymour's self appointed role in life seems to cause the issues of the Glass siblings, arguing that the entire educational system Seymour enforced was also to blame. Warren French's compilation of criticisms entitled *J.D. Salinger* provided insight into Salinger's methods and an analysis of Salinger's characters, thus leading to an important conclusion: through Salinger's writing, Seymour's beliefs made him significant to his siblings; so much so, that Salinger had their entire lives surround him, even after his death, thereby leading to a religious awakening. Salinger intended Seymour to be crucial to the belief systems of his siblings. Although Seymour contributed to various identity crises, Salinger depicted Seymour shaping his siblings as characters, especially after his death. Seymour's death also meant the end of his siblings' desire to live their lives as they once had. Hence, although the siblings remained living they shared in his death. This is where Salinger began the Glass family stories; at the end of Seymour's life and the beginning of the siblings' lives without their sibling.

Since Salinger wanted Seymour to have the most profound effect, it became necessary to identify where psychoanalysis would be applicable to not only understand the levels of being within the Glass family, but also the obvious and underlying effects that Seymour had. To thoroughly understand Seymour's impact, I examined Jacques Lacan's "The Mirror Stage," which analyzes the impacts of dominating subjects in a being's life; Berssel A. van der Kolk and Alexander C. McFarlane's "The Black Hole of

Trauma,” which delved into trauma theory and repression; Elizabeth Wright’s “Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reappraisal,” which delved into the ideas of conflict and instinct within a being; articles found in Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan’s work, *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, which includes their own analysis of the human psyche and also contains critical articles from several of the aforementioned psychoanalytic experts. All of these works discuss significant elements of post-traumatic stress, which each Glass sibling suffers from, due to Seymour’s suicide, as well as the educational system he imposed upon them. In lieu of outward grief, the siblings suffered from post-traumatic stress.

After reading these articles I wanted to examine Seymour’s role as sibling, educator, seer and poet. Cathy Caruth defines trauma in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* as “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (11). Ultimately, each Glass child has been forced to deal with the trauma of Seymour’s suicide and issues brought on by both their siblings and their parents; through the psychoanalytic dynamics of the family one can understand the severity and significance of Seymour’s actions and the siblings’ justification of labeling Seymour as a “true poet,” an omnipotent being who knows what truly brings happiness in life, and as Franny later details, “If you’re a poet, you do something beautiful” (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 19). From the standpoint of his siblings, Seymour was a poet because he attempted to perform a beautiful act in educating his siblings. Salinger created a poet in Seymour who was seemingly too

influential because Seymour spiritually killed his siblings through the curriculum and his suicide due to the psychoanalytic element of post-traumatic stress.

Walt and Waker Glass are the twins of the family. Walt is the most lighthearted (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 123) and Waker, the most conscientious. Salinger had the twins serve as the lighthearted relief within his Glass family saga. Walt, referenced briefly only in the short story “Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut” found in J.D. Salinger’s compilation *Nine Stories* and “Seymour: An Introduction” found in the collection *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction*, is the sibling that consciously chooses to live life detached from his family and unconsciously does not rely too heavily on his intelligence or previous mastermind status. His life’s path could be explained by his unconscious rebellion against Seymour’s teachings. Walt chooses to leave his family and enlist in an effort to educate himself in an unintentional rebellion against Seymour and Buddy’s curricular efforts that he witnessed at home. This self-education ultimately leads Walt to contentment; however, it also leads to his comical and senseless death by the explosion of a stove during World War II. Walt’s twin, Waker, however, lives a restrictive life also as a form of subconscious rebellion.

Waker chooses to leave the Glass family apartment behind in an effort to gain an enhanced spiritual existence. He, like Walt, wants to see the world from an innovative perspective; therefore, he elects to become a priest. This decision is inventive because of his Jewish-Irish descent and Waker, similar to Seymour and Buddy, evidently intrigued by the pious life, wants to continue his own education and exploration of what the world has to offer. Waker becomes so consciously aware of his desire to achieve a higher spiritual level that he abandons his previous life as a Glass and fully embraces the sacred

life as a priest, which also serves as an escape from Seymour's influence. Salinger has this serve as the catalyst of Waker's constant absence, never permitting the reader to know or even become familiar with him. What is known about Waker is brief in that the reader can only rely on what they are told by Buddy through the works "Seymour: An Introduction" and "Hapworth 16, 1924." It is safe to assume that this enclosed lifestyle that Waker chose is unhealthy for him since he never receives exposure to the outside world or his own family. This lack of sociality is similar to Seymour's, though not as present, and contributes to Waker's fragility as a Glass. This frailty also shapes his relationship with Seymour, who, by J.D. Salinger, is deemed as the religious educator within the family. Salinger never depicts either twin directly, yet through them Salinger has made it apparent that the Glass children who do escape their reputation never do so in moderation. For example, Walt's commitment to his jovial role and Waker's full commitment to the religious life is similar to that of their older sister Boo Boo; Boo Boo also escapes, seemingly unscathed, and also fully embraces her new life as a suburban housewife and mother.

Through Boo Boo, Salinger has created the most well adjusted Glass sibling, where she consciously chooses to abandon her imbalanced and chaotic familial life for a more balanced one. Boo Boo, characterized by Salinger as "a stunning and final girl" (Salinger, "Down at the Dinghey" 77), is eccentric in her own right through her unique interactions with her son as depicted in "Down at the Dinghey." However, Boo Boo remains average in that she marries, purchases a home in the suburbs and has children. She, like Walt and Waker, needed to escape her previous life in an effort to achieve a sense of normalcy among the rest of society. This conscious uprising permits

Boo Boo to attain something she has never known before; an average lifestyle that doesn't exploit her intelligence or force education upon her. Salinger refers to Boo Boo several times throughout the Glass family works, especially in "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters," a work titled because of her message to her emotionally unstable and vulnerable brother, Seymour, but Salinger actually depicts her in "Down at the Dinghey," which focuses on her relationship with her son, Lionel. Salinger portrays Boo Boo as a stable mother who seemingly empathizes with her son but is clearly still a Glass family member based on her awkward appearance and reference to Seymour. Boo Boo remains present in her living siblings' lives from a spiritual standpoint; although never seen truly interacting, she is often writing letters of support in a maternal and caring manner that does not pertain to their previous selves as the Blacks. The Blacks were once on a pedestal, and no longer exist since their fall from grace. The Glass siblings were once successful and admired for their intelligence but are now viewed with scorn because of their inability to adapt to society and now try to escape. However, although the twins and Boo Boo have managed an escape of sorts, they have not escaped scars from Seymour. Salinger juxtaposed Buddy to his other siblings, in that he embraces the emotionally and intellectually chaotic lifestyle in an effort to emulate his brother, Seymour.

Seymour is complex, but in order to fully comprehend his actions both alive and dead, each of Salinger's Glass siblings must be analyzed. Since Seymour's presence is unwavering in *Franny & Zooey* for Zooey, Franny and Buddy, it becomes worthwhile to examine Seymour's influence over the remaining siblings. In examining each sibling separately, it becomes clearer that they all suffer from Seymour's influence as sibling and teacher, and also from his teachings and suicide. To comprehend this family and

Seymour's impact, Salinger's desires for the family must be considered therefore the works must be examined in order of publication. Franny Glass, the youngest sibling is the sibling in most need of answers. Upon first meeting her in *Franny and Zooey*, one can see that she recently entered the phase in her life that is meant for self-discovery and doubt in stating that people are never "real poets" (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 18), which contradicts the belief that her brother Seymour is a poet. As she matures and forges ahead in her college education, she begins to realize that there are specific individuals and personality traits that she not only frowns upon, but is also willing to completely shun in an effort to preserve what integrity is left in her life. Her exposure to Seymour as a person is limited compared to her other siblings since he died when she was a child. However, Franny had the ability, along with Zooey, of seeing Seymour as the omnipotent educator (and her other brother, Buddy, as co-educator) who facilitated her and Zooey's extensive exposure to cultural writings and philosophies, also known as "the curriculum." Salinger has Franny's story surround her own exposure to *The Way of the Pilgrim*, a chronicle of a pilgrim's journey towards praying without ceasing. In an effort to perpetuate her own curriculum and consciously gain her own spirituality and achieve spiritual enlightenment, Salinger had Franny attempt to pray without ceasing, thereby leading her to an emotional breakdown. The only sibling able to aid her through this disintegration was Zooey, the only one who knew what it was like to be in made into an alleged freak.

Salinger wrote these stories through Buddy's perspective in order to provide a less objective telling of the stories. Through Buddy's voice, the intense emotions felt by the siblings and their experiences are validated rather than perceived as too passionate. Salinger chose to publish these works in a specific order so that the readers' impressions

of the Glass family were that of shock and intrigue hence; he began with the central issue of the family, Seymour's suicide, as seen in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish." Courtesy of Salinger, Buddy's insight and attention to detail allow the reader to see the transpired events primarily through his self-critical perspective. Salinger has Buddy directly characterize himself in relation to 1.) Seymour 2.) a Taoist tale of adventure and camaraderie and 3.) his brother's suicide: "Since [Seymour's] permanent retirement from the scene, I haven't been able to think of anybody whom I'd care to send out to look for horses in his stead" (Salinger, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" 5). Salinger rarely allows the reader to perceive Buddy as a person and as a being that interacts with and cares for his siblings. Buddy is the omnipotent and mysterious letter writer in *Franny and Zooey*; he reigns as the only sibling who fully understands Seymour's intentions, and this is primarily because he wants to be as similar to his older brother as possible. Salinger actually focused on Buddy in *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters*, but only because Buddy's divine mission is to get to Seymour. Salinger, as Buddy, focused on Seymour himself in *Seymour: An Introduction*, in that he tells this tale about his brother, in an effort to explicate Seymour's motives behind the curriculum and any other actions that have inadvertent effects on the remaining Glass siblings. It seems as though Salinger's writings as Buddy are Salinger's effort not only to revisit and resuscitate the dead brother, but to also justify Buddy's actions and assume Seymour's role as seer, which is again why the tales begin with Seymour's death. Seymour, perceived as the wisest, is absent from Buddy's stories therefore causing the siblings post-traumatic stress because of his suicide but also because of his imposed education.

Zooey, also introduced in *Franny and Zooey*, is the most physically beautiful and misanthropic. He, like Seymour, had a relatively elitist air about him that led to his indecision in life: "I'm tired as hell of getting up furious in the morning and going to bed furious at night" (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 137). However, Salinger put Zooey's indecision on hold once Franny returns home and it becomes evident that she is unable to cope with her supposed over-exposure to the world's teachings. Zooey's tale focuses primarily on his sister, Franny, illustrating that Franny's obsession with the Jesus Prayer influences people other than her. This excerpt of Zooey's life also surrounds his own being and interactions with his family, both members that are present and absent. Zooey is complex primarily because of his own consciousness; he is more than aware of the fact that he is the antithesis of the societal norm because of his innate abilities and intelligence. His differences are also the direct result of Seymour and Buddy's development of the curriculum for him and Franny. Salinger provides the reader with the ability to know Zooey on a more profound level because of the intimate setting of his tale (first the Glass family bathroom, then the Glass family apartment) and also its contents; Zooey is first seen reading a revealing letter from Buddy in regards to his curriculum, his future, and Seymour. Salinger never depicts the two youngest siblings interacting with their siblings in the living, breathing respect, but rather has them unconsciously influenced by their remaining siblings in their daily lives.

Without Seymour's guidance and education, Salinger's Glass siblings would not have the religious beliefs or knowledge to filter through their daily lives in a corrupt world. Through his imposed educational system and other teachings and actions, Seymour provided his siblings with the concept of the Fat Lady: a woman the children

were instructed to shine their shoes for. This Fat Lady, reminiscent of Buddha, is Seymour's modernized concept of a religious belief: so long as one believes in a higher deity, one can obtain peace. Without Seymour, the Glass children would lack their identities, an education and a fixed religious belief system. Because of post traumatic stress however, Seymour's suicide brought upon the metaphorical deaths of his siblings. Seymour's influence, and the order of publication of the works allows this conclusion to extend on previous criticisms; previous examinations of Seymour's influence have suggested that his siblings persevered in the wake of his suicide. These examinations concluded that although Seymour's influence was infinite, the surviving Glass siblings were able to cope with their loss. This is not accurate, in that the siblings consciously did not want to survive their teacher, and due to post-traumatic stress, they did not cope properly with his death, killing a sense of themselves too. In understanding that the Glass siblings suffer from post-traumatic stress, we are able to see the Glass family for what they truly are: a family of victims, who invoke pity. These siblings often times act in detestable ways, but regardless, in understanding their trauma, you cannot help but pity them.

CHAPTER II
“SEE MORE GLASS”

(Salinger, “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” 10).

“A Perfect Day for Bananafish” was Salinger’s first story of the Glass family and is the central Glass family legend. Known for his intelligence, abilities and capacity to label those who have resigned to the norms of society from the familial life he once knew, Seymour is the most talented and also the most wounded. Salinger depicted Seymour as one who will never be fully understood by his siblings or his readers, and on some level both take great pride in this. Salinger relished in the misinterpretations of Seymour’s world and expected Seymour “not to be understood outside of the Glass family” (Kazin 49). In an effort to understand “the nonconformist hero [who] constantly [was] threatened by external forces which seek to inhabit and destroy him” (Wiegand 123), Seymour must be analyzed in relation to his siblings and spouse from a psychoanalytic perspective.

Salinger begins the Glass legacy at the end “A Perfect Day for Bananafish,” as it chronicles the end of Seymour’s life. In this short story, Seymour exhibits characteristics that indicate an emotional disturbance. The first impressions of him are created by his wife, Muriel, who is on the phone with her mother. Muriel makes several references to

Seymour's emotional instability and how he treats her, especially when she notes that he refers to her as "Miss Spiritual Tramp of 1948" (Salinger, "A Perfect Day For Bananafish," 5). Through this nickname, Salinger has Seymour allude to the flaws of Muriel's world according to Seymour. Society lacks the depth and ability to be spiritual, and appears to favor materialism. Salinger depicted the displeasure and restlessness that Seymour experiences in their union and brought it to the surface through Seymour's nickname for Muriel.

In the story, Seymour befriends a little girl named Sybil who innocently reiterates the phrase "See More Glass" (Salinger, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" 10). This flawless seer named see-more has the ability to see more than others, as proven through his appreciation of the innocent and simpler aspects of life. Salinger depicts Seymour befriending this innocent child because he finds "it more natural to talk to a four-year old girl on the beach than to [Muriel]" (Kazin 49). Seymour feels more at home in a child's world rather than the adult world he is forced to participate in. Seymour tells Sybil the tale of bananafish who eat so much that they are unable to leave the hole that they originally entered (16). Seymour appreciates Sybil's innocence and complete trust in him and is envious of that blind affection. Although Seymour is presently happy, Salinger's contentment for Seymour is fleeting. Seymour "[has] become so glutted with sensation that he [like the bananafish] cannot swim out into society again" (Wiegand 127). This parallels Seymour, who digests so much of Muriel's world that he is unable to escape; in this moment of edification, "there is a sense of complete understanding between the child and the adult which redeems the man's pain, and briefly but poetically, restores happiness to his life" (Krim 65). Through his first literary appearance, Seymour, like Salinger,

possesses a supreme appreciation and admiration for those untainted by society. The innocent are the opposite of anyone Seymour has ever encountered outside of his family, especially in regards to Muriel, who is the epitome of this societal corruption. Muriel's world surrounds an emphasis on physical beauty and material possessions, all of which are elements Seymour has shied away from. Sybil and Seymour's interaction is the final positive interaction that Salinger depicts prior to Seymour's death. Immediately afterwards, Seymour heads back to his hotel room, only to harass a woman in the elevator by accusing her of looking at his feet (17) in an inadvertent accusation of her noticing his own "freakish" nature. Seymour goes back to his hotel room and shoots himself in the same room as his sleeping wife. In Seymour's final action, he chooses to escape the world rather than to deal with it.

Seymour's next literary appearance occurs in 1949, one year after "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" was published, and is not so much as an appearance but rather a specific reference, as he is already dead. Even in daily life Seymour's presence is known. In "Down at the Dinghey" Salinger portrayed Boo Boo's son, Lionel, throwing Seymour's goggles into the lake, which he is then reminded "belonged to your Uncle Seymour" (Salinger 77). This inadvertent homage indicates that Seymour's possessions and presence are unwavering through Boo Boo noting who the goggles belonged to, which also likely contributes to Boo Boo's unwavering position as sister to the dead seer.

As next depicted in *Franny & Zooey*, Salinger clearly desired Seymour's impact on his siblings to begin with his need for their acceptance and acknowledgment. Seymour forces the "younger Glass children to swallow an indigestible mass of Eastern mysticism and Western philosophy" (French 8). This force-fed education is also known

as “the curriculum,” designed and enforced by Seymour and Buddy. Salinger created Seymour’s everlasting influence through this curriculum, which was the catalyst of many pursuits of the Glass siblings. Seymour did not possess a specific belief system, and may have been confused due to his “spiritual illness characterized by the individual’s inability either to distinguish between important and unimportant experiences or to realize that he cannot retain them all” (French 37). Salinger has Seymour search for a version of Christ through his affinity of world religions, that he was able to accept. Salinger has Seymour’s curriculum reflect Seymour’s desire to have a “pathological need to have an effect upon people” (French 85). The education is also meant to serve as a way for Seymour and Buddy to build a relationship with their youngest siblings, as confessed by Buddy “(Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 61); Seymour pioneers this act and causes him to be remembered as “both a genius and near saint” (French 8) in the eyes of his siblings. Seymour’s influence over his siblings’ education causes feelings of resentment and bitterness and intellectual superiority to the majority of society. Salinger has Zooey constantly remind his mother and his sister, Franny, that Seymour and Buddy were “Those two bastards [who] got us nice and early and made us into freaks with freakish standards” (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 139). Without Franny and Zooey’s “freakish standards,” attributed to Seymour’s influence, they might ordinarily still be leading average lives instead of obsessing over their dead brother. Franny and Zooey inherit Seymour’s intelligence but also his judgmental nature. Salinger has Seymour’s influence, however, also lay the groundwork for the Glass family standard of an artist and poet, Zooey, in an intuitive reference to Seymour provides “an artist’s only concern is to shoot for some kind of perfection, and on his own terms, not anyone else’s” (Salinger, *Franny*

& Zoëy 199). Seymour does his utmost to achieve this status. From a psychoanalytic standpoint, individuals attempt to “achieve nonintellectual enlightenment” (Gwynn & Blotner 111); an education for the sake of education rather than to use as judgment and intellectual gain. Salinger depicted Seymour and his siblings doing so as well.

After allowing many to witness Seymour’s death, and the aftermath that his siblings are forced to cope with, Salinger published “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters” in 1955, where Seymour marries a young, status conscious Muriel, who is the opposite of what his siblings expect and want for Seymour in a spouse. As the stories are examined chronologically via publication, the Glass family appears to regress. Boo Boo admitted, “She’s awful” (Salinger, “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters” 15). Salinger has each sibling support Seymour’s choice in the fashion of a devoted support system. Muriel is “gossipy, overly concerned with trivial material things and neglects great works of the imagination” (French 80), particularly when Seymour explains her whereabouts as “At the hairdresser’s. Having her hair dyed pink” (Salinger, “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” 12). In other words, Muriel is the antithesis of every Taoist teaching Seymour embraces, thereby making him curious about her and feeding his attraction to her. Salinger demonstrates Seymour’s attraction to Muriel by noting that she is physically beautiful and also naïve and intellectually inferior. “The sexual instinct plays a major role in psychical conflict precisely because it is always opposed by another instinct” (Chodorow 471). For Seymour, curiosity combined with physical attraction is too difficult for him to handle in a world he already finds too difficult to cope with. Ultimately, Seymour’s marriage to Muriel is a significant contributing factor in his

suicide, and their union brought upon criticisms that Seymour has difficulty coping with, from additional external sources.

Through Seymour, Salinger created a family for Muriel that ultimately clouds her judgment and thoughts with their own observations. Muriel's mother wishes that "Seymour would relate more to people" (Salinger, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" 9), Muriel's matron of honor notes Seymour "can't just barge through life hurting people's feelings whenever [he] feel[s] like it" (Salinger 21) and Muriel's mother also thinks that Seymour is a homosexual (Salinger 36). Seymour was aware of his new family's disapproval. Psychologically, opinions such as these can cause "neurotic symptoms which point towards unresolved conflicts between unconscious inclinations or feeling and the repressive demands of the ego or conscious self" (Rivkin and Ryan, "Introduction: Strangers to Ourselves: Psychoanalysis" 389-90). Salinger portrays Seymour as an individual who cannot cope with reality or the disapproval that it can bring. After a short time as husband and wife, Seymour needs a vacation, and he and Muriel go on a second honeymoon to Florida. During this voyage, as depicted in "A Perfect Day For Bananafish," Seymour takes action for himself as well as his siblings.

The only time Seymour is perceived as untroubled and relatively untouched by what he deems as the fraudulent or materialistic beings of society is in "Hapworth 16, 1924," Salinger's next published work in the Glass family, as he composes a letter home from summer camp. Even at the age of seven, Seymour's "tortured ego is seeking to express itself" (Hassan 154). Through his own divulgence, Seymour portrays himself as the stereotypical tortured genius whose "emotions are too damnably raw" (3). Salinger is sure to never allow Seymour to appear as an average child in any sense of the word. With

the incorporation of aphorisms and a diverse vocabulary, Salinger is sure to have Seymour remain astute and incredibly aware of his surroundings and relationships. Seymour's tortured ego and awareness contribute to his "curriculum" and is the catalyst for the post-traumatic stress that his siblings are later inflicted with. As a child Seymour strove for a strong relationship with his parents. Seymour assessed this attempt at a relationship to place "during my entire life with increasing slight success" (Salinger, "Hapworth 16, 1924" 5). This was Seymour's effort to reach out to and relate to others. As a child, Seymour tried to identify himself in terms of his parents. Individuals attempt to identify signifiers, meaning ways to identify themselves in relation to others (Rivkin and Ryan, "Introduction: Strangers to Ourselves: Psychoanalysis" 395) in an attempt to determine their roles later in life. Seymour also attempted this, but still remains "ill prepared to relate to other people" (French 153) except for his siblings, who are nearly as misunderstood as he is.

The Glass family revolves around Seymour, even after his death. Seymour first causes his title as seer by consistently labeling himself as alone, yet paradoxically reaches out to people. In a letter to his parents, he confesses, "I was born without any great support in the event of continued absences of loved ones" ("Hapworth 16, 1924" 1). Salinger has Seymour become reliant on this victimization which naturally leads to attention and possible fawning, in Seymour's case, from his family. This need for interest juxtaposes Seymour's idealized state of Zen to life around him; "that ninety-eight per cent of my life, thank God, has nothing to do with the dubious pursuit of knowledge" (Salinger, "Hapworth 16, 1924" 3), hence, his desire to seek knowledge without regard to ego. Regardless of Seymour's desires, he is remembered as the wisest and most capable.

The relationship between Buddy and Seymour is the most complex. The way that Salinger relates Buddy to Seymour in the past and how the brothers relate after Seymour's death are a reflection of their relationship in its entirety. As children, Buddy and Seymour are close, and perceive one another with the utmost admiration. Salinger has Seymour admit to his parents "...it is an honor and privilege to be connected to this arresting young lad and secret genius" ("Hapworth 16, 1924" 5). This near obsession is the catalyst of the aforementioned short stories supposedly penned by Buddy Glass himself. Buddy wants to attain and recreate a closeness with his brother, and focused on Seymour's poetry, which reveals his inner most thoughts prior to his suicide. In "Seymour: An Introduction" Buddy fuses the short story with his own epiphanies about his brother induced by Seymour's haikus. Salinger has Buddy narrate these tales of the Glass family to illustrate that they serve as a symptom of Buddy's post-traumatic stress. In never coming to terms with Seymour's suicide, Salinger has Buddy never move on, and only writes the stories for his own benefit.

Through Buddy's writing, it is obvious that Seymour Glass possesses specific traits that are indicative of an emotional disturbance, specifically, repression. Psychoanalytically speaking, "repression is essential to civilization" (Rivkin & Ryan, "Introduction: Strangers to Ourselves: Psychoanalysis" 389). Repression is needed for survival in daily life; an individual cannot survive if every issue is brought to the surface, and will never learn to cope with reality. Seymour strives to repress any unpleasantness he encounters in life. However, the amount that Seymour represses is clearly too much in that repressions "can never be quelled entirely" (Rivkin & Ryan, "Introduction: Strangers to Ourselves: Psychoanalysis" 391). Salinger has Seymour attempt to deal with his

corrupt surroundings, but he is unable to effectively do so because he represses so much, therefore, he turns to suicide. Through his suicide, Seymour feels that he is liberating his siblings and Muriel by no longer forcing them to digest his own ideas and urges, when in actuality he is doing the opposite. In eliminating what he has deemed “the enemy” (Caruth 30), Seymour, through Salinger’s perspective, reaches a cathartic state and deals with the corruptions of the world in the only way that he knows how. Seymour exhibits a tendency to not cope with his surroundings and instead prefers to escape them altogether, as demonstrated when he leaves Muriel at the altar, and later elopes with her. Sybil’s reaction to Seymour’s tale about bananafish also serves as a contributing factor to his suicide. Sybil’s belief in bananafish parallels that of J.D. Salinger and Seymour’s own beliefs: that a person can be so immersed in society that they lose themselves.

J.D. Salinger’s Seymour Glass struggles to express himself. Most individuals “express wishes or desires that cannot find way expression in waking life because they are at odds with the requirements of the ego” (Rivkin & Ryan, “Introduction: Strangers to Ourselves: Psychoanalysis” 390). Seymour is unable to express his displeasure with the world. Through this struggle, he develops a strong desire for edification, and Seymour ultimately represses any issues pertaining to his lack of acceptance in society, hence, he “educates” his siblings and hides from reality. Regardless, Seymour still attempts to find acceptance outside of his family unit, thereby linking himself to Muriel. Muriel’s family disapproves of Seymour because of his actions, and they hold strong opposing opinions about their marital union. These oppositions are too difficult for Seymour to come to terms with, and they contribute to his emotional deterioration. These opinions demonstrate that “Family structure produces crucial differentiating experiences between

the sexes” (Chadrow 470) and they also reflect the common thoughts of those living outside of Seymour’s Glass family infrastructure. These familial reviews contribute to Seymour’s neuroses. Seymour, like most people, struggles to deal with opposition because it is “in the grip of something outside their awareness or control” (Rivkin & Ryan, “Introduction: Strangers to Ourselves: Psychoanalysis” 390). Salinger portrayed Seymour as unable to control the opinions and actions of others, thereby making Seymour even more emotionally imbalanced because he is aware of these negative opinions.

Seymour lives his life in constant anticipation of solitude due to an unconscious desire for martyrdom. Seymour, like many individuals, experience the “alienating function of the I” (Lacan 445). Individuals tend to desire solitude, often as a coping mechanism. Seymour could not deal with others’ actions, and felt that it was easier for him to be alone rather than attempt to understand the world around him. Seymour chose to explore various world religions in an effort to discover an appropriate way to cope with his displeasure and realizes that solitude is best achieved through his death. Although Muriel was present, Seymour felt spiritually alone, as demonstrated in labeling his wife a “spiritual tramp” (Salinger, “A Perfect Day For Bananafish,” 5), thereby making his suicide a solitary act. Seymour means that Muriel is a tramp in terms of a drifter; she refuses to deal with spirituality and instead is a tramp in terms of materialism. Muriel’s lack of a spiritual side juxtaposes to Seymour’s excessive spirituality. Although Seymour himself is a tramp in terms of religion, he still possesses spirituality. As exhibited through post-traumatic stress, the remaining Glass siblings cannot live without Seymour’s presence. Like most individuals coping with post-traumatic stress, they feel

that “in missing the moment of death, [they were] unable to recognize the continuation of their [lives]” (Caruth 39), thereby justifying the Glass siblings’ continuing obsession with Seymour after his death. After a traumatic event “almost all people suffer from intrusive thoughts about what has happened” (van der Kolk & McFarlane 491), hence, the Glass siblings’ stagnancy after Seymour’s suicide.

CHAPTER III

UNCLE WIGGILY AND THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

The second Glass sibling to be featured in a work by J.D. Salinger was Walt Glass, of “Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut,” published in 1953. Walt, the elder of the Glass family twins, is remembered as the sibling most easily connected to the reader because of his characterization. The story itself essentially focuses on a woman playing “what if?” while getting drunk in the afternoon with her friend. What is relevant to this thesis is Walt’s characterization as a Glass, thus it is his characterization rather than the story’s actual plot that is the focus of this section. As an interesting note, at the time of publication, nowhere in this story is it made clear that Walt is in fact a Glass. Not until *Zooey* in 1957 was Walt listed as a Glass family member and his actual means of death made known. Salinger depicted Walt as the Glass sibling with a sense of humor, and audiences connect with him because of their desire to be lighthearted and carefree themselves. Walt is the least affected by Seymour’s death since he died about five years prior to Seymour’s suicide. It would be inaccurate, however, to say that Walt was never influenced by Seymour, because Seymour is who taught Walt to be content by doing the opposite of his oldest brother.

Walt's former girlfriend Eloise reminisces, "He didn't try to be funny-he just *was* funny" (Salinger, "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut" 29). By far, Walt is the most humanized Glass family member. He is not remembered as being a child prodigy, though he was, or even struggling with his own identity; he is mostly recalled as a private family member who later is characterized as "never a great letter writer, and very little personal information-almost none-reached us after his death" ("Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" 6). Walt's absence from the family stories shows his desire for privacy which ironically mirrors that of Salinger, and both seem to be secure enough to simply be. Walt simply learns to embrace where and who he is as opposed to Seymour who is unstable and comprehensible because of his own feelings of thinking he was in hell (Barr 174). Walt is the opposite of Seymour, because he is happy and able to laugh. Whether Salinger's intentions for Walt were to serve as the opposite of Seymour is uncertain, but Salinger allowed Walt to have a positive outlook, even when it came to establishing a belief system within the Glass family. Years later, to reassure Franny, Zooey admits: "He had a theory, Walt, that the religious life and all the agony that goes with it, is just something God sicks on people who have the gall to accuse Him of having created an ugly world" (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 154). Walt feels that anyone who doubted their superior creator was sentenced to the search for religious discovery. This comment provided interesting commentary, as it refers to Seymour, who searches for happiness via various philosophies and religious. Behind this rationale Salinger chose to have Walt seize the day rather than be overly pensive and scarred like his siblings. His mindset of *carpe diem* is even illustrated through his death.

Walt's death is also discussed by Eloise; she tells of him packing a small Japanese stove for a colonel while in the army during World War II, and "it was full of gasoline and junk and it exploded" (Salinger, "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut" 31). Walt's death is labeled senseless and as an "unspeakably absurd GI accident" (Salinger, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" 6) by both his siblings and his readers alike, but his death is also representative of Seymour's ideological intentions for his siblings. Seymour "taught his disciples...to play their parts in the world whole heartedly" (French 17), as seen through each siblings' undertaking. Franny becomes obsessed with the Jesus Prayer (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 39); Boo Boo becomes a loving mother (Salinger, "Down at the Dinghey" 78); Buddy accommodates Muriel's family after Seymour leaves her at the altar (Salinger, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" 55); Walt assumes the role of the jubilant and humorous Glass sibling. Walt's death, which can be construed as ironic humor since it could have been prevented and had nothing to do with the war, illustrates that he strays from the stereotypical Glass child prototype. Although an unconventional Glass, Walt still takes what his poetic brother, Seymour, says to heart.

Waker, Walt's twin, was introduced by J.D. Salinger only through obscure references in *Franny & Zooey* and "Seymour: An Introduction." Waker "was a Roman Catholic priest, and in November, 1955, he was in Ecuador, attending a Jesuit conference of some kind" (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 53). As the sibling that Salinger depicts the least often, Waker, still maintains the idiosyncrasies of the Glass siblings. Notorious for his distribution of the Catholic host, he is punished by his superiors in order "to free him of a persistent temptation to administer the sacramental wafer to his parishioners' lips by standing back two or three feet and trajecting it in a lovely arc over his left shoulder"

(Salinger, "Seymour: An Introduction" 96). Waker also embraced his role in life, but also truly made it his own, without following the rigorous standard previously set in place. Readers only know a limited amount about Waker, even more so than Walt, primarily because Salinger wanted Waker to possess a desire for individuality brought on by self alienation within the Glass family. Waker is simply labeled for his Catholic faith and also that he "was in a conscientious [war] objectors' camp" (Salinger, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" 6). In placing Waker in an objectors' camp, Salinger characterized Waker to be as assertive and in possession of a strong belief system, much like his siblings. However, his siblings' belief systems not only overlapped but are also technically "nonsectarian" (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 63). Waker's need to break from his family and pursue his own belief system is in fact reminiscent of Seymour's fat lady, whom Franny is ultimately in search of. It wasn't a matter of what the belief system, but rather, the fact that both Franny and Zooey are instructed to shine their shoes for the fat lady because "There isn't anyone out there who isn't Seymour's fat lady" because she is "Christ himself" (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 200). Since the image of the fat lady was ingrained into each Glass siblings' mind, this explains Waker's religious devotion; he is trying to fulfill a concept that Seymour introduced him to, but at the same time is rejecting the method in which it was introduced. Waker is rejecting the curriculum by choosing only one religious affiliation, rather than embracing all of them. Through the inadvertent guidance of his eldest brother, Seymour, Waker has the confidence to pursue what he felt was the most appropriate belief system for himself. Salinger created Seymour's everlasting influence, which was the catalyst of Waker's pursuit of the religious life. Waker strives to find what he sees his eldest brother search for, and began

this religious excursion at a young age. Even while at camp as a seven-year old child, Seymour implored, “Waker, old man, I particularly appeal to your thrilling, innocent powers of prayer” (Salinger, “Hapworth 16, 1922” 7). Seymour acknowledges Waker’s precocity and religious consciousness but remains the seer of the family, since he possesses the religious knowledge he teaches his siblings about.

Salinger had Walt and Waker both choose to abandon the quest for purity and pursue their own ideas of what they feel is most important in life. Though absent in most Glass family stories, Walt is the opposite of Seymour, in an effort to self alienate, similar to Lacan’s function of the I (112). Before Walt’s death, he consciously rebels against the Glass family norm set by Seymour, and has repressed Seymour’s education and emotional frailty. This, combined with his awareness of his desire to rebel against Seymour’s character, causes Walt to grow. In cases of post-traumatic stress, individuals witness various concepts and behaviors and neglect to deal with these behaviors appropriately. Without coping, the individuals develop an intense “desire of the other” (Lacan 445). Because Waker outlived his eldest brother, it only further alienated Waker from society and from his family, thereby causing him to no longer live the life he once knew and to repress Seymour’s influence and suicide. In repressing Seymour’s educational authority, Waker is not present in the Glass family stories and his location is unknown and he is never heard from (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 53). Due to Seymour’s incessant need to press his own ideals upon his siblings, the twins consciously feel pressure to escape this lifestyle and pursue their own independent lives and/or religious affiliations, hence, their constant absence. Walt and Waker are not present during Seymour’s final days and even months because of their own pursuits. At the time of

Seymour's death, Walt was already deceased and Waker was already in pursuit of his own religious ideal. Regardless of circumstances, it is probable that they at some point feel guilty because of their absence due to religious affiliation or war, which contributes to their post-traumatic stress. Cathy Caruth explains that through post traumatic stress, those that suffer from it because of death are an "endless testimony to the impossibility of living" (62). Since Walt and Waker are unable to grasp Seymour's influence fully, their lives have become that testimony, and therefore, they fulfilled the roles assigned to them. After Seymour's teachings and suicide, the siblings become focused on continuing their own lives not because of what Seymour taught them, but rather, because their survival was so traumatic. The Glass siblings survived forced teachings and experienced a serious confusion because Seymour's guidance had an adverse affect; Seymour thought he was educating his siblings, but instead was scarring and confusing them. Glass siblings are intelligent and gifted in their own right and Boo Boo's excelled as a homemaker.

CHAPTER IV

“A TUKAHOE HOMEMAKER”

(Salinger, “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters” 63).

Boo Boo, Salinger’s third family member to be introduced, featured in 1949’s “Down at the Dinghy,” is never clearly identified as a Glass sibling until she refers to her son’s uncle, Seymour. Similar to “Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut,” the plot has a different focus than merely being a study of the Glass family, as it focuses on a mother and son relationship and their dealing with ethnic stereotyping. What is actually relevant, however, is Boo Boo’s role as a Glass and her relationship to Seymour, which are the focal points of this section. Although Boo Boo has established her own life, separate from her siblings, Salinger identifies her in regards to Seymour, thereby perpetuating the concept that she also suffers from elements of post-traumatic stress because of Seymour’s suicide.

J.D. Salinger’s maternal Glass sibling, Boo Boo is conservative, and technically never “did” anything with her higher education or gift of ingenuity. Boo Boo eventually married and had three children, and described herself to Buddy as “a Tukahoe homemaker” (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 51). Boo Boo is described as incredibly

simplistic, and even her appearance and mannerisms are simple, as well. In an effort to stray from the abnormalities of Glass family life, Boo Boo craves her own “average” and private family, as opposed to her public family where the parents were entertainers and the children were prodigies. Boo Boo is the exception to the Glass children. She “grew up to become a suburban wife and mother,” whereas “none of the Glass children is able to live comfortably in the world. They are out of place” (Malcolm 2). Aside from being well adjusted, Boo Boo’s physical description matches her lifestyle, yet is reminiscent of her Glass roots. Boo Boo is plain but is, as all Glass children are, “immoderately perceptive” (Salinger, “Down at the Dinghey” 77). Salinger has this perception serve as a sixth sense, much like that of her brother, Seymour, who also has the uncanny ability to read people because he is able to transfer his own emotions to others, similar to individuals who transfer meaning to objects. Boo Boo, like her siblings, also feels a need to maintain Seymour’s presence. When her son, Lionel, throws a meaningless pair of goggles into the lake in a fit, she notes that “They once belonged to your Uncle Seymour” (Salinger, “Down at the Dinghey” 84). This transfer of meaning to an object that was once insignificant is indicative of not only Boo Boo’s desire for her brother, but also of her efforts to maintain his presence in her life. These discarded goggles, combined with Seymour being a seer symbolically indicate that Boo Boo is not prepared to move on with her life, which is also why she has not returned to her home in the city and remains at their summer home. Although Boo Boo has created a life for herself beyond the Glass family, she remains one of Seymour’s students, and cannot permanently distance herself from that role. From a post-traumatic stress standpoint, Boo Boo continues to focus on

Seymour, and his ability to see the world around him, which is why the goggles are identified as Seymour's.

Salinger, however, chose to have Boo Boo serve as the logical sibling in that when discussing Seymour's haikus with Buddy, she doubts their complete accuracy. When Buddy analyzes Seymour's haikus, he points out that "Boo Boo has somewhat treacherously suggested that there may have been a little girl with a doll aboard this airplane" (Salinger, "Seymour: An Introduction" 133-4). Being the realist that she is, Boo Boo hints that Seymour's poetry is actually fictionalized (Bidney 124) in that it did not report events exactly as they occurred. Through Boo Boo's doubt in Seymour's poetry, Salinger indicates that Boo Boo's faith in Seymour is now deficient and her ability to adapt to society and logical side are actually what is considered freakish by the Glass family. These blatant differences between herself and her siblings alienate her, yet she feels further alienated by society upon Seymour's death.

When faced with Seymour's suicide, Salinger showed that Boo Boo could not cope with her teacher's absence and chose to stay away from New York society and remain at their second home (Salinger, "Down at the Dinghey" 76). This permits her to avoid city life and hibernate in her own world. Boo Boo is now able to focus on Seymour and actually transfers emotion to his goggles when her son throws them into the lake. This transfer of emotion ultimately leads to a heightened awareness of others and to the development of different relational capacities for girls and boys (Chadrow 470). For this reason, Seymour is unable to cope with this transfer of emotions whereas Boo Boo adjusts properly and leads a normal life, but remains isolated from society, thereby repressing her day to day life. According to psychoanalysis, possessions such as

Seymour's goggles are "the secret embodiment of its owner's unconscious desire" (Wright 33). In recalling her eldest brother's influence, Boo Boo is the only sibling that attempts to be rational, which is not necessarily what Seymour wanted for his siblings. Seymour wanted his siblings to independently think and follow their own beliefs, regardless of logic or rationality. When Buddy recalls a haiku about a little girl with a doll on an airplane that Seymour wrote, he insists it was original in its entirety. She is the only Glass child who realizes that her education and experiences on *It's a Wise Child* are traumatic in expressing her doubt of Seymour's poetry. As van der Kolk and McFarlane note "experiencing trauma is an essential part of being human" (487). Salinger had Boo Boo accept the trauma, but did not allow her to deal with it properly.

Boo Boo cannot deal with Seymour's suicide and though the antithesis of Seymour, she still needs her oldest brother. The human capacity to adapt (van der Kolk & McFarlane 489) is an important facet of a person's being. Boo Boo is able to adapt, but is not able to move entirely beyond Seymour's teachings and suicide, a trait of post-traumatic stress. Boo Boo avoids the city and moving beyond Seymour's teachings. Salinger portrays Boo Boo's need to verbally acknowledge Seymour's constant presence as a repeated act. According to Cathy Caruth, to attempt to regain what is lost is an "attempt to claim one's own survival" (64). Boo Boo knows that she must continue to live, but does not want to. In recognizing that she continues to survive Seymour, Boo Boo still feels the need to preserve Seymour's spirit by unconsciously acknowledging his influence and presence in her life by keeping items like his goggles. This possession reflected Boo Boo's fixation with Seymour, as well as his impact on her.

CHAPTER V

“THE PRAYER IS RISING”

(Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 158).

J.D. Salinger’s youngest Glass, Franny, was the next to be introduced and first appeared in the short story “Franny” in 1955. Franny had the shortest career on *It’s a Wise Child*, the child genius program that each Glass child participated in. For her, this ultimately leads to be both blessing and burden. Her lack of comparative success due to her brief stint on the show leads her to struggle with her own identity issues; therefore, she becomes obsessed with her own belief system. Salinger created these issues to also fault her eldest brother; through Seymour’s influence with a specially designed “curriculum” created in a quest for “as Zen would put it, for no-knowledge” (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 65) designed for her and her brother, Zooey. Franny exhibits several traits of post-traumatic stress disorder; she has not moved forward with her life since her brother’s suicide. In remaining in the same emotional state, Franny has become increasingly sensitive and has not matured beyond a certain point.

Through Franny and her brother Zooey’s unconventional education via “the curriculum,” they were exposed to various religious writings. Seymour read his favorite

Taoist tale to Franny, who was ten months old at the time, in an effort to reiterate its moral through his telling of the protagonists' experience: "In making sure of the essential, he forgets the homely details; intent on the inward qualities, he loses sight of the external" (Salinger, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" 5). This conveys one of Seymour's desires for Franny and the rest of his siblings: to dismiss life and focus only on spirituality, all the while remaining true to themselves. This early experience serves as the catalyst of many others for Franny, in which she begins her quest for the most suitable belief system. Franny's religious quest indicates that when Seymour died, her faith was shattered and her will to live died with him, which is why she dismissed her daily life in an effort to pray without ceasing.

In reading *The Way of the Pilgrim*, which Franny found on Seymour's desk, and becoming overly focused on her own beliefs (or lack thereof), Franny endures a self-inflicted emotional breakdown because of her obsession with the Jesus Prayer, which is a short prayer focused on Jesus having mercy on the individual saying it. Although Salinger conveyed this as emotional deterioration, this breakdown allows Franny to have an epiphany while she suffers (a trend amongst the siblings, where pain brings about a sense of cathartic knowledge); she realizes that the vast majority of people aren't real poets, because "If you're a poet, you do something beautiful. I mean you're supposed to leave something beautiful after you get off the page and everything" (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 19). Franny is inflicting pain on herself in praying ceaselessly and is ultimately trying to appease the poet in the process. Salinger created this epiphany to shadow the actions of Seymour, the poet who does something beautiful: his mind is so beautiful and unique that he ends his life in an effort to avoid the harsh realities of life. Although

Seymour's suicide primarily served as a selfish escape from the tainted world, it was also an act of preservation. Seymour escaped reality in favor of a world that he created for himself; one void of corruption. Franny's epiphany is similar to that of her brother, Buddy's; both epiphanies are directly linked to Seymour's haikus. Although Franny's concept of a poet is linked to Seymour, her obsession with the Jesus Prayer also leads her to a more profound connection with Seymour. Since *The Way of the Pilgrim* once belonged to Seymour, Franny most likely confuses her obsession with the Jesus Prayer with the achievement of attaining a higher spiritual connection to her deceased brother, and is obviously willing to abandon her own life in order to become closer to Seymour. Only thirteen at the time of Seymour's death (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 66), Franny never saw Seymour as a flawed human being, but rather as one who "was not capable of a wrong act" (French 17). Franny never saw Seymour in any other role than teacher, primarily due to the significant age difference between the two (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 64). Seymour contributes to the Glass family dynamics even after his death, in which even his possessions have an effect on his siblings. Franny's obsession with the prayer, however, indicates that she is too emotionally immature to deal with this concept of spirituality.

Franny's immaturity can be directly linked to Seymour's absence, because upon the completion of *The Way of the Pilgrim* she read *The Pilgrim Continues His Way*. The former, focuses on saying the Jesus Prayer incessantly, "First under the supervision of a qualified teacher...then, after the person's mastered it to some extent, he's supposed to go on with it on his own" (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 113). In Franny's life and informal education brought on by her brothers Seymour and Buddy, Seymour assumes the role of

the qualified teacher, and the most knowledgeable and gifted. The absence of Franny's qualified teacher causes Franny to realize that although her education has been effective, it ultimately never destroys her own ego, which seems to be her worst enemy. The constant presence of an ego is something that Seymour did not want for his siblings, as it is the antithesis of no knowledge; a concept based on the concept of learning to learn rather than to be superior. In the letter Buddy writes to Zooey he notes, "Seymour had already begun to believe (and I agreed with him, as far as I was able to see the point) that education by any name would smell as sweet, and maybe much sweeter" (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 65). Franny seems unable to gain knowledge without gaining ego, and Zooey recognizes this. "There's no difference at all, that I can see, between the man who's greedy for material treasure- or even intellectual treasure-and the man who's greedy for spiritual treasure" (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 148). Zooey points out that Franny's desire to attain a higher spiritual and selfless level is still directly linked to enlarging her ego. Since her teacher is not available to counsel her, she elects to avoid living and admits that her tragic flaw is that "I'm not afraid to compete...I'm afraid I *will* compete" (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 30). The absence of Franny's teacher, Seymour, causes not only her breakdown, but also reiterates an absence that already was too overwhelming for her to endure.

Although Seymour was deceased, Salinger had him as the inadvertent catalyst of this emotional breakdown, and Franny wants to talk to Seymour about her confusion (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 68) because only Seymour can save Franny (Hassan 157) since he established Franny's belief system. This confession causes Zooey to instead invoke the alleged assistance of Buddy, the next best alternative. Because of Franny's

incessant need for Seymour, and her desire for knowledge in a narcissistic manner, combined with her curiosity about spirituality, one can conclude that she is too emotionally frail.

Because Seymour's death impacts each Glass family member so profoundly, they each have issues with displacement of emotion and a tendency to fixate on beliefs and ideas that alter them, and because of this, each sibling loses their desire to live when Seymour dies. Franny is in search of not only a belief system, but a connection to Seymour. Zooey reveals to his younger sister it doesn't matter what belief system Franny believes, but rather, that as long as she believes in something, hence, "There isn't anyone out there who isn't Seymour's Fat Lady" (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 201). Zooey reminds Franny of the concept Seymour's fat lady, whom all Glass children were instructed to shine their shoes for before appearing on *It's a Wise Child*. Zooey explains that "The fat lady is Christ himself" (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 200), and as long as she believes, just as she believes in her connection to Seymour, he will ultimately remain as a presence in all of his siblings' lives. This fat lady, though not real in the physical sense, metaphorically represents any higher deity, and although a fictionalized image created by Seymour, is indicative of Seymour's poetry, or legacy and love, even though only Franny actually benefits from the fat lady's existence because now she knows that faith is enough. Zooey, however, struggles more with the concept of simply having faith, primarily because he is so similar to Seymour.

The education that Franny received makes the reader wonder who is to blame for her identity issues. In regards to post-traumatic stress, there are always events that raise "questions of causation and with these, issues of blame and responsibility" (Kolk &

McFarlane 489). Since Salinger has Franny experiment with her role as an adult, the trauma of Seymour's suicide combines with her own identity confusion. Identity confusion "would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself" (Caruth 17). Due to Franny's desire to develop into an adult role in society and maintain the education she received as a child, Franny's subconscious is unwilling to come to terms with Seymour's suicide. Franny's subconscious has been repressed, since Seymour is such a significant factor in shaping her being. To achieve this higher spirituality, Franny repeats the Jesus Prayer in an effort to become closer to Seymour, thereby illustrating that Franny has emotionally transferred her need for Seymour onto her need for spirituality.

Jacques Lacan proposed when an individual begins to identify with an idea or subject, their being actually alters. Franny's obsession with the meditation of the Jesus Prayer is a reflection of the Glass family dynamics in which the prayer caused a "transformation that takes place in the subject when [she] assumes an image" (Lacan 442). Salinger had Franny attempt to assume the role of the devout pilgrim, thereby representing the complexities within her family unit. Franny is one of Seymour's devout pilgrims, as are all of the other Glass siblings. J.D. Salinger shows Franny transferring meaning to an inanimate object, much like Boo Boo, when Franny takes Seymour's possession, therefore causing her mindset to evolve. Transfer, in this case, is the causation "into mediatization through the desire of the other" (Lacan 445). The actions of reading, praying and obsessing should have, according to Lacan, led to Franny's maturation. However, she is not mentally ready for this pivotal experience Franny's intense emotional involvement or "investment of that moment" (Lacan 445) leads to her

own destructive and death instincts. Due to repressing her issues with Seymour's suicide, it is evident that Franny has never come to terms with his death. In a subconscious refusal to continue her life's path and instead obsess over the Jesus Prayer, Franny's life has metaphorically ceased.

CHAPTER VI

“I SEE EVERYBODY IN THE FAMILY, INCLUDING MYSELF,
THROUGH THE WRONG END OF A TELESCOPE”

(Salinger, “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters” 5).

Through J.D. Salinger’s chronology of the Glass family saga, the next sibling to appear was Buddy Glass in the work “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters.” Buddy adored Seymour, and felt an incessant need to resemble Seymour as much as possible, including such acts as agreeing with Seymour, even if he didn’t understand him (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 65). Even at an early age, Buddy wanted to emulate his older brother. Although Seymour designed the curriculum, Buddy attached himself to that curriculum and appointed himself educator, even though it was Seymour’s development (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 65). With Seymour’s suicide came a large amount of repression for Buddy. He was unable to cope with Seymour’s death, because there was no one to pattern himself after. Once Seymour died, Buddy became even more reclusive, and abandoned his old life for one that embraced being in solitude. Through Seymour’s suicide and the associated elements of post traumatic stress, Buddy’s life metaphorically ended, and he chose to live through Seymour’s memory.

Buddy Glass, who Salinger admitted is parallel to himself, is notorious for his precocious observations, grew up closely with Seymour, the eldest Glass, and is primarily characterized through his self-created similarities with Seymour. Although the vast majority of Buddy's life has been spent trying to align himself with Seymour, one of the few direct admissions of his character is that "I know the difference between a mystical story and a love story" (Salinger, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" 49), in this case, the love story being a tale with an idealized leading man and a happy ending. Even though Buddy wants to encompass the ideals of Seymour, he knows that what prevents his story from being a love story is the absence of a romantic death at the end. This romantic ideal is present in Seymour's tale, and although he desires to be like Seymour, Buddy wants to please him even more and fulfill the standards set for him by Seymour, which is why Buddy abandons his old life upon Seymour's death.

Salinger depicts Seymour and Buddy sharing many eccentricities. Buddy wants to acclimatize himself to these traits in an effort to emulate Seymour. In an attempt to attend Seymour's wedding, Buddy begins with "I was not only twenty-three but a conspicuously retarded twenty-three" (Salinger, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" 15) as justification for his actions of staying with Muriel's family after she had been left at the altar by his brother. Buddy proves that he "felt a sense of isolation and loneliness more overwhelming than I'd felt all day" (Salinger, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" 51), hence, his attendance at the wedding itself, but also the idea that he stays with Muriel's family members. This loneliness is inexplicable, in that Buddy is surrounded by friends and family, which parallels Seymour's feelings of solitude. However, Seymour identifies himself with his own personal loneliness, and exploits it with the intention of

further alienating himself from the rest of society. After this admission Buddy internally admits “I felt an infinitely less furry sense of self-identification than I had since I’d got off the train earlier in the afternoon” (Salinger, “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters” 42) because Buddy is incapable of identifying himself without Seymour being present in some way, adding to his own neuroses and highlighting the fact that he cannot cope with Seymour’s absence, so he must repress his brother’s suicide.

Initially, Salinger only provided a glimpse of Buddy through a letter Buddy composed to his youngest brother, Zooey. In this letter, composed on the three year anniversary of Seymour’s suicide (Salinger, *Franny and Zooey* 61), Buddy highlighted the rationale behind the education forced upon the younger siblings, but also entailed what prevented him from attaining a doctorate degree. Buddy shares this in an effort to encourage Zooey to get his own. This letter creates a bond between Zooey and Buddy. Although Buddy cares for Zooey, it becomes questionable as to whether or not his motives in writing the letter were solely for Zooey’s benefit. Zooey, who Salinger made most similar to Seymour, is being used by Buddy in an attempt to fill a void. Through his letter, Buddy sees that a combination of himself, who imitates Seymour, and Zooey, who is so similar to Seymour, ultimately creating a living version of the Glass Poet. Even Bessie, mother to the Glass brood, links her two sons together in telling Zooey “Neither you nor Buddy knows how to talk to people you don’t like. Don’t love, really” (Salinger, *Franny and Zooey* 45). The Glass family, in some way, tries to avoid coming to term with the corrupt society in which they live and with Seymour’s education and later death, by metaphorically killing themselves. This evasion reiterates what Seymour always felt: he is misunderstood outside of his family. In fact, it is Buddy

whom Zooey imitates when phoning Franny in an effort to save her from her own breakdown. The letter appears to be a link between Buddy and Zooey in the same profound way that Buddy attempts to align himself with Seymour: through writing.

In his letter, Salinger has Buddy admit he never obtained a doctorate degree because he was a snob while working on his first degree, and because Seymour had his doctorate by the time most graduated high school, thereby making him feel inferior to his older brother (Salinger, *Franny and Zooey* 58-9). Buddy becomes a snob because of his own intellectual abilities, but also because it is something that Seymour inadvertently encourages: “Seymour cannot accept the injustices, the ugliness, the lovelessness and the egomania that surrounds him” (French 10). Seymour does not directly encourage snobbery, but rather, encourages awareness of the ego and the attempted destruction of it. Since Seymour cannot accept reality, he superimposes his own frailty onto Buddy. Buddy never realizes this, and continues on his quest for a spiritual connection to Seymour.

Salinger wrote the Glass family stories as Buddy in an effort to consciously “harmonize Seymour and make him immortal” (Wiegand 120), to expose the readers to his truth, but also in an effort to allow him to cope with his own trauma: being a part of a family of prodigies who have the rare gift to see the facades of the world. Buddy wants to become “indistinguishable from Seymour” (Wiegand 122) because of the profound respect he has for his brother.

Buddy appears to be incapable of finding his own enlightenment, instead utilizing Seymour’s haikus as his own form of edification (Bidney 119). Each haiku is representative of a different epiphany, and Buddy only uses the poem itself and

Seymour's own thought process prior to composing the poem to gain illumination, and he chooses to disregard any external and environmental circumstances that could affect his interpretation of Seymour's poem. Salinger exposes Buddy to these haikus and because of this, "Buddy's epiphanies are blended with Seymour's" (Bidney 123). Buddy learns that this emotional connection is only feasible because Seymour is deceased; when alive Buddy's admiration for Seymour quickly evolves into competition, and because of this, it is difficult to distinguish between either sibling.

Buddy is the author of the Glass family stories and the true focus of "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" and Salinger has Buddy share an excerpt of his and Seymour's childhood. In reflecting on his and Buddy's roles Seymour states, "your magnificent son Buddy as well as myself, are perhaps best suited to enjoy [privileges] only in dire emergency or when they know great discord in their family life" (Salinger, "Hapworth 16, 1924" 3), indicating that Seymour himself is not only committed to fulfilling his self-designated role as seer and poet, but also that Buddy's role is similar. Most importantly, Salinger does not want Buddy to disappoint his idol, more so than the rest of the Glass siblings. Seymour particularly shapes Buddy into the person that he has become; however, it is important to note that Salinger never actually depicts them interacting, other than in Buddy's memory. This lack of contact both prior to Seymour's suicide as well as after his death, serves as the catalyst for Buddy's need to impersonate and embody his brother; unconsciously, Buddy realizes that since his idol ceases to live, he must as well, and after Seymour's death, Buddy lives an isolated lifestyle. Salinger never shows the brothers interact, and the closest they do come to it is when Buddy attempts to attend Seymour's wedding.

Salinger seldom depicted the relationship between Buddy and Seymour. Ironically, this was a relationship that was the most significant to them both. In an effort to survive an emotionally scarring event, people tend “to integrate the awful experience and start developing the specific patterns” (van der Kolk & McFarlane 489), in this case, the patterns are Buddy’s desire to live in the past. Buddy’s incessant need to reminisce illustrates his inability to integrate a coping mechanism into his life, therefore he cannot move beyond Seymour’s influence. Salinger had both Buddy and Seymour become reclusive. Psychoanalytically speaking, individuals suffering from some form of repression must ultimately face reality, and more often than not, reality is much too harsh for them to endure. Upon his self-alienation, Seymour realizes that the only people who understand him are his siblings, and he expects to be misunderstood everywhere else in the world. Salinger has Buddy alienate himself. This illustrates that “the highest achievements of ideals...are inseparable from instinctual ways towards constancy” (Rivkin & Ryan, “Introduction: Strangers to Ourselves: Psychoanalysis” 389). Buddy needs a routine, and establishes it through self alienation and immersing himself in Seymour’s memory. Buddy’s actions are done out of loyalty to Seymour’s memory. This apparent loyalty to his brother becomes even more prevalent when Buddy identifies himself as Seymour in “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters” at Seymour’s wedding.

Through the density of their relationship, Buddy becomes increasingly neurotic, primarily due to his need to imitate Seymour. Salinger depicted Buddy dealing with coughing spells at his brother’s almost-wedding. These fits are representative of Buddy and Seymour’s awareness of their differences with the rest of the world. Those that experience post-traumatic stress “frequently [suffer from] displaced desires, or anxieties,

or drive energies that are unconscious onto expressive activities or compulsive thoughts” (Rivkin & Ryan, “Introduction: Strangers to Ourselves: Psychoanalysis” 390). Buddy’s cough is merely an example of this displacement of energy, and anxiety appears to be commonplace for the Glass children in that they all possess several unconventional behaviors, inadvertently uniting them in yet another way. The brotherhood between Seymour and Buddy is especially profound, and Salinger illustrates that through their complex relationship, they are conjoined in their aspirations for their siblings to become capable of seeing the beauty in a corrupt world. This leads to a far more profound and united relationship, and also produces the imposed curriculum.

Though competitive in nature, the brothers ultimately created the “curriculum” which educates the youngest Glass children, but also inadvertently influences the remaining siblings. The curriculum was designed by the brothers in an effort to not only enhance their siblings’ capabilities, but also to please the brothers themselves through carrying on the Glass family tradition, to ensure the youngest are educated also, and this educational system acknowledges the fact that both Seymour and Buddy want to protect Franny and Zooey until they are intellectually ready for reality. This incessant need for self-satisfaction illustrates that, according to psychoanalysis, “the highest achievements and ideals of civilization are inseparable from instinctual urges toward pleasure, constancy and the release of excitation and energy” (Rivkin and Ryan, “Introduction: Strangers to Ourselves: Psychoanalysis” 389). Salinger combines the curriculum with Buddy’s unremitting needs to live in Seymour’s shadow which is what leads Buddy to compose the Glass family stories for publication. Buddy is unable to move beyond Seymour’s death, nor can he assimilate into society, so he immerses himself in preserving

Seymour's memory. Although Buddy does not intend these works to be popular literature, Buddy needs to compose these works in an effort to become closer to his dead brother and to justify the abandonment of his own life. Buddy's ultimate goal is not truly to be closer to Seymour, but rather, to duplicate him. In an effort to be so similar to Seymour, Buddy avoids ever having to truly live without him by secluding himself and writing about Seymour. Buddy is able to abandon his own life for that of a dead life in Seymour. In recreating and inadvertently resurrecting Seymour, Salinger demonstrates that for Buddy, his post-traumatic stress was brought on only by Seymour's suicide. As van der Kolk and McFarlane note, "trauma does not present a radically new experience, but rather confirms some belief that an individual has tried to evade" (491). In this case, Buddy tries to avoid Seymour's absence. Since he realizes at a young age this would be impossible and this realization is reiterated as an adult when Seymour dies, Buddy opts to simply become emotionally closer to Seymour, and through this, his actual self dies. Through death, all that survives is the deceased's spirit, and that is all that Buddy wants of himself to survive, since that is all that is left of Seymour. This emotional connection is similar to that of Franny's search for a belief system; however, Buddy found that his belief system is entrusted to Seymour whereas Franny's is in Seymour's fat lady. Since Buddy relies so heavily on Seymour, he is unable to see the world around objectively, and "through the wrong end of a telescope" (Salinger, "Rise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" 5).

Little is truly known about Buddy directly because of his need to resemble Seymour. These stories that Buddy has composed are all that remain of his brother Seymour, and the two are closely linked, even more so than Zooey and Seymour, because

Salinger had the two eldest set the standard for the rest of the Glass children. Buddy could not simply cope with his need to emulate Seymour and also his suicide, therefore, he chooses to repress any significant emotion that could foster his grieving and write about Seymour and the rest of the Glass family, and metaphorically kill his previous self. Coping mechanisms often are “the structure and history of the book, in its traumatic form of repression and repetitive reappearance, thus mark it as the very bearer of a historical truth” (Caruth 20). Psychoanalytically speaking “It is the truth of the traumatic experience that forms the center of its psychopathology” (van der Kolk & McFarlane 490), which explains Buddy’s fascination with Seymour. Buddy wants to share his experiences with the world, yet learns the most difficult lesson of all: he will never *be* Seymour, which is why he turns to reclusion.

CHAPTER VII

“YOU CAN’T LIVE IN THE WORLD WITH SUCH STRONG LIKES AND DISLIKES”

(Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 118).

Zooey, introduced two years after Franny’s quest for spirituality was published, finally offered a conclusion to Franny’s breakdown. Zooey seemingly managed Seymour’s death appropriately, but still remained scarred from the experience, as well as the experiences Seymour forced upon him. Zooey ultimately suffered from post-traumatic stress, not only from Seymour’s suicide, but also from the education that Seymour imposed upon him.

Zooey, the second youngest child in Salinger’s Glass family, is the most like Seymour, without actually trying to be. Zooey’s similarities to Seymour are juxtaposed to Buddy, who actually tries to emulate Seymour. With an intellect that rivals Seymour’s, combined with “a wholly beautiful face” (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 51) indicative of innocence, comparisons of the two brothers began as early as Zooey’s initial appearances on *It’s a Wise Child*, in which Seymour is rated the “best to hear” and Zooey is “generally placed second in order of preference” (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 54). Zooey,

notorious for his difficult personality and precocious nature, “had been smoking [cigars] since he was sixteen, and regularly, as many as a dozen a day” (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 124). Cigars, often associated with older men, are indicative of Zooey’s rebellious and judgmental side, in which he has gained the wisdom of an old man because of his studies. Zooey stands out from his remaining siblings because he is the most like Seymour.

Like Seymour, Zooey is not easily influenced by others, including his own family; therefore, Zooey resists a formalized doctorate degree in order to pursue acting against his mother’s wishes. In a letter, Buddy addresses Zooey’s aspirations for the future; this shows that Salinger does not want the remaining siblings to forget their brother. The letter, composed on the third anniversary of Seymour’s death, shares that Buddy confessed “There are many times when I think you’ve forgiven Seymour more completely than any of us have...the rest of us...were outwardly un-bitter and inwardly unforgiving” (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 68). This confession implies that Buddy has become angry with Seymour and resulted in his forgiveness. Because of the internalization of anger about Seymour’s suicide that the rest of the siblings create ineffective coping mechanisms, such as an attempt to pray without ceasing or joining the seminary in an effort to pursue the religious life. Even after his suicide, Salinger has Seymour remain as the reigning presence of guidance in the Glass family, specifically when Franny began on her religious quest of the Jesus Prayer.

Salinger has Zooey, the replica of Seymour, develop a plan to aid in Franny’s recovery because “only [Franny and Zooey] can save each other” (Malcolm 10); they are the ones most directly and consciously influenced by Seymour. Zooey’s plan involves

entering a sacred place therefore, he enters Seymour and Buddy's old bedroom with a handkerchief on his head (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 176-7) as a sign of respect for the teachers and this holy and sacred place of his education. This place is sacred to the Glass siblings because it literally served as the gateway to their education and interpersonal issues that were brought on by post-traumatic stress. In this temple, Zooey calls Franny and assumes the role of the next best thing to the poet Seymour: the aspirant poet, Buddy. This phone line is kept in Seymour's name because of Buddy and "in order to perpetuate Seymour's name and to symbolize his continuing influence on them as a teacher and guide" (Kazin 48). By being in a sacred place and utilizing a sacred medium of communication (sacred because Buddy lacked a phone line at his home at all), Zooey attempts to teach Franny the message Salinger tried to convey through the concept of the Fat Lady: this version of Christ "is a gift of love from Seymour" (French 9). By instilling a belief system in Zooey, Seymour has provided insight and justification for his act of educating his brother. Although the Fat Lady is the primary gift from Seymour, he also bestows yet another gift on his siblings: their desire for knowledge of the world and of the self in a selfless manner. This selfless quest for knowledge has an impact on all of the siblings; however, the capacity of this quest for "no knowledge" is not consistently effective; Buddy's quest for knowledge of the world, his self and his brother is an unconscious desire to mimic Seymour in an effort to get him back. "No knowledge" encompasses the idea that knowledge is the reward, and that knowing leads to spiritual enlightenment. Salinger depicts Zooey denouncing this concept, not because Zooey does not believe in it, but rather, he disagrees with how the concept was enforced. Buddy eventually admits to Zooey that although acting may have been his passion; if he did fail,

it is due to his ever-present educators, Seymour and Buddy. These educators bring about a traumatizing experience for both Franny and Zooey: the curriculum. Zooey remains scarred from his curriculum he has unsuccessfully repressed the teachings and experience because he knows that “We’re freaks... We don’t converse, we expound. At least I do” (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 140). Zooey’s informal education is especially wounding to his psyche because it highlights the significant differences between himself and other children his age. Salinger made Buddy aware of what he and Seymour did to their youngest siblings because Buddy admits that Zooey “would make a damn site better-adjusted actor if Seymour and I hadn’t thrown in Upanishads and the Diamond Sutra and Eckhart” (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 59-60). Although his training for no-knowledge leads him to an imagined of omnipotence, Zooey still struggles with adapting to life outside of the Glass family. This adaptation becomes so difficult, in fact, that Zooey develops an ulcer “because when I’m not thinking properly, I let my feelings... get personal” (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 163). This tendency to be overly sensitive is similar to that of Seymour, as both men often become irrationally angry because they let things “get personal” (Salinger *Franny & Zooey* 163).

Like Seymour, Zooey perfects martyrdom claiming that “I’m sick to death of being the heavy in everybody’s life” (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 148). Salinger depicted Zooey’s self-inflicted feelings of victimization as not only a catalyst for Zooey’s anger in general, but specifically the anger towards his oldest brothers, who leave only scars behind. These issues of anger and indecision are ultimately due to Seymour’s death; without the educator present in his daily life, Zooey sees little reason in continuing. Salinger wanted Zooey to desire dormancy in his life, which illustrates that a significant

facet of Zooey's life died with Seymour because Zooey didn't attempt to achieve this dormancy until after Seymour's death.

The relationship between Zooey and Seymour normally would have been nonexistent, had it not been for the education that Seymour pioneered. One of Seymour's goals is to establish a connection of the oldest Glass generation (himself and Buddy) with the youngest (Franny and Zooey). Although the education is created to foster a relationship, it became the thing that left the most severe emotional scars on Zooey, which he acknowledges when he states that he and Franny "are freaks, the two of us" (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 103). According to Zooey, his education has proven to be the vehicle to his judgment and also to his frequently irrational fears of the real world (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 163). Like Seymour, who also "never wanted to grow up," Zooey's similarities to his oldest brother also shape him to be one of the more judgmental Glass children. Salinger had most of the Glass children remain true to their teacher, Seymour, and the siblings did not become angry. Buddy acknowledges, "There are times when I think you've forgiven Seymour more completely than any of us have...the rest of us...were outwardly unbitter and inwardly unforgiving" (Salinger, *Franny & Zooey* 68). Since Zooey is so similar to Seymour, he has the ability to understand Seymour's actions more than the rest. Zooey is the only sibling with the ability to appropriately channel his feelings of resentment towards his brother Seymour, but is still affected in his day to day life.

Due to his educational experiences, Zooey has experienced post-traumatic stress later in life. "Most people who have been exposed to traumatic stressors are somehow able to go on with their lives...that does not mean that the traumatic events go unnoticed"

(van der Kolk & McFarlane 489). Although Salinger allowed the experience to shape Zooney, Buddy eventually sees the error of his ways in attempting to educate the youngest Glasses. Buddy's realization shows both Seymour and Buddy projecting how they want their "selves" to take shape onto Zooney. In attempting beings to adapt they ultimately become "models outside [themselves] and externalize [his] own feelings by assigning them to others" (Rivkin and Ryan, "Introduction: Strangers to Ourselves: Psychoanalysis" 391). Because Zooney was groomed by Seymour, he was unable to deal with his own feelings and ultimately becomes the angriest Glass child, who not only finds ways to assign his resentment to others, but also experiences other issues. Commonly, those suffering from post-traumatic stress experience "considerable interpersonal and occupational problems" (van der Kolk & McFarlane 489), hence, Zooney's indecision about his acting career. These issues of adaptation from his post-traumatic stress brought on by the curriculum also account for Zooney's judgmental traits and fears of the real world, thereby making adaptation to the real world nearly impossible. Both Zooney and Seymour's avoidance of the real world is also indicative of their traumatic issues. Van der Kolk and McFarlane note that commonly "the core issue in trauma is reality" (490), a thing neither sibling ever wanted to face. Zooney's indecision about his life's path can be attributed to Seymour's suicide; Zooney's surviving Seymour not only left him feeling fearful of continuing to live without his brother, but also unprepared for reality. Psychoanalytically speaking, Zooney actually fears entering the "real world" much like Seymour. Individuals suffering from post-traumatic stress tend to "remain attached to early forms of emotional life" (Rivkin and Ryan, "Introduction: Strangers to Ourselves: Psychoanalysis" 390) in an effort to prevent the necessity of maturity and adulthood.

Zoey consciously chooses this. Zoey's issues stem from his anger at Seymour, but also from his lack of preparation for reality. Those that suffer from post-traumatic stress tend to be overly fixated on the event and suffer from a "lack of preparedness to take in a stimulus that comes too quickly" (Caruth 62). In Zoey's case, he is not prepared for adulthood, and more specifically, dealing with Seymour's education and later Seymour's suicide. Both Zoey and Seymour try to avoid the real world, but only Seymour truly succeeds. Seymour's suicide prevents Buddy from confronting these issues, but definitively creates more issues for his siblings. Paradoxically, Seymour's death has made life simpler, as well; his suicide has provided an escape, as well as a way to convey a meaningful act of purification. Seymour purified himself in eliminating the outside world and also purified his siblings' lives through his suicide.

Characteristically, after a suicide, the surviving friends and family of the deceased become angry and confused. Due to the distress of his education, Zoey possesses "involuntary intrusive memories [which] is a normal way of responding to dreadful experiences" (van der Kolk & McFarlane 489). Salinger has Zoey somehow manage to attain normalcy in dealing with his brother's suicide. Because of his similarities to Seymour, Zoey has a better chance of forging on in life, but still remains one of the "deceased" in never moving on from the education that he received.

CHAPTER VIII

“THEY ARE MISFITS-BUT THEY ARE NOT SEYMOURS” (Malcolm 5).

The Glass children were always perceived as different from the norms of society, by their own standards as well as others’, and they were decisively “a family of nonconformists” (Wiegand 122). However, it was their oldest brother, Seymour, who remained the catalyst of their nonconformity. Seymour psychologically impacted them and their choices, even after his death. He shaped their personalities, career paths and educations to such an extent that they were never the same, and ultimately it became psychologically impossible for them to ever assimilate into society without one another because of their own creation of truth; the siblings were overtaken by Seymour’s death and created their own reality. Ultimately, after Seymour’s death each sibling was united in yet another way; each suffered from a loss of a sense of themselves, a loss of spiritual awareness, and suffered from the same cause of grief, which was Seymour’s influence. The inability to separate reality with a scarring event is a common trend within the realm of post traumatic stress disorder (Caruth 41). Since the Glass siblings cannot cope with their education and their loss, they continually focus on these events. Survivors of a scarring event live a life that is “an endless testimony to the impossibility of living”

(Caruth 62) and become completely fixated on the event. Comprehending the Glass family is imperative to understanding Seymour himself, who was oftentimes aligned with a higher deity by his siblings, and the opposite is true as well. Ultimately, in examining Seymour's underlying belief system, the reader is not only exposed to world cultures and beliefs from a secondary resource, but also the likely beliefs of J.D. Salinger himself.

J.D. Salinger sought to convey his own commentary on society as a whole and reiterate the concept that the youth are innocent and beautiful, as shown in Seymour's interactions with a little girl on the beach in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish." Salinger also acknowledged that none can stay pure and beautiful for eternity; who he examined a family that was the antithesis of average in an effort to prove that those are the gifted have the innate ability to see the world from a corrupt and pure standpoint as adults. This perhaps is Salinger's inadvertent commentary on himself; he appears to believe that he is one of these gifted adults. Salinger strove for his readers to embrace their internalized youth, because definitively, they would reach a spiritual nirvana through their innocence. The Glass children are products of this mindset and are the medium of Salinger's religious ideals. The Glass family has the ability to teach and edify not only one another, but also their readers, who always will take away a religious realization after reading and understanding their tales.

The complex relationship Salinger developed between the siblings shows that family influences various levels of being. As Nancy Chodorow noted, "basic features of the family structure entail varied modes of differentiation for the ego and its internalized object" (470). Seymour's influence on his family was more than surface level; Seymour impacted each ego and how they interacted with the outside world. This close family

bond justifies the Glass's preoccupation with their deceased brother, especially in remembering that those that are traumatized "become fixated on the trauma and on to lead traumatized and traumatizing existences" (van der Kolk & McFarlane 487). Seymour's issues ultimately became victorious over his already too fragile emotional state, thereby leaving his remaining siblings to fend for themselves via their own individualized ways of coping. The siblings are not able to cope at all and essentially fail at living their previous lives after Seymour is dead.

Specifically, Salinger wanted Seymour to resemble the closest being to a living god. Seymour possessed a "supersensory perception" (French 16), was supposedly the "sanest and strongest of men" (French 17), and in the eyes of his siblings, he was incapable of acting erroneously, hence, their justification of his actions. The most effective way for Salinger to portray this sort of once living god was to have him kill himself in a self sacrificing way that allowed he and his family the need for spiritual knowledge. Seymour Glass was J.D. Salinger's modernized version of a humanized god. Through his similarities to his creator, Seymour is also familiar to his readers, even if they were reading about his life for the first time. We have all known someone who is larger than life in our eyes, and we have unknowingly placed them on a pedestal. Seymour is that familiar face with traits traditionally considered admirable: the concept of caring about what is actually important and of not caring about what others think, the spirituality and knowledge that we ourselves do not possess, and the gumption to follow through on plans, regardless of the consequences.

Salinger ultimately accomplished conveying his own religious beliefs and causing a realization in his readers that faith in a higher deity is enough, regardless of

background. He has beautifully transmitted the concept that it doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you believe. What makes this theme so unique is that the belief can be in anything, as long as it exists. J.D. Salinger created Seymour Glass especially for the purpose of illustrating this mantra. Seymour and Salinger alike have taught their readers that Seymour's existence and education was so profound for his siblings, that we as readers wish we were a Glass, too so that we could possess the same knowledge.

Because of my own Salinger induced epiphany I chose to explore the Glass family on several levels, from the surface, through examining their respective literary works as well as the criticisms of others, to the core, through the examination of psychoanalysis and post-traumatic stress as an applicable and significant explanation of the Glass siblings. As seen in Seymour, it is apparent that someone who has the ability to convey such profundity is a pillar within a family. Seymour taught his siblings that the ego is the foundation of corruption; in emphasizing selflessness, the remaining Glass siblings truly learned these lessons in losing the desire to continue living after Seymour's death. Seymour's influence perpetuated after his death through the education he provided for his siblings. Because of this education, Seymour is not only a poet, but the most pivotal Glass sibling who has served as the vehicle of the family's characters.

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