J.D. Salinger's Glass Stories:

The Genius and 1950s America

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Abstract

This thesis explores how J.D. Salinger's short fiction concerning the Glass family responds to the post-war, 1950s reemergence of American anti-intellectualism. Through these stories Salinger shows interest in four options of refuge for the person of intellect in which to preserve themselves amid this national tenor: the university, the Bohemian subculture, the family and the monastic life. None of these options, however, is viable for the Glass children who are not merely intellectuals, but geniuses. Though Salinger demonstrates interest in these spheres of refuge, they are not solutions in themselves to the Glass children's alienation from the world and desire for authenticity. While inherently aloof from society because of their genius, the Glasses struggle with their alienation from the world in contrast to the institutionalized intellectual who welcomes it. In this reading of the Glasses, Salinger seems to posit that the genius strives to break out of isolation to touch humanity and, as Franny Glass says, "leave something beautiful." The genius strives for an authentic, pure life and relationship to God that does not exist solely in any one refuge. A comprehensive reading of the Glass stories ultimately points to a hybrid solution. There is no direct path—whether religious, academic, or cultural—to an authentic life; even as they take certain lessons through their experiences in the various realms, neither a life isolated within the university, on the road with the Bohemians, contained to their families, or withdrawn to a monastery can lead them to authenticity. Despite the Glasses' fate as geniuses to be distanced from humanity, they are able to intermittently break through their isolation through the mode of art. This thesis argues that the Glass children must become artists and entertainers in order to exist in a squalid world as geniuses—that imitation of authenticity through art is as close as they can get. Through their arts—acting and writing—the Glasses reflect this authenticity onto their audiences within the pages, and on to us, the readers, and can momentarily touch humanity and "leave something beautiful."

This thesis begins by introducing the Glass family, its individual members, and establishing their genius from the get-go. Therefore this thesis's aim is not to prove the Glass's genius, but to study their fate as geniuses in a antagonistic society. The 1952 presidential election between General Dwight Eisenhower and Governor Adlai E. Stevenson in which Stevenson's drastic defeat illuminates to what extent the American people held the intellectual in contempt, leading to the four spheres of refuge for the person of intellect. In order to understand how the Glass children cope with their alienation from society and desire for authenticity, the remaining four chapters will explore the four spheres of refuge as they existed and were perceived in 1950s America. The second, third, and fourth chapters relate the historical context of these spheres, the university and concurrent Bohemian sub-culture, the family and the monastic life, respectively, to the Glass children's narrative throughout the short stories. Finally, this thesis will examine the Glasses' roles as entertainers and artists.

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Short Titles

Hofstadter, Richard. Anti-Intellectualism in American Life. New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc. 1963: Anti-Intellectualism.

May, Elaine Tyler. Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era. New York: Basic Books, 2008: Homeward Bound

Salinger, J.D. "A Perfect Day for Bananafish." Nine Stories. New York: Back Bay Books, 2001: "Bananafish"

.....The Catcher in the Rye. Boston: Little, Brown and Co. 1951: Catcher

.....Franny and Zooey. New York: Bay Back Book, 2001: "Franny" or "Zooey"

....."Hapworth 16, 1924." The New Yorker. 19 June 1965: 32-85: "Hapworth"

.....Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour—An Introduction. New York: Bay Back Books, 2001: "Raise High" or "Seymour"

Introduction:

J.D. Salinger's first short story published in The New Yorker was the birth of Salinger's narrative regarding the Glass children, and yet it ends with protagonist Seymour Glass firing "a bullet through his right temple."[1] Despite Salinger's blunt and final image of death in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," Seymour's suicide is not the end of the Glasses.[2] On the contrary, it propels Salinger's authorial journey into the 1950s where he uses the Glass narrative to create friction against social norms of the times. It marks the beginning of Buddy Glass's, narrator and "writer" of the short stories, endeavor to understand and encapsulate Seymour, whose legacy hovers over his siblings long after his death. In doing so, Buddy unravels the family history through a series of disjointed short stories that explores the fates of the genius Glass children in juxtaposition with post-war America.

Post-war 1950s America was a unique and peculiar decade. Often regarded as a place holder between the 1940s war years and the revolutionary 1960s, the overarching summation of the decade is a perfected dullness masking controlled panic. It was a time when the nation's fears of complete annihilation by the Communists were evaded through escapism—through a national phoniness. In a momentary flashback of the times, an observer might visualize an impeccably coiffed family of four posed in a bomb shelter with their new dishwasher. It was the time of McCarthyism and consumerism, nuclear fear and night caps. Interestingly, Warren French in his The Fifties: Fiction, Poetry,

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1 J.D. Salinger, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," Nine Stories (New York: Back Bay Books, 2001) 26. Hereafter cited in the text.
2 Jack R. Subletter, J.D. Salinger: An Annotated Bibliography, 1938-1981 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1984) 12.

Drama, titles the first chapter "The Age of Salinger."[3] According to French, Salinger unquestionably dominated the 50s with the 1951 publication of The Catcher in the Rye, followed by three other slim books— Nine Stories (1953), Franny and Zooey (1961), and Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour—An Introduction (1963)—and a limited number of uncollected short stories (Subletter, 8-9).

Salinger's popularity during the period is indisputable and yet simultaneously a curious phenomenon: the amount of criticism and popular media commenting on the author and his works in proportion to the amount he had actually published, was immense. At the height of his popularity, Salinger stopped publishing. "Hapworth 16, 1924," which appeared in The New Yorker in the 1965, was Salinger's last published work. After this, Salinger plunged deeper and deeper into a reclusive state. A recent 2008 New York Times article, "Still Paging Mr. Salinger," wrote that Salinger, on the eve of his 90th birthday remains "so secretive he makes Thomas Pynchon seem like a gadabout."[4] While Salinger's reclusion is neither a focus of this thesis nor employed as evidence for any argument within the text, it does report on an anxiety of the times. The enormous popularity of Salinger's works in contrast to his parallel reclusive lifestyle bears a truth about the times in which Salinger was writing and in which his Glass stories take place.

Salinger's short fiction concerning the Glass family responds to the post-war 1950s reemergence of American anti-intellectualism and the tension between the genius and the world around them. The Glass family stories that I will mostly reference in this

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3 Warren French, "The Age of Salinger," The Fifties: Fiction, Poetry, Drama ed. Warren French (Deland Florida: Everett/Edwards, inc. 1970) 1.
4 Charles McGrath, "Still Paging Mr. Salinger," The New York Times. 30 Dec. 2008: C1.

thesis are: "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" from Nine Stories, Franny and Zooey, Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour—an Introduction and "Hapworth 16, 24." Through these stories, Salinger shows interest in four options of refuge for the person of intellect in which to preserve themselves amid this national tenor: the university, the Bohemian subculture, the family and the monastic life. None of these options, however, is viable for the Glass children who are not merely intellectuals, but geniuses. Although Salinger never truly demonstrates the genius of the Glasses—outside of their rhetoric and the way in which characters outside their family respond to them—taking Salinger's word for it allows for a more meaningful reading. In "Franny," Franny Glass's boyfriend Lane asks her, " 'You think *you're* a genius?'"[5] Franny does not give Lane an answer. Instead, she avoids answering him: "Aw, Lane. Please. Don't do that to me," (29). Had Salinger chosen to actually demonstrate Franny's genius here, or any of the Glasses' genius elsewhere in the text, readers would be given the opportunity to be skeptical of it. Instead, Salinger shows their fates as geniuses—how they react to the world and the world to them.

It seems appropriate here to introduce the Glass family as a whole. In order of their births, Seymour, Buddy, Beatrice (Boo Boo), Walt and Waker (who are twins), Zachary (Zooey) and Frances (Franny) are all the children of Bessie and Les Glass, retired vaudevillians, (see Fig.1). They grew up in a "not unfashionable apartment house in the East Seventies" of a "distinctly Manhattanesque locale" and were all contestants on the radio program "It's a Wise Child."[6] While the radio program originated as a kids' quiz show, Buddy explains in "Raise High" that once Seymour was recruited for the

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5 "Franny," (New York: Bay Back Book, 2001) 29. Hereafter cited in the text.
6 "Zooey," (New York: Bay Back Books, 2001) 74. Hereafter cited in the text.

show "he changed the whole format, really. He turned the program into a kind of children's round-table discussion." [7] Salinger depicts the effects of their genius without actually showing it. The way in which Seymour changes the format of the show signifies a mind more elevated than just an intelligent child who can answer questions. The fact that all of the Glass children were contestants suggests that they share in this genius as well.

While the Glass children are all geniuses, Seymour is at the heart of the stories. The Glass children revere his legacy; they venerate his memory in a saint-like, almost God-like way. To his siblings, Seymour was a "blue-striped unicorn, [their] double-lensed burning glass...consultant genius...portable conscience...supercargo, and [their] one full poet."[8] The surviving Glass siblings remember Seymour not only as a teacher, but something more—as a seer. Salinger's naming of Seymour is a tribute to this. Sybil Carpenter, the four-year-old Seymour befriends on his 1948 vacation in Florida in "Bananafish," refers to him as "See more glass," (14). Seymour's suicide, then, is a massive loss to his siblings not only because they lost a brother, but because they lost a spiritual guide.

In the aftermath of Seymour's death, as the surviving Glass children grow up, they become increasingly aware of their disposition and struggle to fully understand Seymour's legacy and lessons. With the 1950s reemergence of anti-intellectualism and the nation's general hostile attitude toward people of intellect, the Glass children's aloofness from the world is magnified. As geniuses, they are alienated from humanity,

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7 "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters," (New York: Bay Back Books, 2001) 67. Hereafter cited in text.
8 "Seymour—An Introduction," (New York: Bay Back Books, 2001) 124. Hereafter cited in the text.

but their alienation exists *a priori* to their experience in contrast to the institutionalized intellectual who welcomes it. Though Salinger demonstrates interest in the aforementioned spheres of refuge, they are not solutions in themselves to the Glass children's alienation from the world and desire for authenticity especially in a time of prevailing escapism and phoniness. In this reading of the Glasses, Salinger seems to posit that the genius strives to break out of isolation to touch humanity and, as Franny Glass says, "leave something beautiful." The genius strives for an authentic, pure life and relationship to God that does not exist solely in any one refuge. A comprehensive reading of the Glass stories ultimately points to a hybrid solution. There is no direct path—whether religious, academic, or cultural—to an authentic life; even as they take certain lessons through their experiences in the various realms, neither a life isolated within the university, on the road with the Bohemians, contained within their families, or withdrawn inside a monastery can lead them to authenticity.

The 1950s Reemergence of Anti-Intellectualism

In order to understand the general mood of the 1950s and to place Salinger's works in context with the period, I use Richard Hofstadter's 1963 Anti-Intellectualism in American Life as a key text in my study of Salinger's short works and the parallel times. While Hofstadter's claims may be considered outdated, I find the proximity of its publication to the 1950s all the more useful and relevant to my research. In this regard, I place Anti-Intellectualism as less of an historical, retroactive criticism than as a contemporaneous criticism of a phenomenon. This categorization provides greater personal insight to me for how intellectuals themselves may have defined and perceived

the American intellectual. Hofstadter establishes his most fundamental claim on anti-intellectualism as he writes:

> Anti-intellectualism in various forms continues to pervade American life, but at the same time intellect has taken on new and more positive meaning and intellectuals have come to enjoy more acceptance and, in some way, a more satisfactory position.[9]

Hofstadter contends that although anti-intellectualism always existed in American society in some way or another, it was is far more suffused in the fabric of the country at the time of his (and Salinger's) publication. What seems contradictory is that he also points out the changes the times offered the intellectual: they were more accepted and more comfortable within society. This new "positive meaning" for the intellectual stems largely from the expansion of the university which bestowed careers for the intellectual as well as the expert or professional who emerged from the university trained in a specific vocation, for example, the psychoanalyst. This new "acceptance" is in contrast to the traditional belief that the intellectual only hinders the creative mind "when it is trying to be sociable," (426). The intellectual, Hofstadter explains, is traditionally "either shut out or sold out," (417). For the intellectual, detachment and alienation are seen as inherent to their role. The converging changes in American society appear paradoxical as Hofstadter explains: "While [intellectuals] do resent evidence of anti-intellectualism, and take it as a token of serious weakness in our society, they are troubled and divided in a more profound way by their acceptance," (393). Although the intellectual does not conform to society and exists as an intellectual by retreating to the ivory tower, the 1950s

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[9] Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life, (New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc. 1963) 393.

exhibited an era of conflicting trends, such as the university institution and budding Bohemia, that frustrated the already existing apprehension of intellectuals to abandon their isolation.

Although intellectuals were offered a more "satisfactory position," this was not a position embedded in regular society. The university was still an institution distinct from the public, and the intellectual still faced great hostility from the general American public. Hofstadter writes that "it was...a tendency to see in McCarthyism, and even in the Eisenhower administration, some apocalypse for intellectuals in public life," (5). While he explains that this "tendency" is no longer possible (in 1963), I think that looking back fifty years later offers a clearer perspective to see that perhaps an intellectual apocalypse is a bit exaggerated, but that anti-intellectualism enveloped the mood of the 1950s. This included the presidential election.

On November 4, 1952, a nearly twenty-year span of Democratic control in the White House came to a abrupt end when, by what The New York Times described as "an emphatic majority," voted General Dwight D. Eisenhower President of the United States.[10] The transfer of power between parties marked a turning point from preceding presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry Truman's policies regarding expansive government social and economic programs. In that same defining year, The New York Times also published "A List of 275 Outstanding Books of the Year."[11] Among the 275 books was J.D. Salinger's Nine Stories, one of the sixty works of fiction selected. While the mere selection of Salinger's collection does not denote the immense popularity he

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10 Arthur Krock, "Race is Conceded," The New York Times 5 Nov. 1952: 1.
11 "A List of 275 Outstanding Books of the Year," The New York Times 13 Dec. 1953: BR44.

exhibited during this time, an advertisement in the same paper displayed three days prior to the release of the "275" does shed light on Salinger's popularity; it is an advertisement for Elizabeth Janeway's Leaving Home which claims that her works have "been compared to J.D. Salinger."[12] The use of Salinger's name as a marketing device to promote the selling of another, perhaps less popular, book implies the promotional power of Salinger's name and how popular he truly was. It would be hard to believe that the contemporaneous occurrences of Salinger's popularity and the sharp shift in Washington politics could have existed completely independently of each other. I believe the 1952 presidential election reflects the overall tone of the American post-war era, and therefore, the depiction of Salinger's Glass children.

As I mentioned previously, Eisenhower won the presidency in a "landslide" against Governor Adlai E. Stevenson. Considering the tenure the Democrats had in the White House up until the 1952 election, the polls alone signaled a decisive shift in what the American public wanted not only for the future of their nation, but what they wanted in that precise moment, in that specific and unique cultural atmosphere. This large-scale event exposes an American consensus not only politically, but socially and culturally. Many factors distinguished the two presidential candidates, but the most compelling and relevant way in which they differ and one that reveals the general milieu of the era can be seen through Hofstadter's theory of anti-intellectualism. The election between Eisenhower and Stevenson for the White House was an election between two polar opposite figures, both in terms of politics and personalities. General Eisenhower was a true military man: straightforward and tough-minded. Governor Stevenson was widely

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12 "Display Ad 43," The New York Times, 10 Dec. 1953: 44.

known as the intellectual and was thought to be deeply contemplative in just the way that Eisenhower was not. In The New York Times dated July 27, 1952, an article entitled "The Two Candidates: A Study in Contrasts" describes Eisenhower and Stevenson and how they were "vastly different men."[13] While it is probably inherent to a bi-partisan election for the candidates to differ from each other, the stress of their differences in this article is less on their different political agendas than on their personalities:

> Governor Stevenson is distinguished for the intellectual content of what he says; General Eisenhower's speeches since he returned lack precisely this quality; General Eisenhower is tough-minded, simple, and direct in his approach to a question, Governor Stevenson more complicated and introspective, much more inclined to brood and worry over his problem. (Reston)

The article continues to say how Stevenson's indecisiveness in accepting or declining the Democratic nomination was symptomatic of his "brooding and worrying" over problems. On the other hand, the article notes, "...as soon as it became apparent to General Eisenhower that the time had come to make a decision, he made it." The candidates' contrary decision-making modes were exposed from the inception of the election and Stevenson's seems to have been criticized more than Eisenhower's, whose technique was more esteemed. Even the article places a stronger negative connotation into "intellectual" than the word itself signifies. In this sense, Stevenson is described as an intellectual who is contemplative to an excessive and disadvantageous extent. Stevenson was described as "a Wilsonian figure, a highly literate, idealistic, and urbane"

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13 James Reston, "The Two Candidates: A Study in Contrasts," The New York Times 27 July 1952: E3.

–descriptions that are, generally, positive if read independently from a presidential campaign, (Reston). They are also qualities that seem more expected in the intellectual.

The very word, intellectual, carried with it, and often still does, ideas of the self-righteous, superfluous, and pedantic person who inherently cannot relate to the public—either because intellectuals view themselves in their own ivory tower or because the public puts them there. This stuffy intellectual archetype appears throughout Salinger's Glass stories and is labeled with the same negative connotations seen in the aforementioned articles from the time. At the same time, the Glass children, who are defined as precocious geniuses, are wholly lovable. While this appears contradictory, the distinction between the spurned intellectual and the genius displayed by the Glass children is one I hope to more fully understand through the Eisenhower versus Stevenson election and how it colored, or reflected the larger cultural colors of the 1950s.

In regards to the 1952 election, I argue that Governor Stevenson's defeat to General Eisenhower was largely a demonstration of the anti-intellectualism of the time. While their platforms and politics cannot be underestimated, the way in which the two men campaigned and related to the American public helps in understanding what made Stevenson appear to the public as so starkly intellectual. John Robert Greene writes in The Crusade: The Presidential Election of 1952 that Stevenson's campaign speeches are possibly the "greatest legacy" of his 1952 campaign.[14] His writing is provocative, witty, moving, and often at times, poetic. In his speech "The Verdict—We Pray As One," delivered on November 5, 1952 in Springfield, Illinois after he had conceded the race to

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14 John Robert Greene, The Crusade: The Presidential Election of 1952. (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc, 1985) 52.

Eisenhower, he says: "We vote as many, but we pray as one," (319).[15] Stevenson's command of language is obvious; he conveys, in less than ten words, the magnificence of democracy, the necessity of the American people to stand strong behind Eisenhower and for their country, while gracefully accepting his loss.

Whether the fear of Communism spreading, spies, and atom bombs were rational or not, the fear was *real*, and therefore affected how Americans acted, and voted. The fear of Communism developed into and fed a parallel anxiety of American intellectual comradeship with Communists. This apprehension was heavily translated through Joseph McCarthy's Reign of Terror and blacklisting. In a 1954 New York Times article, Dr. A. Whitney Griswold, president of Yale University, spoke about the "disunity" among the nation: "America is 'a house divided against itself and all but inundated by a lawless, anti-intellectual flood.'"[16] Despite the collectiveness in which the nation voted for Eisenhower in 1952, the absolute fear of Communism and treason spread widely and deeply, dividing the nation. Many intellectuals were blacklisted for "sympathizing with the enemy." In a 1956 article, a journalists writes how the question of academic freedom is addressed at the annual meeting of the American Association of University Professors (A.A.U.P.): "In recent years a number of teachers and professors has figured in investigations into communism and membership in various subversive groups. A number has been dismissed after taking the Fifth Amendment before Congressional committees."[17] In response to this dismissal of professors on grounds of Communist beliefs from Ohio State University, the University of California, Temple University,

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15 Adlai E. Stevenson, "The Verdict—We Pray As One," Major Campaign Speeches of Adlai E. Stevenson 1952, (New York: Random House, 1953) 319.
16 "Griswold Decries Talk of Disunity," The New York Times 9 Dec. 1954: 23.
17 Benjamin Fine, "Education In Review," The New York Times 1 April 1956: 159.

Rutgers University, and Jefferson Medical College, the A.A.U.P asked its members to regard the aforementioned schools in their own "academic black list." One 1952 New York Times article even writes of the necessity to use the new medium of communication, the television, in order to counter "anti-intellectual forces that are looking to the destruction of the educative process as we have known it in this country.'"[18] While intellectuals within the universities often held a certain contempt for the basic concept of the institution, they had to wage a larger war against anti-intellectualism.

The relationship between intellectuals and the American university in the 1950s was fairly new grounds for the country. The expansion of the American university was boosted due largely to the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, more commonly known as the G.I. Bill. Among other things, the bill gave servicemen and women unprecedented educational opportunities allowing them to "[resume] their educational or technical training after discharge...not only without tuition charge up to $500 per school year, but with the right to receive a monthly living allowance while pursuing their studies."[19] The novelty of the expanding university helps to explain the heightened tension between intellectuals and the institution. With the expansion of the university also came an increase in the number of people enrolling in higher education and attending the universities. As more people came in contact with materials and information that had previously only been accessible to the elite, a new tension arose between . This tension is most prominent in Salinger's Franny and Zooey and "Seymour—An Introduction" where

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18 John N. Popham, "TV Use Seen to Combat 'Anti-Intellectuals' Who Attack the Present Educational System," The New York Times, 13 Dec .1952: 23.
19 "GI-Bill History," United States Department of Veteran Affairs, (October 2008, http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/history.htm).

Buddy, Franny and Zooey all find themselves at some point within the university, but hold it in contempt nonetheless. On top of this overall anxiety, there was also the strange new power of America's global position following World War II, and apprehension over how America would play its part in global affairs. In retrospect, it is clear that the qualities belonging to the intellectual—Stevenson— could be easily eclipsed by ones more intimidating to threatening nations and ideals. More specifically, the values held by the no-nonsense military man that the American public overwhelmingly voted into office seemed in opposition to the intellectual curiosity promoted by educational systems.

Eisenhower was not the poster boy for anti-intellectualism. As General of the Army, Eisenhower proved himself to be a great leader and a skillful thinker; however, many have historically downplayed his achievements: "To suggest, as many writers have, that Eisenhower in 1952 was a political novice defies the facts of his military career. It was quite obvious...that [his] rise through the ranks was due less to his tactical abilities than to his skill as a bureaucrat and a politician" (52). Eisenhower was not actually an anti-intellectual, but his election signifies how he can be seen as a reflection of the reemergence of anti-intellectualism in the 1950s. On the contrary, Stevenson can be seen as an emblem of the intellectual. His defeat epitomizes the intellectual's displacement from society and the decade's overall tenor. Salinger's works, written and taking place within this context, exhibit the Glass characters' fate in this national ethos and, over the course of the entire series of stories, offers places of solace in which the Glasses can comfortably exist.

Despite the Glasses' fate as geniuses to be distanced from humanity, and are even more distanced by the reemergence of American anti-intellectualism, they are able to

intermittently break through their isolation through the creation of art. Although Salinger himself became a recluse, his characters do not. This thesis argues that the Glass children, namely Buddy, Franny and Zooey, must become artists and entertainers in order to exist in a squalid world as geniuses—that imitation of authenticity through art is as close as they can get. Through their arts—acting and writing—the Glasses can momentarily break through their isolation and touch humanity to "leave something beautiful."

Spheres of Refuge

Salinger's works respond to this national anti-intellectualism by establishing four central options of refuge for people of intellect in which to preserve themselves: the university, the Bohemian subculture, the family and the monastic life. Despite these alternatives for relocation outside of the antagonistic mainstream, Salinger does not seem interested in only one alternative for the Glass children. While he places Seymour, Buddy, Franny, and Zooey within the university, they simultaneously protest against the institution. None of the Glass children take up the Bohemian life, but they are rubbed against it creating a friction. Similarly, although Salinger does have Waker Glass become a monk, Waker is seldom written critically about. Still, Waker's designation as monk should not be ignored as it nevertheless shows Salinger's interest in monastic withdrawal. Finally, even the family as a place of refuge for the Glasses is not typical of American families of the time, and the Glasses do not find absolute peace there either.

While Salinger places the Glasses in context with each intellectual refuge, they absorb only certain aspects from them and largely reject others. Ultimately, it seems that the Glass children's geniuses makes them stand out from other people of intellect and make it impossible to inhabit only one intellectual sphere of refuge. In the anti-

intellectual milieu of the 1950s, Salinger's stories suggest that in the post-war world, true authenticity does not inhabit any one sphere, and so the genius—the Glasses—do not either. Perhaps for the genius, then, authenticity is a necessity to exist. This need for authenticity is why Seymour committed suicide; he could not detach himself from the shallowness and phoniness of the world.

Still, the question that lingers is why is Seymour the only Glass to kill himself? What do the younger Glasses—namely Buddy, Franny and Zooey since they are the most central figures in the narrative—do differently from Seymour? By exploring the Glasses' qualms within the four given places of refuge Salinger offers in response to anti-intellectualism, this chapter will seek to understand why the rest of the Glasses do not similarly "fire a bullet" through their heads, as Seymour does in "Bananafish." Through Salinger's placement of the Glass children within different refuges, we can see more fully how he works to create distance and friction between his characters and the social norms of the time.

Chapter 1: The University and Bohemia

> "On especially black days I sometimes tell myself that if I'd loaded up with degrees when I was able, I might not now be teaching anything quite so collegiate and hopeless as Advanced Writing 24-A."
>
> J.D. Salinger

The 1950s voting booth exposed the nation's macro-movement of American anti-intellectualism. Eisenhower's victory over Stevenson by nearly six and half million votes was a powerful demonstration of how voters did not trust Stevenson to protect the nation from the ever-looming threat of Communism. The nation's confidence rested in Eisenhower, leaving the intellectual figure, appropriately, alienated. The university, however, is a microenvironment within the nation where this role is largely reversed; the university depends upon the intellectual. It is crucial to understand that while certain intellectuals found the university to be a haven from anti-intellectualism, many intellectuals, among them the Beats, denounced the institution as a way of "conforming" or "giving in."[1] Richard Hofstadter elaborates on this peculiar relationship in Anti-Intellectualism:

> The dislike of involvement with 'accredited institutions' exhibited by the prophets of alienation bespeaks a more fundamental dislike of the association of intellect with power. The frightening idea that an intellectual ceases altogether to function as an intellectual when he enters an accredited institution (which would at one stroke eliminate from the intellectual life all of our university professors) may be taken as a crude formation of a real problem. (427)

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1 While I am concentrating on the American university in this section, institutions, as a whole, were considered in the same regard by intellectuals, Beats, and arguably, Salinger's Glass family.

As this passage points out, the relationship between the intellectual and the university was (and somewhat still remains) a tangled and blurred one in which both the institution and the intellectual depend on the other. By the 1950s, the placement of the university in American life was far more developed than it had been prior to World War II, liberating intellectuals from their so-called alienation. At the same time, alienation is thought to be at the heart of the intellectual's role in society, hence the idea of the ivory tower. This is largely because the institution, with its standards and more conventional expectations, poses a threat to the creative career to the freelance intellectual. Hofstadter notes how some viewed the institution as a metaphorical prison for their creative minds (427). This is very much how the Glasses view institutionalized education.

Through my research and reading of the Glass family, it seems that this muddled relationship between the intellectual and the growth of the American university in the 1950s led to three distinct reactions from refuge-seeking intellects. The first reaction includes the intellectuals who wholly accepted their comfortable position within accredited institutions. They committed themselves entirely to the institution. A sub-category of this branch, which the next chapter will explore, is the expert who specialized in a vocation that could be shared with the public, as opposed to the scholar or academic who remained alienated from the public. Often Salinger's characters describe these academics as pompous, pedantic, and phony; they are largely the bane of the Glass family's existence.[2] In Franny and Zooey, a frustrated Franny complains to her collegiate boyfriend, Lane, about her discontent with the English Department as well as with her peers at lunch before the Yale football game cocktail party:

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2 Salinger's Catcher's Holden Caulfield voices his contempt for "phonies" throughout the novel and is carried over to the Glass stories.

> 'Where I go, the English Department has about ten little section men running around ruining things for people, and they're all so brilliant they can hardly open their mouths—pardon the contradiction. I mean if you get into an argument with them, all they do is get this terribly *benign* expression on their—' (15).

Lane interrupts Franny asking her, "What the hell's the matter with you?" Franny's disgruntlement with academia, its loyalists and Lane's defensive rejoinder mimics the relationship between content academics working within the institution and another kind of intellectual who cannot fully accept the university model. Franny's comments suggest there is an undeserved arrogant air that saturates the university. She does not seem simply annoyed with the "little section men running around," but something seems more at stake; they are "ruining things for people." There is a sense of destruction that emits from these walking "contradictions." The self-important hybrids are too "brilliant" to "open their mouths," which implies Franny's awareness of the inauthentic nature of the university. The institutionalized intellectual does not distinguish themselves from the world with creative freedom and thought but because of arrogance; the differences that Salinger describes are more attitude-driven than founded on intellectual strands of thought.

While Franny does voice dissatisfaction with the university, she does not, however, completely reject it. Those who do completely reject the university inhabit the second type of refuge to the growth of the university. This includes the Beats, also known in Salinger's work as "the bohemian-types." David Sterrit writes of the Beats in his book Mad to Be Saved:

> [The early Beats] were driven by a commingling of alienation, anxiety, idealism, and intellectual energy, and both rejected the social given in favor of an aggressive insistence that humans must define themselves and their reality through their choices, decisions and actions.[3]

The Beats did not compromise. They could not work within the institution, and therefore worked completely apart from it, without the restrictions they believed the university would impose upon on their creativity. Even their name, as Sterrit articulates, suggests the "tormented…or worn down and defeated" feeling that conventional social norms weighed down on them (2). At the same time, the Beats did not dwell in their own ivory tower; they resisted the pretentious alienation and attempted to live authentic and liberated lives. Jack Kerouac's 1958 novel's title, On the Road, alone is able to depict the Beats departure and rejection from any kind of intellectualized and controlled way of living.[4] They are not bound to a finite location. While it can seem that the Beats preached and practiced a version of anti-intellectualism by completely rejecting the institution, they did not by any means conform to mainstream American values of the time. The Beat movement was a complete rejection of conformity and institutions. It offered another refuge for the intellect who disapproved of the university.

Salinger's references to the Beats indicate his interest in the movement as an alternative path of refuge for people of intellect. For example, when Franny tries to articulate her contempt for the institution, Lane, her self-proclaimed college-intellect boyfriend, asks Franny why she calls the professors, who he deems invaluable, not true

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3 David, Sterritt, Mad to Be Saved, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998) 3.
4 Jack Kerouac, On the Road (New York: Penguin Books, 1999).

poets: " 'Do you have to be a goddam bohemian type, or *dead*, for Chrissake, to be a *real poet*? What do you want—some bastard with wavy hair?'" ("Franny," 18). Franny tells Lane "no" and tries to move on with the conversation. Later, as she tries to explain what a "real poet" is to Lane, she does not bring up the Beats again. The fleetingness in which Salinger references the Beats, as well as the fact that it is Lane, not Franny, who references them indicates that Salinger is not as serious about the Beat movement as a refuge for intellects, let alone for the genius Glasses, as he is about the value of the university in which he places three of his characters. While both the Beats and the Glasses similarly hold the institution in contempt, the Glasses do not identify with the Beats. Salinger does not write a story about Franny taking off on the back of a motorcycle on an impromptu road trip as the wind tousles Kerouac's hair against her cheek. Instead, her story relies on the fact that she remains within the university, as a malcontent on the midst of a nervous breakdown, but nonetheless, within the institution.

As her lunch continues with Lane, Franny's frustration with the university takes a physical toll on her; she eventually faints in the bathroom by the end of "Franny," and in "Zooey" Salinger's narrator, Buddy, tells how Zooey ultimately helps Franny recover. Franny's contempt for the university and its effects on her can be seen in a further conversation between her and Lane at lunch:

> "I don't *k̃now* what a real poet is. I wish you'd *stop* it, Lane. I'm serious. I'm feeling very peculiar and funny, and I can't...I know this much, is all...If you're a poet, you do something beautiful....The ones you're talking about don't leave a single solitary thing beautiful....It may just be some kind of terribly fascinating,

syntaxy *droppings*—excuse the expression. Like Manlius and Esposito and all those poor men." (119)

This passage demonstrates the third type of reaction to the university, a reaction elicited by Salinger's genius Glasses. While Lane represents the pseudo-intellectual who reveres the institution, Franny tries to express why she resents the English Department, but her attempt is unclear as she even explains that she doesn't "*know*." It is not until "Zooey" that her discontent is clearly articulated; her derision for the university, the professors and her peers rests on the idea that it is not poetry if it does not "[leave] something beautiful." However, in "Zooey" we discover that Franny's breakdown is more religious-based than this passage implies. What we can take from this passage is that Salinger's placement of Franny in this world suggests that from his perspective neither the 1950s university nor Bohemia offers an absolute haven for the genius. She does not identify with "all those poor men" in the university, but she also shares in Lane's disapproval of "bastards with wavy hair." The fact that Franny does not include the "wavy hair bastards," the Beats, as "real poets" implies she finds inauthenticity in the new Bohemia, that they produce the same "syntaxy *droppings*" as the institutionalized intellectuals, but through a different road. Ultimately, Franny's inability to express herself manifests itself physically when she becomes ill; as she attempts describing the "*some*thing" that a "*real* poet" possesses, she begins feeling "peculiar." At the end of "Franny," Salinger closes the story on an isolated image of Franny after she has fainted: "Alone, Franny lay quite still, looking at the ceiling," (43). The image invokes Franny's inability to submit to university, and she does not make it to college cocktail party.

At this point, it is safe to say that the Glasses belong fully neither to the institutionalized intellectual factions, nor to the countermovement. Buddy's experience, as illustrated in "Seymour—An Introduction," provides more evidence to how the Glasses are derelict from 1950s American society. Buddy is a writer and, after never earning a B.A., he teaches creative writing at a university and lives in an isolated cabin outside of New York. He rejects the university by not completing his bachelor's degree, yet finds himself employed there. He also attempts to create an alienated world for himself by living in the woods, and not only often finds himself missing New York City, but, in the reality of the story, his cabin is also only three miles away from real civilization. This alludes to a kind of monastic withdrawal as a kind of refuge, but Buddy is clearly haphazard about his withdrawal. Buddy shares his discontent with academia with Franny, and it is present in almost all of his writings. It is hard to imagine how Buddy lives with these contradictions. Hofstadter elaborates on Buddy's ambiguous existence by articulating how "painful" it would be "to imagine what our literature would like if it were written by academic teachers of 'creative writing' courses, whose main experience was to have been themselves trained in such courses" (427). Buddy is certainly conscious of this vicious circle of wasted art and mediocre writing, but he is trapped inside of it himself. He complains about the majority of the students he teaches. When explaining one of the three types of students he comes across in "Seymour" Buddy writes:

> [A] young person who actually rings doorbells in the pursuit of literary data suffers, somewhat profoundly, from a case of academicitis, contracted from any

one of half a dozen Modern English professors or graduate instructors to whom he's been exposed his freshman year (160).

For Buddy, the institutionalized university is a hotbed for a terrible disease, the very contagious "academicitis," of which he seems to have somehow immunized himself against while the other English professors have taken ill. But, what is "academicitis"? For Buddy, and Franny would agree, it is the unnecessarily pretentiousness of a phony intellectual; there is a self-righteousness that the Glass children seem to correlate with those who remove themselves to the ivory tower and believe that they are simply better than everyone else. While oftentimes it seems that the Glass children esteem themselves too highly and look down on the world around them, their obsessive self-consciousness about their own tendencies to be hypocrites—to be self-righteousness, phony and arrogant—distinguishes the Glass children from those they hold in contempt. Franny says to Lane: "I'm just sick of ego, ego, ego. My own and everybody else's," ("Franny," 29). Franny admits to her own shortcomings as she criticizes other people; her discontent with academia is related to her personal dissatisfaction within the 1950s society. On the other hand, the fact that Salinger does not have Lane admit any fault of ego seems to prove Buddy's idea of "academicitis"; the people contracted with it are not aware.

As Buddy continues with his description of this kind of "young person," he describes an incident when one of his students visited his cabin to ask a question about Buddy's work on Sherwood Anderson. As Buddy cut wood outside feeling a "trifle Thoreauish," the student asked him if he thought "there was an endemic American *Zeitgeist.*" Buddy wraps up the story saying "Poor young man. Even if he takes exceptionally good care of himself, he can't at the outside have more than fifty years of

successful campus activity ahead of him," (161). "Zeitgeist" is a very academic-sounding word, and in this passage Buddy cannot help deplore the student for sounding so pretentious and phony. While he points his finger specifically at this student, we can extrapolate the accusation to include the overall arrogant intellectualism that had become a dominant component of the environment surrounding him, part of the *zeitgeist* that envelops the Glass family.

This critique of society brings me back to Buddy's paradox. While he denounces the academic zombies, and removes himself after hours to his somewhat isolated cabin, he still chooses to teach for them and participate in a heavily academic world. Perhaps in the anxiety of the decade, in the domestic war between anti-intellectualism and intellectualisms, Buddy is ultimately more comfortable within the university. This predicament arcs through almost all of the Glass stories and is one with which we often see Buddy play tug-of-war. If we take into account that Buddy is the author of the Glass stories, the stories largely amount to Buddy's own written journey to place himself and his siblings in a world in which they struggle to find solace. We see this in a letter Buddy writes to his youngest brother, Zooey, as Buddy expresses his concern for his brother's future in "Zooey." Though "Zooey" takes place in 1955, he letter is dated 1951:

> 'I'm to write and tell you that you have your Whole Life Before You and that it's Criminal if you don't go after your Ph.D. before you go in for the actor's life in a big way. [Bessie] doesn't say what she'd like you to get the Ph.D. in, but I assume Math rather than Greek, you dirty little bookworm.' (58)

These academic praises are probably the last words Salinger's readers would expect out of Buddy's mouth, but he is speaking as a surrogate for their mother who

clearly wants Zooey to continue his education. While Buddy mocks his mother's speech, capitalizing each first letter in "Whole Life Before You," he has still agreed to persuade Zooey to continue his education. The letter concludes with Buddy's epiphany in which he tells Zooey to "*Act*...when and where you want to, since you feel you must, but do it *with all your might*," but the conclusion—to be an artist—does not come easily; it takes the experience of writing the letter to come to such a powerful assertion and arguably the experience of writing all of the Glass stories (68). Buddy's advice reveals his own uncertainty in his life choices and where he currently finds himself. His critique of and response to society exposes his own vulnerabilities and apprehensions. In fact, it seems that Buddy regrets his own failure to complete a B.A., let alone a Ph.D. His tone hints at the fact that Zooey has nothing to lose by getting his Ph.D.; it would never make him less authentic or subordinate him to a phony-status. Buddy's letter continues:

> 'I take it for granted you *know* that for all the years I've been moving my literary whore's cubicle from college to college, I still don't have even a B.A. It seems a century ago, but I think there were two reasons, originally, why I didn't take a degree...One, I was a proper snob in college, as only an old Wise Child alumnus and future lifetime English-major can be, and I didn't want any degrees if all the ill-read literates and radio announcers and pedagogical dummies I know had them by the peck...' (58)

This passage seems more typical of the Glass children we know. At the same time, it is written in retrospect; Buddy is much older than Zooey and has contemplated over his life and through the lessons Seymour has left behind. He knows, however, the way in which his youngest siblings look up to him as a teacher, especially since he and

Seymour took it upon themselves to teach their own curriculum to the much younger Franny and Zooey. Once again, Buddy is not only the speaker in the letter, but he is also the author of the story being told. It therefore works as a dual analysis of Buddy's life. While he explains his reasoning at the time for not completing a B.A., those reasons cease to be as crucial for him to have turned down earning his B.A., and he can now more reasonably advise his youngest brother to do what he failed to. Even though, like Franny, Buddy was and continues to be disgusted with "pedagogical dummies," he tells Zooey to look past them—to abandon the "proper snob" attitude and complete a Ph.D. because it will provide a freer creative life than the one Buddy currently has as he "whores" himself out to the institution: "On especially black days I sometimes tell myself that if I'd loaded up with degrees when I was able, I might not now be teaching anything quite so collegiate and hopeless as Advanced Writing 24-A" (59). Buddy's perception of his own situation seems depressing, and yet despite how the letter advocates Zooey endure the pains of the institution, Buddy, as mentioned before, ultimately tells Zooey to pursue acting. Even Buddy's reference to being an "It's a Wise Child alumnus" implies that his experience as a child entertainer made a college career less realistic for him. The message Salinger sends in the letter are mixed; it would be impossible to decipher what exactly Buddy is telling Zooey to do because he spends so much time trying to convince Zooey to stay in the university, and then, flip flops by the end. Salinger seems to have a foot in both doors. While in the end the artist's life becomes the best choice for the Glass children, the conclusion does not come easily. The fact that Buddy's letter offers both lives of intellectual pursuit and anti-intellectual creativity as solutions indicates that

Salinger himself considered both options of refuge and, ultimately, opted for the artist's life.

The contradiction of Buddy's choice to not earn a B.A., to take a job as a creative writing teacher at a university, to call out the numerous phonies he comes across everyday, and then to try to convince Zooey to go back to school exposes the ever-growing tension created from the friction of the expanding university, anti-intellectualism—including the Communist scare within universities—and the Glasses' own convictions of not giving in to any institutionalized intellectual faction. The Glasses cannot seem to locate themselves within this tense setting. It takes a complete exploration of Buddy's short stories in order to fit the pieces together, and yet the Glasses never quite settle into any one intellectual locus.

Chapter 2: The Nuclear Family

While not necessarily an intellectual refuge, the American nuclear family of the 1950s did provide a place of asylum for intellectuals. Amid the overall anti-intellectual mood, the expansion of the university, its counter-culture, and the fear of spreading Communism, the nuclear family was a source of stability for families on every rung of socioeconomic the ladder. Similarly to how the Salinger places the Glasses within the university contemporaneously with its expansion, he also places a great stress on their family during an era that saw a great migration back to the home and family. In light of this, and the idea of the 1950s American family, Elaine Tyler May's Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era serves as a critical text within my research. May writes about the relationship between the post-war rush into domesticity and cold war politics. She argues that the definitive goal of the 1950s American family ideology was containment as a private solution to a social problem. She writes, "It was not a perfect life, but it was secure and predictable."[1] Salinger's juxtaposition of the genius Glass characters within the family, like the university, offers the family an option for refuge for people of intellect from the 1950s American ethos.

At the same time, while the Glass family at first glance may fit quite nicely within the 1950s family paradigm as they are an incredibly close-knit family themselves, but they are not the typical family. The family does not necessarily provide a haven for the genius; Seymour kills himself shortly after marrying and beginning his own family. Only one of the Glass children, Boo Boo, gives herself entirely to this nuclear lifestyle when she moves to the suburbs after she marries and then raises a child there. While

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1 Elaine Tyler May, Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 29. Hereafter cited in text.

Salinger clearly shows interest in the family as an option of refuge for the genius, the nuclear family is not wholly satisfactory as a response to the anxiety of the 1950s.

The Movement Inward to Marriage

It is important to grasp the scale on which the movement toward the family exploded in following the war. In light of the shift inward from Communist fear, the convention of marriage essentially provided the foundation for the exodus back to the home. It makes perfect sense then that marriages increased tremendously following the war. According to May:

> Those who came to age during and after World War II were the most marrying generation on record: 96.4 percent of the women and 94.1 percent of the men. These aggregate statistics hide another significant fact: Americans behaved in striking conformity to each other during these years...the average age [of] marriage [dropped], [and] almost everyone was married by his or her mid-twenties. (23)

While the Glass family is a close-knit family that seems to fit the trend May describes, May is actually writing about the family that emerged as a result of the Cold War and therefore during and after World War II. The 96.4 percent of women and 94.1 percent of men that were marrying were among Seymour, Walt, Waker, Buddy, and Boo Boo's generation—not their parents'.[2] Of these five Glass children, only Seymour and Boo Boo ever married, and of these two marriages, only Boo Boo's resembles the family structure that May examines. Boo Boo's family, however, is on the periphery of

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2 Zooey and Franny are the two youngest children, nearly a generation younger than the eldest sibling, Seymour, and are therefore excluded from the list of Glass children who were among the generation May's Homeward Bound discusses.

Salinger's interests. Her family is written about in Nine Stories' "Down at the Dinghy," but does not emerge in the rest of the Glass stories. Even Boo Boo, who is depicted as the ever-maternal eldest sister, only appears in the remaining stories are through letters. Similar to the Bohemian life, Salinger demonstrates interest in this refuge, but does not indulge in it the way he does with either the Glass siblings' relationships with each other or Seymour's marriage to Muriel Fedder. While Seymour's marriage is given the most space on the page, it is also the most enlightening in terms of how the Glasses—let us consider Seymour a kind of once-walking and breathing representative emblem of the Glass children—respond to the he 1950s American inclination toward young marriage in what was perceived as an unstable world.

While May's analysis is a comprehensive evaluation of the post-war family, Barbara Ehrenreich's The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment explores more specifically the twentieth century journey of men in terms of marriage. Her work complements May's greatly as it sheds light on the forces that compelled men to marry in the fifties. Ehrenreich's assessment of the fifties is that marriage was as much, if not more, an economic institution as it was for love. She writes that although "We romanticize [marriage], as in the popular song lyrics of the fifties where love was an adventure culminating either in matrimony or premature death," we forget that marriage in the fifties was as much about, or even more, the economics as it was about love, or as May writes, about feeling safe.[3] In the fifties, women were not equal wage earners and, in general, would not have been able to live the same quality of

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3 Barbara Ehreneich, The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment, (Doubleday: New York, 1983) 3.

life without a spouse. According to Ehrenriech, the economics of marriage seem to have been forgotten:

> It is, in retrospect, frightening to think how much of our sense of social order and continuity has depended on the willingness of men to succumb in the battle of the sexes: to marry, to become wage earners and to reliably share their wages with their dependents. (3)

This line of thought about marriage is not only largely disregarded today, but it is also absent as a motive for marriage in the Glass stories. In Ehrenriech's words, Seymour "succumbs," yet not to the battle of the sexes, but to battle between himself and society. This suggests strongly that Seymour sees marriage as an answer to something else. Although Seymour's fears leading him to marry Muriel do not necessarily fall under the same category as anxiety about Cold War containment, Seymour's marriage to Muriel does imply a desire to resolve his issues with the world around him. It is as if Seymour thinks marrying someone so "primal" in her desires, so normal as Muriel, will relieve him of the inner turmoil he constantly wrestles with in order to exist in such a squalid world. Seven years after Seymour's suicide, which happened to take place on a honeymoon-like getaway with Muriel, Bessie Glass tells Zooey: " 'I'd wish you'd get married,' Mrs. Glass said, abruptly, wistfully," ("Zooey," 105). While out of context, we can imagine any mother saying something like this to her young adult son. But Salinger writes it as a complete non sequitur; Zooey has just spent the previous page complaining about his and Franny's alienation from the world. His mother's response, while perhaps a true concern of the character's, is also a literary clue from Salinger imposing the time's concerns on Zooey. Even after it becomes apparent to the Glasses that Seymour's

marriage did not work as a solution to his suffering, the Glasses' mother still hints at the fact that marriage can be a solution to a problem. Salinger therefore uses Bessie Glass as a character clearly close to the children, but she also reflects the 1950s mood of the nation in which Seymour tried to define himself.

"Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters," and "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" are both stories that largely refer to Seymour's marriage, but we must be aware that the narrator is not unidentified, but rather a specific person, Buddy Glass. This narrative point of view gives us inside perspective as to how the Glasses tend to respond to the world. Without an inside source, we might take certain things Seymour says to be condescending or possibly insane; however, we trust Buddy. He is honest about his attempt to answer questions about Seymour's death through his writing. So, although Buddy may have a hyperbolic, tangential or skewed perception at times, we as readers are fully aware of his agenda. His transparency as a narrator allows us to trust him. Therefore, by understanding Seymour's narrative through Buddy's perspective we can more fully see the failures Salinger finds in the familial refuge for the genius.

Similarly to how Buddy expresses his unrelenting derision for the university and the intellectual employed at such institutions yet nevertheless finds himself working within the machine and amongst the people he so greatly despises, Seymour creates a similar paradoxical predicament for himself. Despite his disdain for conventional marriage trends, Seymour submits to the institution. In "Raise High," Buddy retroactively narrates his experience on Seymour's wedding day. In short, Buddy finds himself to be the only Glass attending the wedding, which becomes all the more awkward when not even Seymour, the groom, shows up. Buddy winds up bringing Muriel's

matron of honor, one of Muriel's aunts, and a few others from her side back to his apartment after a series of unfortunate holdups, such as a parade, make it impossible to get where they had planned on going in the first place. Muriel's friends and family treat Buddy as a scapegoat for Seymour's actions, criticizing Buddy and Seymour as if they were one in the same—this is important because it allows the readers to map Seymour's narrative onto his siblings. During this strange congregation of people at his New York apartment, Buddy finds Seymour's journal and takes the liberty to read from it. It is important to note that while Buddy is retelling an incident that took place in 1942 and is reading from an entry in Seymour's journal dated around 1941 or 1942, Buddy is reproducing this passage in 1955, that is, after Seymour's 1948 suicide. Salinger therefore employs Seymour's thoughts in his diary as a way to inform on what possibly led to his suicide. The passage from Seymour's journal reads:

> 'My one terrible consolation is that my beloved has an undying, basically undeviating love for the institution of marriage itself. She has a primal urge to play house permanently. Her marital goals are so absurd and touching. She wants to get a very dark tan and go up to the desk clerk in some very posh hotel and ask if her Husband has picked up the mail.' (83)

Seymour's disdain for the institution of marriage is obvious. But what is even more wrenching in this passage is that he not only holds the institution in contempt, but wants to marry a woman who is in love with the conventional idea of marriage and yet finds it the endearing. His diction, using words such as "absurd and touching," elevates him to a place above being simply human and, at the same time, shows how he is incapable of basic human attachment. First time readers of Salinger might find this

condescending; however, Seymour is just the opposite; he wants to find beauty in living without thinking too deeply. In this entry, it is as if Seymour is looking down from a godly perspective onto Muriel and is therefore able to find beauty within her superficiality—a humanity that is not attainable to the exalted mind of the genius. Later in his diary he writes: " 'But are [Muriel's motives] despicable? In a way, they must be, but yet they seem so human-size and beautiful that I can't think of them even now as I write without feeling deeply, deeply moved,' " (84). Seymour's response to Muriel's motives seem counterintuitive to what we know about Seymour. Here, he finds humanity in Muriel's motives because they are "so human-sized," but in "Bananafish," it seems that Seymour cannot cope with her "despicable" motives and that it is Muriel's superficial motivations that lead to Seymour's suicide. The fact that the passage referring to Muriel's "absurd and touching" marital goals predicts what actually happens in "Bananafish" –the couple stays a very posh hotel where Seymour kills himself—removes the blame from Muriel. The inconsistency is addressed by Salinger in "Seymour" when Buddy admits to have written "Bananafish" and to also have not quite captured his brother correctly: "Several members of my [immediate family] …have gently pointed out to me…that the "Seymour"…was not Seymour at all but…someone with a striking resemblance to…myself," (131). Buddy's authorship of "Bananafish" and profession to not truly capturing Seymour's character helps explain this discrepancy between the Seymour Salinger tries to describe in "Raise High" and the Seymour first written about in 1948.[4] The way in which Seymour is moved by Muriel's humanity suggests that he

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4 Salinger critic, Eberhard Alsen argues that Muriel cannot be to blame for Seymour's suicide based on simple chronology. Alsen contends that Seymour had made his first suicide attempt even before meeting Muriel, and also that Seymour and Muriel spent a

himself considers his marriage to her as a possible refuge from his own intellectual isolation. As a genius, Seymour does not fit into the world—as Zooey calls himself and his siblings "We're freaks!" ("Zooey," 103). Yet, despite his aloofness from the world, he is touched by the common humanity Muriel exudes. In this sense, Salinger suggests that the genius hungers to be a part of humanity; Seymour's marriage is an attempt on Seymour's part to extend himself into the ordinary—to find refuge in something he is not. While his marriage to Muriel is not the end-all-be-all of solutions, Salinger's revision of Seymour's motives for his suicide tell us that we cannot blame Muriel for Seymour's death.

Seymour's simultaneous aloofness from the world and desire to take refuge in marriage can be seen even on his own wedding day. Although he is deeply moved by Muriel, he does not attend his own wedding. We find out it is because he is too "happy" to get married. While waiting in the taxi, Muriel's Matron of Honor explains to everybody in the car what she has so far heard about Seymour since nobody outside the immediate family had met him yet: " 'After she explains all that, he says to her he's terribly sorry but he can't get married till he feels less *happy* or some crazy thing!'" ("Raise High," 45). Seymour's reasoning seems counterintuitive since he is referring to being happy about his relationship with Muriel, as opposed to being a happy bachelor. He knows he will compromise his happiness by marrying Muriel; Salinger hints here, then, that marriage is not a refuge for authenticity either. By the end of "Raise High,"

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minimal amount of time together between their marriage in 1942 and his death in 1948. Eberhard Alsen, The Glass Stories as a Composite Novel (New York: Whitson Publishing, 1983) 121.

however, the crisis is resolved, or at least the crisis the wedding guests perceived; Seymour and Muriel elope:

> 'Apparently he was *at* the apartment when they got back. So Muriel just ups and packs her bag, and off the two of them go, just like that.' The Matron of Honor shrugged her shoulders elaborately...My God, what a woman. [Muriel's mother] sounded absolutely normal. From what I gathered—I mean from what she said—this *Sey*mour's promised to start going to an analyst and get himself straightened out.' (100-101)

The strange aspect of this passage is how Seymour, despite protesting the institution of marriage by not going to his own wedding, ultimately compromises. While eloping may seem like a wild and untraditional thing to do, it is essentially a more spontaneous means to the same end: marriage. Seymour—the seer, the Jesus-like character, the wise sage of all the Glass children—is the first to concede to the most widespread trend following World War II. This only further illustrates how post-War Americans viewed marriage as a solution to a larger, national fear. Seymour does not marry necessarily for the same reasons as Americans at large, but Salinger's choice to concentrate so much of the Glass stories around Seymour's marriage creates a friction against social norms of the times while ultimately proving itself not to be the solution Seymour needed.

Seymour and the Psychoanalyst

Simultaneously occurring with the exodus to the home, the parallel expansion of the university led to the emergence of the expert. The expert took shape as a person who could be essentially imported into the familial life. In Anti-Intellectualism, Hofstadter

describes the expert in these terms: "If the typical man of power simply wants knowledge as an instrument, the typical man of knowledge in modern America is the expert," (428). Hofstadter's language implies that the expert is a "typical" man, but elevated through attainment of some sort of knowledge base. Hofstadter explains that the expert is like a "[technician] concerned only with power and accepting implicitly the terms power puts to them," (429).[5] The way Hofstadter associates the term "technician" with the expert is brilliantly fitting; it allows the expert access into the public world in order to fix something that is broken, like a family would welcome a repairman to their home. By this I mean that the expert, though certainly a source of higher knowledge, is not simply synonymous with the intellectual since the expert is a public figure; the expert contains a wealth of information on a specialized subject and distributes it somehow, whether through literature or face-to-face interaction. Experts generally emerged from universities and trained thoroughly in a specialization. Experts in a sense, then, are catalogued to a specific vocation. The Glasses respond to this mechanic-like way of applying knowledge as inauthentic.

Although the Glasses find both the institutionalized intellectual and the more public expert inauthentic, the public largely accepted the expert despite the anti-intellectualism ringing loudly throughout the United States. When the nation at large turned inward to the immediate familial unit, guidance and advice on living was essentially imported to the family's front doorsteps through the voice of the expert. The

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5 In this passage, Hofstadter puts forth the idea of power and whether obtaining power—he speaks to power more politically than not—undermines one's role as an intellectual. For Hofstadter, the intellectual "has relinquished all thought of association with power" since "there is always the danger that a sudden association with power will become too glamorous, and hence intellectually blinding" (429). While important to Hofstadter's overall argument, its relation to the Glass family in not quite relevant.

1950's family sought refuge from the threat of nuclear attack and Communism within their own homes. May notes: "By 1956, nearly two-thirds of the those polled believed that in the event of another war, the hydrogen bomb would be against the United States," (17). For many, the expert was a guiding platform to dive off of in search of self-improvement and better living. May articulates the revival of confidence upon field experts:

> Postwar American was the era of the expert...It was now up to experts to make the unmanageable manageable....Americans were looking to professionals to tell them how to manage their lives....One retrospective study of the attitudes and habits of over 4,000 Americans in 1957 found that the reliance on expertise was one of the most striking developments of the postwar years. (21)

The increasing access and diffusion of expert information through the university and published literature allowed for the individual to remain contained and isolated within the family. This wide acceptance of the expert in contrast to the extensive contempt for the intellectual reveals a strange phenomenon within 1950s America and helps to emphasize even more what a peculiar place in the world the Glass children, as overly precocious geniuses, find themselves. May writes that "When the experts spoke, Americans listened," (30). And according to a 1950 New York Times article "Pocket Books Sells 300,000,000TH Copy," which explains that Dr. Benjamin Spock's "The Pocket Book of Baby and Child Care" was among one of the best sellers of the year, people were certainly listening, and willing to listen with their wallets.

> Americans were looking to professionals to tell them how to manage their lives. The tremendous popularity of Benjamin Spock's *Baby and Child Care* reflects a

> reluctance to trust the shared wisdom of kin and community....These best-selling books stressed the centrality of the family in their prescriptions for a better future. (30)

This confidence placed in the expert and simultaneous inward movement to the family only further irritates the Glass geniuses inabilities to harbor themselves safely in a kind of refuge. Even if the Glasses attempt to take refuge in the family, the inauthentic expert permeates that sphere. They cannot separate their desires to connect with humanity from their intellectual tendencies. If the Glass children find any solace within their immediate family it is not through self-help literature written by field experts, but by the lessons Seymour tried to instill in them. Even Seymour and Buddy's attempt to teach the youngest Glasses is an example of how the Glasses were not the typical family nor did they reach out to the expert. Zooey is outwardly sour about his disdain and alienation from the world which he blames on Seymour and Buddy who taught him and Franny as children: "'We're *freaks*, the two of us, Franny and I,' [Zooey] announced, standing up. 'I'm a twenty-five-year-old freak and she's a twenty-year-old freak, and both of those bastards are responsible,'" ("Zooey, 103). Zooey yells this at his mother while deliberating over Franny's breakdown. The fact that the Glass parents give a teacher's responsibilities to Seymour and Buddy works well within the 1950s turn inward to the family. At the same time, Franny's breakdown and Zooey's resentment toward his brothers is evidence that the home schooling was not completely successful and possibly made Franny and Zooey more isolated from the world than they would have been without Seymour and Buddy's untraditional, heavily spirituality-based teachings. The early teaching to Franny and Zooey by their brothers also illuminates how, unlike the nation on

the grand scale, the Glasses did not look to the expert for rearing. While the Glass children are begrudged by the forced removal and phoniness of institutionalized intellectuals, they do not welcome the expert, a public figure, with open arms either. The Glasses do not, however, resent the expert as much as they resent pompous institutionalized intellectuals, yet the expert is similarly inauthentic and phony in the eyes of the Glass children as well.

Within his stories, Salinger uses both the expert and the family as a source of tension and safety; however, while Seymour hopes starting a family will be enough to save him, Muriel's family, which he is marrying into, does not think marriage will make Seymour more "relatable," or cure his "schizoid personality," ("Raise High," 43). Instead, they rely on the guidance of the expert. In short, the Fedders are passionate about the psychoanalyst. In the aforementioned passage about Seymour and Muriel's decision to elope, Seymour promises to see an analyst to "get himself straightened out." This shows how the Fedders rely on the expert to heal them. While this passage works to resolve what at least the bride's side deems as the problem, the failure to get married, it also speculatively resolves another issue: Seymour's instability and odd behavior as perceived by Muriel's family. Because Buddy writes the story and makes his readers aware of it, we understand that he is not a wholly reliable narrator. Yet I refrain from submitting entirely to identifying Buddy as an unreliable narrator because, although it is somewhat circular logic, we empathize with the argument that only geniuses, such as the Glasses, can understand, or attempt to understand, who or what kind of person Seymour Glass was. In this sense, while we are left to question Seymour's sanity ourselves, the

narrative allows us to believe Buddy, at least to the extent that it is not Seymour who is insane, but a phony world that he cannot endure.

While May might note that the Glasses are not alone in their anxiety of the world's contamination on their sanity, they are unable to remedy their concerns the same way the public at large can. One considerable difference between the Glasses and the subjects of May's Homeward Bound is that while "Children of immigrants moved from ethnic neighborhoods with extended kin and community ties to homogenous suburbs, where they formed nuclear families and invested them with high hopes," the Glasses are urban dwellers for most of their time chronicled in the stories (27). Salinger's deliberate geographic positioning of the Glasses as New Yorkers is itself an indicator of the Glass children's nonconformity with larger American social and cultural trends. The Glasses do not have a suburban haven to seek solace in, nor could would we ever think it credible that they would desire the suburban life that May examines in Homeward Bound.[6] Despite the fact that they are a close-knit family and look to each other for consolation, they do not join in the widespread migration to the suburbs. Instead, they stay in a city where nothing is standard, where no one can entirely fit in. Consequently, even the Glass family's locus in America highlights their inability to belong within mainstream society.

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6 Again, Boo Boo Glass does live in the suburbs with her family later on, but she seems to be an exception to Salinger's Glass characters as she is the most maternal and mature of the siblings Salinger's story "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut" illuminates the kind of lives suburbanites led. Eloise and Mary Jane, two old college friends drink all afternoon in Eloise's suburban home. Eloise speaks nostalgically about her true love, Walt Glass, and comes to terms with the life she now leads with her husband and daughter. Salinger's title alone sheds light on the importance of geographic placement in the story—Connecticut is emblem of upper middle class suburban living—and therefore casts a negative, darker angle on suburban living than families would have realized during the times.

The national exodus to the suburbs correlates with the overall fears and anxieties of the times. The suburban home and the suburban neighborhood were a safe places to raise a family despite outside, uncontrolled threats. Amid the movement to the suburbs and underlying fears that correlated with that migration, May writes about how post-war Americans embraced the expert to aid their apprehensions: "Young people embraced the advice of experts in rapidly expanding fields of social science, medicine, and psychology. After all, science was changing the world. Was it not reasonable to expect it to change the home as well?" (28). Here, May is mostly alluding to the atom bomb. Although the bomb unveiled an unprecedented capacity to destroy, the promise of progress during the Cold War era was deeply alluring even at the domestic level. May writes about the 1959 "kitchen debate" between Vice President Richard M. Nixon and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev: "The two leaders did not discuss missiles, bombs, or even modes of government. Rather, they argued over the relative merits of American and Soviet washing machines, televisions, and electric ranges," (19). Today the "kitchen debate" seems depreciative and obsolete, however, it demonstrated a Fifties ideology of American living: the perfect suburban home. We can compare the domestication of technology to the public's reception of the expert since, as May writes, "Postwar America was the era of the expert…It was now up to the experts to make the unmanageable manageable," (29). Domestic technologies such as the dishwasher made keeping a household easier, more manageable. If we refer back to how Hofstadter compares the expert to a technician who uses his knowledge to apply to the real world, we can see a parallel for how the expert was like a domestic technology imported into the home to make life more manageable. This concept is in Salinger's works through the placement of

the psychoanalyst in many of his stories. In fact, it often seems as if the psychoanalyst were an abstract character in Salinger's stories that he employs in order to spark friction for the Glass children. In this way, the presence of the analyst in Salinger's stories embodies the 1950's expert and the need of mainstream society to embrace a voice of authority.

Before examining the analyst within the Glass stories, we can perhaps better understand Salinger's intentions of positioning the analyst within the stories if we look outside the Glass stories at Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye.[7] In Salinger's only full-length novel, the young protagonist, Holden Caulfield, narrates his account to a psychoanalyst. Yet the presence of the analyst is an absent presence; the analyst never materializes in the story, and at the end of the novel, we are left unconvinced that Holden will be saved. What does seem certain, however, is that the analyst is the last person who can help Holden because the analyst is as phony as everyone else who failed Holden. I believe that Salinger's use of the analyst in Catcher also instructs his readers how to interpret the analyst within the Glass stories. The overall effect of the analyst generates a strong tension between the Glass characters and a society that not only desires the advice of the analyst but deems it necessary.

If we combine May's assertion and Salinger's use of the analyst in Catcher, we see how Muriel Fedder and her family attempt to make the unmanageable, Seymour, into a more manageable presence. References to Seymour seeing an analyst are seen over and over just within "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters." In 1942 Buddy receives a

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7 J.D. Salinger, The Catcher in the Rye, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co. 1951).

letter from Boo Boo addressing the fact that Seymour is getting married. Boo Boo describes Seymour's mother-in-law to be:

> "The mother is the end—a finger in all the arts, and sees a good Jungian man twice a week (she asked me twice, the night I met her, if I'd ever been analyzed). She told me she just wishes Seymour would *relate* more to people." (10)

Boo Boo's report of Muriel's mother, Mrs. Fedder, is quite revealing. Mrs. Fedder who has "a finger in all the arts" is somewhere among the ranks of the elite New Yorkers. A discussion with Muriel about fashion and even offering to pay for Muriel to go on a cruise in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" implies the Fedders' wealth. Mrs. Fedder has the time to care and to be in the know about new fads or fashions. At the same time, her interest in art is superficial; it is more about the appearance of caring about art. In "Bananafish," Mrs. Fedder dismisses Seymour's request for Muriel to read Rainer Maria Rilke in German as " 'Awful. Awful,' " (8). While Mrs. Fedder at this moment is probably more concerned with her daughter's well-being since Seymour had just recently and purposefully crashed a car into a tree, she nevertheless minimizes Seymour's request. Seymour's act of giving Muriel the book of Rilke-- whom he calls "the *only great poet of the century*"— shows his attempt to provide Muriel access to himself. When Muriel asks if her mother has the book, Mrs. Fedder leads the conversation away from the poetry and toward the analyst. The fact that Mrs. Fedder asks Boo Boo twice if she has seen an analyst attests not only to how the analyst was embedded within the cultural vernacular of the time, but also how important and trendy it was to have one's inner psyche explained. And yet Mrs. Fedder does not stand alone in

her reliance upon the analyst. Muriel also demonstrates a strong confidence in the analyst eventually in her conversation with her mother in "Bananafish":

> "Your father talked to Dr. Sivetski."
>
> "Oh?" said the girl.
>
> "He told him *ev*erything…."
>
> "There's a psychiatrist here at the hotel," said the girl…Rieser or something. He's supposed to be very good." (8-9)

The conversation between Muriel and her mother is sequentially placed before we are introduced to Seymour in the story. While the "Bananafish" can function apart from the other Glass stories, Buddy's narratives greatly enhance how we understand Seymour despite through the tainted description of Muriel's mother who finds him to be a "raving maniac"—which, at the same time, is understandable, considering he has already attempted to commit suicide. We can infer from this conversation that Muriel has researched the psychiatrist herself in hopes that perhaps she could get Seymour to agree to an appointment while on vacation. Muriel has faith in the analyst to help fix a Seymour she deems broken.

Since "Bananafish" was published before "Raise High," contemporaneous readers did not find out until later in the series that the Fedders had been relentless in trying to set Seymour straight, even before his marriage to Muriel. Therefore, the fact that the Fedders still call upon the analyst for help even though the analyst has failed to heal Seymour demonstrates a faith in the analyst comparable to a religious zealot's unwavering faith in God. In "Raise High," taking place six years before "Bananafish"

takes place, but written after, Buddy finds a passage in Seymour's journal written just prior to Seymour's wedding day:

> 'What a night. Mrs. Fedder's analyst was there for dinner and grilled me, off and on, till about eleven-thirty. Occasionally with great skill, intelligence. Once or twice, I found myself pulling of for him.' (85)

Seymour is cognizant of how people perceive him. This passage enlightens its readers to Seymour's genius by establishing how mindful he is to world outside himself; Seymour is not only receptive to the fact that Mrs. Fedder probably did not coincidentally invite her analyst over for dinner the same night as Seymour, but his mind is also one step ahead of the expert; he is even "pulling for him" as if the analyst were the underdog in the situation, unaware of what he is up against (85). The scene of Seymour at a dinner table surrounded by people who want to fix him and who think they know what is best for him establishes a huge source of tension that is carried through in his marriage to Muriel. In this sense, his marriage to Muriel would never be purely to Muriel, but also to the world she inhabits, and more specifically to the inauthenticity of her surroundings. The dinner scene also works to recreate the absurdity of the Glasses' relationship with the world in an isolated microenvironment in which we can more closely analyze: the adults at the dinner table believe that they know how to help Seymour. The sagaciousness of Seymour is that he knows an analyst is not the answer to his problems, yet he wants to please Muriel and her family nonetheless. By entangling Seymour's own wife within the web of the cultural and social convictions of the time, Seymour, and therefore his siblings, are even more loudly contrasted against the world around them. In another passage from Seymour's journal Buddy reads:

> "Anyway, I can't see that I have anything to lose by seeing analyst. If I do it in the Army, it'll be free. M. loves me, but she'll never feel really close to me, *familiar* with me, *frivolous* with me, till I'm slightly overhauled...If or when I do start going to an analyst, I hope to God he the foresight to let a dermatologist sit in on consultation. A hand specialist. I have scars on my hands from touching certain people." (88).

For the world in which the Glasses and, specifically, Seymour, find themselves, the analyst is a means, like marriage, to solving a problem. An analyst introduces people to their inner selves and offers personal fears and anxieties in order to treat them. Seymour's journal entry, however, illustrates how Seymour is willing concede to see an analyst not because he believes it will help him, but because the world around him believes it will, and more specifically, Muriel. Therefore, the analyst, to Seymour is a means by which he can begin to create his own familial sphere of refuge. A journal entry is also a kind of narration similar to psychoanalysis; it allows the characters to parse through the states of their own minds. In this sense, Seymour's meta-cognitive nature indicates he is self-aware—that he knows himself. Nevertheless, Seymour forfeits because he understands that Muriel thinks she can relate to him more if he is treated, but then he almost immediately turns his concession into a joke. At first, Seymour's joke about having a dermatologist present is lighthearted. As he provides rationale for the joke, however, the seemingly small jest provides great insight into Seymour's perception of himself and his placement in the world; he is *physically* effected by the world in a way that most people are not; he is metaphorically scarred by how moved he is. Seymour recalls how touching Charlotte Mayhew's—his childhood love—yellow cotton dress left

" 'a lemon-yellow mark on the palm of [his] right hand,' " (88). This physical manifestation of the way in which Seymour interacts and reacts to the world, in the form of a metaphor, is akin to Franny's corporeal reaction to her spiritual dilemma within the university. In these instances, Franny and Seymour demonstrate how torn they are between their personal virtues of living and those largely held around them. Seymour's diary continues with his interaction with the analyst at the Fedders' home:

> "He didn't disagree with me, but he seemed to feel that I have a perfection complex of some kind. Much talk from him, and quite intelligent, on the virtues of living the imperfect life, of accepting one's own and others' weaknesses. I agree with him, but only in theory. I'll champion indiscrimination till doomsday, on the ground that it leads to health and a kind of very real, enviable happiness. *Followed purely* it's the way of the Tao, and undoubtedly the highest way." (87)

Seymour's virtues rest in purity, which is the most authentic life one can lead. In this passage Seymour expresses the indiscrimination necessary for living purely as he even attempts to write indiscriminately by describing the analyst as intelligent, instead of discrediting his authority as the reader might expect Buddy, Franny or Zooey to do given their exhibited tantrums. While living purely to one extent can be taken to mean living without judgment, the term is pregnant with meaning. In a more traditional sense of the word, pure means chaste. I mention this here because Salinger includes this issue, however briefly, in Seymour's diary: " 'Apparently there is something 'wrong' with me because I haven't seduced Muriel,' " (82). Whatever the era's sexual norms were, Salinger calculatingly tells us that Seymour's belated seduction of Muriel is seen as

abnormal. Muriel's Matron of Honor elaborates on why Seymour may not have shown to his own wedding:

> "I mean nothing small or really de*reog*atory or anything like that. All [Mrs. Fedder] said, really, was that this Seymour, in her opinion, was a latent homosexual and that he was basically afraid of marriage. I mean she didn't say it nasty or anything. She just said it—you know—intelligently. I mean she was psychoanalyzed herself for years and years." (42)

Seymour's sexual prudence can be seen as a deliberate aspect of Salinger's characterization of Seymour as unable to successfully move into adulthood, and I believe we can understand Seymour's belated seduction of Muriel in relation to his aspiration of pure, authentic living. This, however, would inherently conflict with marriage and the objective to create a family. If we look once more to Catcher to instruct us as how to interpret Seymour's behavior, we see that Holden's contempt for sex is a reflection of his fear of leaving childhood and entering adulthood; it has nothing to do with Holden's sexual orientation. In this passage from "Raise High," Muriel's family and friends misread Seymour's inaction as an indication of homosexuality, and once again, of course, they trust this interpretation since it is derived from a psychiatrist's viewpoint.

The Fedders' analysis of Seymour, however, is not ill-founded when taking into account Ehrenreich's study about the connections between marriage and sanity. She writes, "By the 1950s and '60s psychiatry had developed a massive weight of theory establishing that marriage…was the only normal state for the adult male. Outside lay only a range of diagnoses, all unflattering," (15). Although May describes the masses people rushing to the alter as a result of Cold War containment to fulfill a domestic

ideology, Ehrenreich's argument elaborates on a different layer of this ideology: the underlying goal of marriage, Ehrenreich argues, was to reach maturity and adulthood (19). Joan Didion describes in her essay "On the Morning after the Sixties" that "To have assumed that particular fate so early was the peculiarity of my generation. I think now that we were the last generation to identify with adults."[8] Maturity and adulthood were the end game for 1950s Americans.

Seymour's aversion to seducing his fiancé can be translated to his endeavor to live purely, but not because the act of sex itself is impure, but because sex signifies adulthood. If we take our cue from *Catcher*, we can see that the Glasses are not only alienated from the different spheres of refuge, but from adulthood. Their incapacity to find solace in any one place—the university, Bohemia, the family—suggests that Salinger is not only interested in how the Glasses struggle being geniuses that cannot be easily categorized, but that they struggle as adults. Salinger uses childhood anecdotes as the crux for understanding his characters because the child genius is the most pure and authentic. The consciousness of their own disposition and the world around them as they grow into adults does not necessarily taint their character, but tarnishes their ability to live purely. Not only do Glasses comment on the times as geniuses amongst the intellectual and the expert, but on the purity of children that is lost in adulthood especially in a decade so highly focused around the nuclear family and marriage. Seymour, Buddy, Franny and Zooey's ultimate inability to conceive adulthood as anything but giving in to an imperfect world renders them homeless; they are exiles who do not know where to return. Once again, while Salinger is clearly interested in the family as a refuge for the

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8 Joan Didion, "On the Morning After the Sixties," The White Album (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979) 207.

genius and explores the familial unit extensively through the Glass works, he emphatically disproves of its solace as a place of refuge when Seymour kills himself.

Chapter 3: The Artist/Entertainer

The Glasses' genius does not simply alienate them from the intellectual sphere or societal circles, but also from adulthood; they do not identify with adulthood in an era when maturity was a desired status in American life. This chapter will explore not only the Glasses as geniuses, but the Glasses as *child* geniuses juxtaposed with religious themes that are at once deeply embedded within the text, but also in post-war American life. I should reiterate that although the Glass stories are narrated by adult author Buddy, they are heavily based on memories and recollections of childhood in a manner that implies Salinger's conviction that the pure, without prejudice and detached living in which Seymour attempts instructing his siblings is only available to children, however not genius children. Their genius even as children makes them overly perceptive to the world, its shortcomings, and their own imperfections. The progression into adulthood can become detrimental as the purity of childhood that they did not absorb themselves but were immersed in becomes further and further away: Seymour ultimately kills himself, Franny has a nervous breakdown, Zooey suffers from ulcers and a similar complex to Franny, and Buddy spends his entire adult career as trying to unravel it all.

Nevertheless, it is only Seymour who cannot bear any existence and takes his own life in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish." The other three Glasses that I will examine in this chapter undoubtedly struggle with existence as adults, but do not give up their search for God, or life for that matter, the way Seymour does.[1] Salinger does not even hint at the fact that Seymour's remaining siblings would consider taking their lives. And while they do certainly suffer and experience nervous breakdowns, they persist. Salinger's

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1 In this chapter, "God" refers to the one God the Glasses seek although they seek God through various forms i.e. Jesus Christ, Buddha, etc.

Glass works after "Bananafish" expand on not merely why Seymour committed suicide, but why the others do not. In this regard, the fact that they do not commit suicide implies that Buddy, Franny and Zooey *do* find some sort of refuge. Their choices are inescapably defined by their brother's ultimate choice to kill himself. They understand that they will never reach this childhood detachment or purity, and therefore in order to subsist in society, they submit partially to the world around them in effort to be closer to God and instead of living a life of judgment; they surrender to an existence in limbo—they are neither fully integrated into the earthly world they inhabit nor completely distinct from it. They hover slightly above the normal world Salinger writes about and outside of the text as well. Standing on toes, they are accessible to other non-genius Glass characters within the text, and they are almost tangible as we turn the pages of their stories. They are entertainers—as characters within the text, and to us, the readers. Therefore, I argue that Salinger's Glass stories posit that the adult genius in American life submits to become artists/entertainers in order to maintain a livelihood while living in a squalid society and searching for God. The texts I will mostly refer to in this chapter in order to paint a clearer image of the child genius in context with these themes are "Hapworth 16, 1924," "Seymour—An Introduction" and Franny and Zooey.

Before plunging into the religious themes within the Glass works, understanding the religious atmosphere in the world in which Salinger was writing can give us a more comprehensive idea of where the Glass geniuses are located both inside and outside of texts. If we look back to the 1952 presidential race, we can see the big issues encompassed within the election and hence the general concerns of the American people. One of these major anxieties was the spread of communism, however, not simply its

political, economic, and social ramifications, but its religious ones as well. During Eisenhower's campaign, he addressed this fear directly:

> 'It would be completely unfair to say that there could be any perfect peace today at a time when the godless doctrine of communism commands the strength that it does in the heart of the Eurasian land mass, absolutely ruthless and implacable.'[2]

In this speech prior to his election, Eisenhower directly addresses the enemy's "godlessness" as a remorseless obstruction to world peace. Eisenhower states that there is no way to deal reasonably with such a godless doctrine; it must be quarantined like an infectious disease. Thus, while the Soviet Union was portrayed and perceived by Americans as a nation void of God, the United States, on the contrary, was depicted as a sanctuary for religion and God. Eisenhower declared: " 'the matchless spiritual strength of the free world as its greatest asset in fighting communism,' " (Conklin, 1). In the Cold War era when the free world and the Soviets covertly fought through arms races and technology wars, it was not munitions or space travel capability that was said to prevail against evil, it was the nation's faith in god and a moral world. In Homeward Bound, May articulates the religious swell in post-war America:

> Religious affiliation became associated with the "American way of life." Americans highlighted their religiosity, in contrast to the "godless communists." "In God We Trust" became the national motto, appearing on all paper currency; and the words "under God" became part of the Pledge of Allegiance. Religion offered to bind citizens to each other and to provide a sense of belonging. (29)

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2 William R. Conklin, "Nominee Cites Again," New York Times 17 Oct. 1952: 19.

May's analysis of the role religion played following World War II seems almost forced and contrived since in today's society, religion does not seem to act as a yoke that unifies all kinds of people, but rather as a dynamic deterrent against any "sense of belonging" among Americans. Perhaps this is because we now face an enemy that is not empty of religiosity, but fueled by it. While we may have difficulty comprehending an America united by religious zeal, its impact is still with us: it is inscribed in our money. Although "In God We Trust" was the United States' de facto motto far before the Cold War era, it became the nation's official motto by law in 1956. American lives were emblazoned in a religiosity that bonded them together and were physically reminded of it with all currency produced after October 1957.[3] Even if America were to be annihilated by an H-Bomb by the Communists, at least they would be in God's hands.

Amid this religious American air, Thomas Merton, a Trappist Monk published his autobiography The Seven Storey Mountain which I find to be one of the most powerful parallels between the Glass family's religious experience and the American experience. William H. Shannon writes in his introduction to the book:

> Published just three years after the end of World War II, *The Seven Storey Mountain* struck an instant and sensitive nerve in America and eventually in other parts of the world. Its timing was perfect, coming as it did when, disillusioned by war and searching for meaning in their lives, people were ready to hear the well-told story of a young man whose search ended in remarkable discovery.[4]

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3 "History of 'In God We Trust,'" U.S. Department of the Treasury, May 2007 <http://www.treas.gov/education/fact-sheets/currency/in-god-we-trust.shtml>.

4 William H. Shannon, Foreword, The Seven Storey Mountain by Thomas Merton (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company,1998) xix.

The publication of Merton's autobiography corresponds quite perfectly with Salinger's publication of Nine Stories in 1948. Not only are the themes within both books similar as both Merton and the Glass family seek to find God, but they were both exceptionally popular in the time they were published, and their popularities were not ephemeral flukes. Not only was religion a mighty force that could withhold Communist expansion, but religion offered Americans greater meaning to their lives when things had never before seemed so bleak, the deaths and casualties of the last war and imminent fear of an atomic attack, annihilation always on the brink. It even seems as if the Glasses would agree with Merton's philosophy when he writes: "We were never destined to lead purely natural lives, and therefore we were never destined in God's plan for purely natural beatitude."[5] While the Glasses may agree with the assertion that supreme happiness is never truly reachable, they cannot stomach it. In fact, their inability to envisage themselves never experiencing a "purely natural beatitude" makes them physically sick. Merton's ultimate point is to find peace with the never-ending journey to God. He concludes his book with the words: "SIT FINIS LIBRI, NON FINIS QUAERENDI," (462) Translated this reads: "Let this be the ending of the book but by no means the end of the searching," (Shannon, xxiii).

The proximity in which Merton and Salinger were both publishing and the close ties found in Salinger's writing suggests that, like the university and the family, monastic withdrawal was also an option for the intellectual refuge. Salinger certainly plays with the idea of monastic withdrawal by writing Waker Glass as a Trappist Monk, but he does not delve into Waker's experience. Instead, Salinger writes of Franny, Zooey and

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5 Thomas Merton, The Seven Storey Mountain (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company,1998) 185.

Buddy's struggle to find God without removing themselves from society. Though Waker may be content with Merton's conclusion, the other Glasses are not. In "Franny," Salinger references the book Franny is carrying around with her, "The Way of the Pilgrim." She tells Lane she "got it out of the library" when in reality, we find out in "Zooey," she took it from the late Seymour's old bedroom. The book refers to a pilgrim's journey to find God and the recitation of the "Jesus Prayer." At the same time, Franny seems to have sought refuge in something that makes her ill. Soon after her confession to feeling sick, Franny explains to Lane about the book she has been carrying around with her, "The Way of the Pilgrim." It is a book about a pilgrim's search for God based on "a group of terribly advanced monks who sort of advocated this really incredible method of praying," (33). As Franny recites the Jesus Prayer, she just seems to become more faint. By the end of "Franny," she is described as being in a catatonic state as she attempts to continue the recitation of the prayer: "Her lips began to move, forming soundless words, and they continued to move" (43). This depiction suggests that monastic teachings cannot save Franny. The muteness of the scene renders Franny hindered—stuck despite trying to use the Jesus Prayer in order to find a place of solace. The continuous prayer instead, however, becomes an idle, meaningless mantra. This is why Merton's "SIT FINIS LIBRI, NON FINIS QUAERENDI," does not sit well with the Glasses; they cannot dedicate their lives to the monastery. Once again, Salinger's interest in monastic withdrawal is introduces the option of refuge for the genius, but not the a fulfilling and comfortable solution.

Another reason for why Merton's methods cannot be transmitted onto the Glasses is because the Glasses, while they are monotheistic, do not follow one religion strictly.

The genesis for this is at their birth; they were born to a mixed marriage. Their mother Bessie Glass (maiden name Gallagher) is Irish Catholic and their father, Les Glass, is Jewish. The family is never identified as being exclusively practicing Jews or Catholics. However, we cannot ignore Salinger's deliberate insertions of this bit of information throughout the Glass stories. I believe Salinger integrates this detail into the stories because it amplifies their religious turmoil; being born of two religions muddles the path in search of finding God. It seems that Salinger sets the Glasses up from the get-go for spiritual confusion and suffering; he does not offer a clear answer or path to choose. Still, while I do want to highlight the importance of religion in the Glass texts, I do not wish to nitpick at Salinger's religious references as to which religion—Zen Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Judaism or Christianity—Salinger's characters followed more closely. Instead, I take Eberhard Alsen's viewpoint that Salinger emphasizes the "essential eclecticism of the religious ideas in the Glass stories," (126). In this regard, although the aforementioned religions are important thematically in the stories for their specific beliefs and ideas, for the purpose of this chapter, I will deem all religious references as different paths to the same spirituality and God-seeking. Insofar as they are pursuing places of personal refuge, it is not any actual religious doctrine that Buddy, Franny, and Zooey come to terms with in discovering how they should lead their lives, but the lessons of their late brother Seymour. Seymour's invaluable lessons are taught when he is a child and reiterated mostly through Buddy's memory and retrospective writing to ultimately provide Buddy, Franny, and Zooey the insight to choose art over death, even when it means compromise: Seymour's final lesson that there is no place for

authenticity, but there is the possibility of *reflecting* truth back to people through art and touching people's hearts as well as their own.

Seymour—A Conclusion

The earliest record of Seymour Glass is in Salinger's "Hapworth 16, 1924." Incongruously, the story published in The New Yorker in 1965 is Salinger's last published work on the Glass family. Many critics believe that "Hapworth" was Salinger's final attempt to bring closure to the Glass narrative by capturing Seymour as a young child and therefore provide the origin of what led to his suicide in "Bananafish." The story is essentially an enormously long letter that Buddy claims to be reproducing as "an exact copy of the letter, word for word" forty-one years after it was originally scribed by a seven-year-old Seymour away at camp.[6] As Alsen points out, however, Buddy's introduction to the letter bears many clues to suggest that Buddy has actually written the letter in Seymour's name. After all, Buddy has spent his entire adult life writing about Seymour in order to understand him and present him to the world. Alsen writes:

> The positively lurid style of the letter, and its structural resemblance to 'Seymour—An Introduction' suggest we ought to interpret it not as a letter written by Seymour but as an attempt by Buddy to re-create what might have been going on in Seymour's mind at a crucial time in his life. (78)

In my opinion there is no question that Buddy is the true author to the letter in "Hapworth." The letter even contains insight into the future stating: "I [Seymour] personally will live at least as long as a well-preserved telephone pole, a generous matter of thirty (30) years or more, which is surely nothing to snicker at. Your son Buddy has

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6 J.D. Salinger, "Hapworth 16, 1924," The New Yorker 19 June 1965: 32.

even longer to go, you will freely rejoice to know," (59). The best way to digest this strange prophetic insert is as a hint that Seymour is not the one writing the letter. I believe that as readers of "Hapworth," we are purposefully led to read the letter as Buddy's contemplative deliberation of everything he has come to understand about Seymour through his own writing—"Bananafish," Franny and Zooey, "Raise High," and "Seymour." This interpretation explains why Seymour seems much older than just seven-years-old even if we trust that he is a genius.[7] Alsen writes:

> The contrast between pretentiousness and slanginess and the contrast between adjectives suggesting enthusiasm and detachment both reveal he wants to be 'a regular boy' who responds uncritically to the world, and on the other hand he wants to be a 'poet and private scholar' who maintains a detached attitude toward everything around him. (81)

Buddy's attempt to capture Seymour's childhood voice through writing the letter is a failure. Even though we trust that Seymour is a genius, the diction and content of his letter make it difficult to grasp that he is only seven. For instance Seymour writes: " "I am an omnivorous reader," (33). Besides the unlikelihood of a seven-year-old using the word "omnivorous," it seems odd that Seymour would need to tell his parents back at home what kind of read he is; they have probably picked up already that their son is a genius and enormously well-read. Instead, this assertion reads as Buddy's contrived exposition to inform his readers of Seymour's life at this point.

Still, Buddy's interpretation is of great value in its long-winded effort to resurrect Seymour's childhood voice. It is extremely helpful in trying to understand how the

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7 Although I am assuming the letter in "Hapworth" was actually penned by Buddy, I will refer to the Seymour in the letter as himself for the sake of simplicity.

genius child both related and responded to the world. If we examine Buddy's endeavor not as a failed attempt to rouse the voice of his brother, but as a successful one because of his *inability* to capture Seymour's voice, we can see how Seymour never was a "regular boy" who had the capacity to respond uncritically to the world. While the Seymour in "Hapworth" wants to disregard all judgment, he cannot:

> After complaining about the other campers "The counsellors themselves are counsellors in name only. Most of them appear slated to go through their entire lives, from birth to dusty death, with picayune, stunted attitudes toward everything in the universe and beyond. (54)

As seen in this passage, the Seymour in the letter is anything but uncritical to the world. Because Buddy was at camp with Seymour, we can rely on Buddy's interpretation of Seymour's experience at camp and that Seymour was largely disgusted by the staff and campers. In fact, Seymour and Buddy only had three friends at camp, one of whom was the camp director's wife, Mrs. Happy. Early on in the letter Seymour describes Mrs. Happy to his parents:

> Picture yourselves a gorgeous brunette, perky, quite musical, with a very nice little sense of humor! It requires all one's powers of self-control to keep from taking her in one's arms when she is strolling about on the grass in one of her tasteful frocks...I must admit, in all joviality, to the moments when this cute, ravishing girl, Mrs. Happy, unwittingly rouses all my unlimited sensuality. (35)

In contrast to Seymour's withheld or arguably nonexistent sexual relationship with his fiancé, Muriel, the seven-year-old Seymour seems to have a significantly stronger libido than his later self. In fact, Seymour's sexual desire in this passage is

never eclipsed by any other instant in the Glass series, so it comes as shocking to hear a seven-year-old elaborate on his "unlimited sensuality." The object of Seymour's affection is not a peer, but an older, married woman. This comments on the young Seymour's failure to identify with other children. Salinger's choice in giving a seven-year-old Seymour the most sexually enthused moment in all the Glass stories even as we have been made aware of Seymour's sexual prudence in "Raise High"—published before "Hapworth"— informs us of the enigma of the child genius and the adult genius; the child genius is designated a child solely based on age. Therefore, if Seymour is a prototype for child geniuses, we can see the tragedy in that he is never truly a child at all; his premature sexuality for an older woman is a bold choice on Salinger's part to indicate Seymour is already past childhood, and already seeking a truer, more authentic life. As for the adult genius, as seen in Seymour's later forbearance, he yearns for a return to a childhood he never truly had. Neither locus on the genius spectrum is compatible with the world at large.

At the same time, it is important to note that Seymour's relationship with Mrs. Happy is mutual. She confides in him and speaks to him as if were her contemporary: "In absence of [Mrs. Happy's friend], Mrs. Happy has enrolled my services as a conversationalist, these being the services of a child of seven, mind you!...She is practically unconscious that she is freely employing a child my age as an audience" (37). Mrs. Happy indulges in her time with Seymour. He is her entertainment, and although he expresses "unlimited worry" about their relationship, it is not because Mrs. Happy is purposefully exploiting him, but because she seems completely oblivious to the fact that Seymour indeed is a child. Were his capabilities as a conversationalist on par with those

of a normal seven-year-old, Mrs. Happy would probably be more conscious of her confiding in a child. Seymour's own acknowledgement that something is strange about Mrs. Happy's conscription of Seymour's communication skills is a caveat unto itself that Seymour is not a "regular boy" even at the age of seven. Still, the most telling aspect of this passage is the duality in Seymour being at once a wellspring of guidance as well as a plain old source of entertainment for a bored lady.

Before delving into the entertainment aspect, first an understanding of Seymour as the man who can, as Sybil Carpenter calls him in "Bananafish," "See more," will provide insight as to how he bestowed spiritual lessons upon his siblings for years to come even though he succumbed to his own foreseen pitfall ("Bananafish," 14). As Buddy unravels Seymour in "Hapworth," we begin to see that Seymour was desperately alone and doomed from the outset to fail because his quest for God was led by himself: "If one has no magnificent teacher, one is obliged to install one in one's mind; it is a perilous thing to do if you were born cravenhearted, as I was," (62). If Buddy is actually the surrogate for Seymour in "Hapworth," then this passage is in reference to what has already happened, and we can discern this as a remark made in hindsight; Seymour did not have a "magnificent teacher" and therefore became his own. Alsen compares Seymour's demise to the beginning of Franny's breakdown in "Franny" :

> But when we see ["Franny"] in the context of Seymour's similar withdrawal and its consequences, then we realize that she uses the Jesus Prayer as an escape from her responsibilities to others and that she offers her love to God so that she doesn't have to bother with people. The crux of her problem is that she pursues

her quest for God in a way that is so self-directed that it is bound to fail. This is precisely why Seymour's quest for God failed. (218)

The reason the younger Glasses do not follow the same path as Seymour to suicide is because they had Seymour as their "magnificent teacher," and thus their quest for God was not self-directed. In Franny and Zooey, Franny's pursuit caves in on itself and her repeated recitation of the Jesus Prayer is only another means to complete isolation and shunning of the world. Seymour's teachings, however, through surrogate Buddy once again, save her. It is nevertheless bewildering to try to understand how Seymour's spiritual teachings could save his siblings even as he spiritually deteriorated to the point of no return. To understand this paradox, it is essential to decipher what Seymour's teachings were and why the absence of having the "magnificent teacher" was so damaging.

The beginnings of Seymour's position as seer and spiritual teacher is very apparent within "Hapworth" as he assumes the role of Mrs. Happy's confidant and provides wisdom to his parents and siblings at home and to Buddy who is with him at camp. He writes that Boo Boo, who is probably only four at the time, should work on manners as he is "far less concerned about how you behave in public than how you behave when you are absolutely alone in a solitary room," (81). For his three-year-old brothers, Walt and Waker, Seymour instructs them to continue practicing their tap dancing and juggling skills, respectively: "Waker, the same request, utterly mean and tyrannical, goes for juggling in this heat! If it is too damn hot for juggling, at least carry some of your favorite juggling object...in your pockets during the stifling day," (80). In

all these requests, Seymour demands that his siblings *perform*—that they create art—whether or not anybody is watching, without caring whether or not they are successful.

Three years later, Buddy writes in "Seymour—An Introduction" of the guidance ten-year-old Seymour gave him during a game of marbles. Buddy recalls his eight-year-old self playing a game of marbles he has looked forward to all day but is losing despite his efforts: "I was using Seymour's technique, or trying to—his side flick, his way of widely curving his marble at the other guy's—and I was losing steadily," (235). Despite utilizing Seymour's "side flick," Buddy is still unsuccessful. When Seymour steps in to advise Buddy, however, the mechanics of flicking the marble is not mentioned at all:

> "Could you try not aiming so much?" [Seymour] asked me, still standing there. "If you hit him when you aim, it'll just be luck." He was breathing, communicating, and yet not breaking the spell. *I* broke it. Quite deliberately. "How can it be *luck* if I *aim*?" I said back to him, not loud (despite italics) but with rather more irritation in my voice than was actually feeling... "Because it will be," he said. "You'll be *glad* if you hit his marble—Ira's marble—won't you? Won't you be *glad?* And if you're *glad* when you hit somebody's marble, then you sort of secretly didn't expect too much to do it. So there'd have to be some luck in it, there'd have to be slightly quite a lot of *ac*cident in it." (236)

This is one of the most vivid scenes in which we can see Seymour assuming the role of teacher and also how Buddy interpreted Seymour's advice. As an outsider, Seymour's advice is bizarre. At the same time, Buddy's portrayal of Seymour is almost God-like; Buddy gives the impression that a very calm, serene Seymour is always watching, "Out of this quietness, and entirely in key with it, Seymour called to me...With

the canopy of lights behind him, his face shadowed, dimmed out," (235). In this memory, Buddy implies there is a halo above Seymour. With his face "dimmed out" Seymour is abstracted to a God-like presence. Despite Buddy being the one to elaborate on the "magic" of the time of day and the game of marbles, he is unable to preserve it. "*I* broke it" Buddy writes, not Seymour. This is interesting because Buddy had already been involved, incorporated into the space; he arguably creates the magic of the atmosphere himself. It is Seymour who interrupts the game, yet he is not the one to break the magic. Buddy's narration, therefore, sets Seymour on a different level than he places himself; Seymour seems to be less earthly than Buddy. Whether falsified or true, this moment vividly portrays Seymour as a seer and spiritual guide, and we trust Seymour's advice.

But, what is Seymour actually trying to explain to Buddy? What could possibly be the advantage of trying *not* to aim? As seen in "Hapworth" and Seymour's directions to Boo Boo, Walt and Waker, Buddy should not expect a reward for an action, but should perform merely for the sake of performance. Seymour suggests that not aiming his marble will result in greater happiness because not expecting the ability to be happy with what happens is inherent to the spiritual goal that Seymour, only ten years old at this point, believes is part of the quest for God. At the same time, Buddy writes that Seymour was undefeated champion of marbles: "Eighty or ninety times out of ā hundred, at this game, whether he shot first or last, Seymour was unbeatable," (234). Buddy goes on to describe Seymour's exact technique and how it differed from all the other kids': "Where everybody else on the block his long shot with an underhand toss, Seymour dispatched *his* marble with a sidearm—or, rather, a sidewrist—flick…" (234). Seymour's

instructions to Buddy and his own actions seem inconsistent. Seymour's winning record alone suggests that Seymour's technique is the most successful, however, when Buddy attempts this technique, he fails: "And again imitation was disastrous. To do it his way was to lose all chance of *any* effective control over the marble," (234). If we interpret the game of marbles as a microcosm of the Glass children's lives, it becomes apparent that Seymour's technique to be completely detached from the effects of his actions is what leads to his spiritual deterioration. Although Seymour is triumphant in the game of marbles, his narrative informs us that his emotional downfall stems from his inability to live out a life in which he is both attached to his actions and his imperfect earthly surroundings.

Seymour is aware of this inability, and while he does not accept or try to change it, he tries to impart the lessons onto his siblings. In "Hapworth" Seymour writes to his parents about Buddy's going to school for the first time following the summer, and how they should prepare him by exposing him to "stupid books":

> These are invaluably stupid books I would like Buddy to have under his belt before entering school next year for the first time in this appearance. Do not trample too quickly on stupid books! One of the swiftest ways, though very enervating and torturous, to have a young, utterly competent boy like Buddy avoid shutting his eyes to daily stupidity and foulness in the world is to offer him an excellent, stupid, foul book. (102)

Seymour explains that exposing Buddy to "stupid" books before he actually enlists in school will not only prepare him to proceed through the institutionalized educational experience that the Glasses hold in contempt, but will also help him to exist

amid the imperfections of the world—its "daily stupidity and foulness." With Seymour's guidance, Buddy and the younger Glass siblings learn not to shut their eyes to squalid occurrences. In other words, Seymour's teaches his siblings what Thomas Merton preaches—that "natural beatitude" is unobtainable but that one must not withdraw from the world despite the endless journey to God, as Merton writes: "NON FINIS QUAERENDI." The catch, however, is that the Glasses' genius makes it all the more challenging for them not to withdraw; their astute perceptiveness to the world makes "daily stupidity and foulness in the word" a weighty burden to sustain. Instead, Buddy, Zooey, and Franny compromise with this burden. As an alternative to complete detachment or complete commitment to the world, their existence depends on their ability to compromise. They become entertainers, and in doing so, they exist both simultaneously detached from and committed to reality.

Descendents of Vaudevillians

Buddy's introduction to the letter in "Hapworth" explains that he was in the middle of writing a long short story about "a particular party, a very consequential party, that [Bessie] and Seymour and [Buddy's] father all went to one night in 1926," (32). While he claims that the 1924 letter replaces his story about the party, Buddy's mentioning of the party proves its significance. The party that happens in 1926, two years after Seymour supposedly writes the letter, is alluded to in a similar prophetic manner as is Seymour's own death. The reference to the party works similarly to how Buddy's seven-year-old Seymour's voice forecasts his own death in order to illuminate the letter as a vessel for understanding Seymour's demise. The party is in fact a retirement party for Bessie and Les Glass from their careers as Vaudevillians. Seymour

and Buddy are introduced to a man who will catapult their careers, and their siblings,' on the radio program "It's a Wise Child." The letter reads:

> Bessie, Les, Buddy, and the undersigned will all be going to one of the most pregnant and important parties that Buddy and I will ever attend...We will meet a man, very overweight, who will make us a slightly straightforward business and career offer at his leisure; it will involve our easy, charming prowess as singers and dancers, but this is very far from all it will involve. He, this corpulent man, will not too seriously change the regular, normal course of our childhood and early, amusing youth by this business offer, but I can assure you that the surface upheaval will be quite enormous. However, that is only my half-glimpse. (61)

The most intriguing part of this passage is that Buddy and Seymour's encounter with the "corpulent man" is at their parents' send-off from their Vaudevillian careers. The party is most definitely "pregnant" as it catalyzes the reincarnation of Bessie and Les's careers as entertainers within their children. As seen before, it is neither Bessie nor Les's religions (Judaism or Catholicism) that trasmits to their children, but rather their assignments as entertainers. Seymour's contradictory depiction of how the meeting will eventually affect his and his siblings' lives—it will at once "not too seriously change" the course of their lives and yet will also be "quite enormous"—denotes that they were destined to entertain from birth; their careers, although they initially sparked at the 1926 party, were always in the cards.

Whether or not they were bound to be performers from the get-go, the Glasses' work with "It's a Wise Child" has an enormous impact on their lives, economically: "All [siblings], at rather conveniently spaced intervals during childhood, had been heard

regularly on a network radio program, a children's quiz show called 'It's a Wise Child,'" ("Zooey," 54). While their involvement on the show funded all of their college educations, it is also a topic of debate among people who encounter the Glasses even years after their tenure is over, as well as a significant hub for locating memories of Seymour's teachings. In "Raise High" when Muriel's disgruntled Matron of Honor comments on Seymour's involvement with the radio program as a cause for why Seymour's behavior:

> "I'd like to see a kid of *mine* get on one of those things. I'd die, in fact, before I'd let an child of mine turn themselves into a little exhibitionist before the public. It warps their whole entire lives. The pub*lic*ity and all, if nothing else—ask any psychiatrist. I mean how can you have any kind of normal *child*hood or anything?" (67-68).

The Matron of Honor's disapproval of children's participation in entertainment is based on her belief that children are taken advantage of by adults and irrevocably damaged by the publicity. What the Matron of Honor does not take into account is that the Glass children were never quite children, never quite as vulnerable, although markedly more perceptive, to the corruption to which being in the public's eye would expose them. Even when Buddy describes many listeners' responses to them as "a bunch of insufferably 'superior' little bastards that should have been drowned or gassed at birth," the program is incredibly popular; their tenure on the show spans from 1927 to 1943, connecting the "Charleston and B-17 Eras," ("Zooey," 54, 53). Therefore, while Salinger draws attention to a considerable amount of irritation instigated by the showcasing of overly precocious children, he also makes a point of showing that the

public was to an extent *bettered* by the Glasses' appearances on the shows—that the Glass children was able to move members of their audience just as Muriel's humanity moved Seymour. Buddy mentions a "coterielike group" of former "It's a Wise Child" listeners suggesting that the Glass children had a fairly large fan base. In "Raise High" Muriel's aunt admits to Buddy that her "husband used to listen to 'It's a Wise Child' without fail," (51).

While neither wholly loved or loathed by the public, the Glass children, in a sense, gave up part of themselves to the public. Their appearances on "It's a Wise Child" were sacrifices to their private lives. The way in which Buddy responds to the Matron of Honor's stab at Seymour's involvement in the radio program reveals his own viewpoint that Seymour's concession to perform is a sacrifice:

> I said it might be different if Seymour had just been some nasty little high-I.Q. showoff. I said he hadn't ever been an exhibitionist. He went down to the broadcast every Wednesday night as though we were going to his own funeral. He didn't even talk to you, for God's sake, the whole way down... (69).

In this passage, Buddy differentiates between a precocious youngster who sells out for his own self-indulgent desires for fame or money. Buddy is also careful to explain that Seymour was not "an exhibitionist"; there is a strong negative connotation rooted in this word. The fact that "exhibitionist" is not used in any description of Bessie and Les's Vaudeville acts implies that it is not synonymous with the performer or entertainer. The Oxford English Dictionary cites that exhibitionism involves "a tendency

towards display; indulgence in extravagant behaviour."[8] Thus if one is an exhibitionist, Salinger seems to argue, it is inherent to one's nature. Buddy's recollection of Seymour's anguish en route to the studio illustrates how their appearances on the show were not to build their own egos by indulging the world in their genius. The implication of death, that Seymour was "walking to his own funeral" and that Seymour was silent before the broadcast, as if in mourning, alludes to their sacrifice. The sacrifice is that they were aiming their marbles; they performed for an audience. And yet, as entertainers they do not fully submit to a committed public existence. Salinger enlists entertainment in the Glass stories as a medium that allows for its performers to remain partially aloof; they are not removed to an ivory tower, but as they perform from a studio or stage, it is only their voices that transmits through radio waves or their performance to the audience. They impart on the audience an imitation of the authenticity they so desire.

After his reign on "It's a Wise Child," however, Seymour abnegates this position as entertainer; he fully withdraws from the world after he is held in a military psychiatric hospital for three years following the war. In "Seymour," Buddy recalls when he and Seymour, ages three and five, accompanied their parents on tour in Australia when they played on the same bill as Joe Jackson. Jackson gave Seymour "a ride on the handle bars" of his "nickel-plated trick bicycle that shown like something better than platinum to very last row of the theater" around the stage (173, 172). Years later, after the breakout of the war, Les Glass asks Seymour if he remembers riding the bicycle. Seymour responds saying "he wasn't sure he had ever got off Joe Jackson's beautiful bicycle," (173).

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8 "Exhibtionist," The Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed., (Oxford UP: 1989) <http://dictionary.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/cgi/entry/50080034?query_type=word&queryword=exhibitionist&first=1&max_to_show=10&single=1&sort_type=alpha>

Seymour's response, in context to his complete narrative—or at least as complete as we know—is poignant and heartbreaking. A young Seymour riding the handlebars is one of the only acutely child-like depictions of him we ever see. At the same time, the episode occurs in the presence of a famous vaudevillian and while on the stage. Whether or not the ride happens during an actual performance is not irrelevant. The event shows that even before the Glasses are introduced to the man who will get them on the radio show, Seymour is conscribed to the stage. His confession that he has never left the bicycle, while it may seem optimistic and innocent, is hauntingly tragic. He muddles the boundaries between entertainment and partial commitment to the corporeal and mistakes the bicycle ride for how he should lead his life: detached and innocent like a child. Even Joe Jackson gets off the bicycle at some point. He had no "magnificent teacher" to tell him the performance ends, and the curtains close—that an imperfect life is inevitable and imitation of authenticity is the best we can hope for. In Seymour's claim that he is not sure that he has ever stopped riding the bicycle, we see that he is unable to compromise. Witnessing the cruelty and corruption in the world on such a grand and terrible scale as he did during the war, Seymour realizes no such bicycle ride is possible, no sphere of refuge can contain him from the world's squalor.

Regardless of Seymour's spiritual demise that led to his suicide, he imparted on his younger siblings what he could not practice himself since Buddy, Franny and Zooey continue to be entertainers into adulthood. Their forms of entertainment evolve more closely to the process of art. Buddy, as I will come back to later, becomes a writer, and Zooey and Franny both take up acting. While Salinger does not write into the future to see what Franny professionally becomes, we do know that Zooey is an actor, and did not

come easily to that professional decision. In "Zooey," Buddy describes a twenty-five-year-old Zooey who "by profession…was an actor, a leading man, in television, and had been for a little more than three years," (52). Buddy makes sure to include that Zooey was also a quite "sought after" television actor, and likewise, highly paid. Immediately following this description, Buddy progresses onto the letter Zooey is reading. It is a four-year-old letter, written in 1951, from Buddy explaining that he had essentially been commissioned by their mother to advise Zooey on his pursuits after college. Buddy writes: "You have your Whole Life Before You and it's Criminal if you don't go after your Ph.D. before you go in for the actor's life in a big way," (57). Ultimately, however, Buddy retracts his earlier advice and tells Zooey: "Enough. *Act*, Zachary Martin Glass, when and where you want to, since you feel you must, but do it *with all your might*," (68). This scene indicates that Zooey makes the distinct choice to become an actor after receiving Buddy's advice, which is derived from the lessons Seymour taught him. These lessons are more clearly articulated when Zooey, acting as a kind of double-surrogate, passes the same wisdom onto his younger sister, Franny; Zooey speaks for Buddy who assumes role as Seymour's proxy. During Franny's breakdown, Zooey counsels his sister with similar guidance to what Seymour had written home to Boo, Walt and Waker from camp. He tells her to perform, that it is a waste of her talent to not perform: "Your beloved Emily *Dick*inson? You want your Emily, every time she has an urge to write a poem, to just sit down and say a prayer till her nasty, egotistical urge goes away? *No*, of course you don't!" (166).[9] Although Emily Dickinson was largely a recluse herself, she

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9 Emily Dickinson was an interesting poet for Salinger to insert considering Dickinson was largely reclusive herself; very few of her poems were actually published during her lifetime, and it is believed that she even requested her works be burnt after death. After

performed. Simply because the audience might be an inauthentic, ego-driven bunch of phonies does not entail that God is not involved. What the younger Glasses realize that saves them is that as even as their genius makes them excessively perceptive to the audience that is "loaded with mercenaries and butchers," God is in the audience as much as he is in a Trappist monk. Zooey reminds Franny that "'Jesus realized there *is* no separation from God,'" (169). To remove oneself to Joe Jackson's bicycle is to deny God's presence in everything else in the world.

Zooey's attempt to enlighten his sick sister in the knowledge Seymour, and thereafter Buddy, imparted on him is in vain; Franny will not listen to him. After he lectures her, Zooey stops himself and looks at his sister. As he sees "Franny's prostrate, face-down position on the couch, and heard, probably for the first time, the only partly stifled sounds of anguish coming from her," he suddenly sees his words are not helping her (171). Zooey leaves the room, apologizing to Franny for his failure to help her and finds himself in Seymour and Buddy's abandoned room. With the beaverboard nailed to back of the door covered in quotes Seymour and Buddy found essential to keep in mind, as well as a note Seymour wrote to himself, Zooey undergoes a spiritual shift: "When he moved again, it was as though marionette strings has been attached to him and given him an overzealous yank," (181). Zooey meditates in order to conjure Buddy and Seymour and Salinger's puppetry imagery suggests that he is successful. Zooey then phones

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her death, however, hundreds of her poems were discovered and eventually published. Salinger's own reclusion parallels Dickinson's; his reclusion seems to have intensified with age like Dickinson's, and according to Joyce Maynard's memoir about her experience living with Salinger, his house included "a small, cluttered room filled with books and papers where Jerry keeps his typewriter. Beyond that, though he doesn't show me this (and in all the I live here, he never will) there is a safe—as large as another room-where he keeps his unpublished manuscripts." From Joyce Maynard's <u>At Home in the World: A Memoir</u>, (First Picador: New York, 1998), 98.

Franny and pretends to be Buddy as he attempts one more time to help his sister by teaching her what his eldest brothers taught him:

> "I remember the fifth time I ever went on 'Wise Child.' I subbed for Walt a few times...Anyway, I started bitching one night before the broadcast. Seymour'd told me to shine my shoes just as I was going out the door with Waker. The studio audience were all morons, the announcer was a moron, the sponsors were morons, and I just damn well wasn't going to shine my shoes for them, I told Seymour. I said they couldn't see them *anyway*, where we sat. He said to shine them anyway. He said to shine them for the Fat Lady." (199)

While Zooey is telling Franny to essentially perform, he himself performs as Buddy in order to reach his sister. It is only by imitating Seymour's advice through Buddy that Zooey is able to successfully reflect it back on to Franny. On the streets as children, Seymour told Buddy not to aim, to have no expectations for an outcome. In this passage, however, the guidance is based on having no expectations for the *audience*, but to nevertheless perform. Even if the audience is all "morons," Seymour tells Zooey to give it his all anyways, to shine his shoes for the Fat Lady because God is in even her. According to the lessons we find in the Glass stories, to *know* God, then, is to *search* for God even when the search is infinite and means accepting the "unskilled laughter." For the Glass children, however, their genius makes absolute acceptance impossible. Seymour committed suicide because while he understood this more than anyone, no "magnificent teacher" told him to get off of the bicycle to take a bow and let the audience applaud, to *accept* the audience even to an extent. As entertainers and performing for the "Fat Lady," the Zooey and Franny compromise, and are therefore saved. It seems then

that throughout the Glass stories there does emerge a solution for the Glasses to exist within society. It is a hybrid of sorts, but Salinger seems to suggest that it does not need to end in suicide for the genius.

We can even see Buddy's writing as a performance for the "Fat Lady"—a concession to the world. Although Buddy attempts withdrawal from the world, removing himself to the woods, he is still an entertainer, and he is still an artist. He is the author of the Glass stories and we readers are Buddy's audience. While Buddy narrates Zooey's guiding words to Franny, we can see that Buddy is in a way writing to himself, reminding himself that he must write; he must produce art:

> "There isn't anyone *any*where that isn't Seymour's Fat Lady. Don't you know that? Don't you know that goddam secret yet? And you don't know—*listen* to me, now—*don't you know who that Fat Lady really is?* ... Ah, buddy. Ah, buddy. It's Christ Himself. Christ Himself, buddy." (200)

The repetition of this passage and the use of italics suggests an urgency on Buddy's behalf. With the employment of "buddy" three times, he reinforces in the idea through his writing to himself. It works to show that Buddy's own vehicle of art is successful; as he partakes as an artist, he inscribes within his work the message that fuels their existence. Through his craft, he can more clearly understand himself the lessons Seymour left with him. In the Joan Didion essay, "Finally (Fashionably) Spurious," she argues that the final lesson in *Franny and Zooey* is illegitimate, perhaps contrived as it flatters its readers:

> There is something very attractive about being told that one finds *enlightenment* or *peace* by something as eminently within the realm of the possible as tolerance

> toward television writers and section men, that one can find the peace which passeth understanding simply by looking for Christ in one's date for the Yale game...*Franny and Zooey* is finally spurious...[10]

It is easy to misread Zooey's advice to Franny as "tolerance equals enlightenment"; however, Didion fails to consider that *not* everybody can find enlightenment or peace with mere toleration. While Didion's conviction is true that Glass stories can read as "self-help copy" that "emerges finally as *Positive Thinking* for the upper classes," I do not believe that they are intended by any means to be instructions for living and reaching God, (79). The Glasses do not simply *tolerate* the Fat Lady, they must *sing* for her—tap dance, juggle, act, and write. In this regard, the Glass stories should not be read as Buddy Glass's version of The Seven Storey Mountain, but as a book that one picks up for entertainment, as an experience of a craft, of Buddy's art, and of course, Salinger's art. When the book is closed, Buddy's narrative ends, and who the Glasses are is lost to us behind the closed curtain. They exist in the art, and it is through that mode that the genius Glass children reflect an authentic, true life onto us and that we can apply to our own lives.

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10 Joan, Didion. "Finally (Fashionably) Spurious," Salinger: A Critical and Personal Portrait, ed. Henry Anatole Grunweld, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962) 79.

Conclusion:

As Seymour's name alludes to his capacity to "see more," the Glass family's surname also speaks to their character. Glass. As a material, it can be transparent or opaque, colored, shaded or clear, filmy or streaked. It is strong in certain constellations and yet can shatter from applied force. Crafted into a perfect plane, glass can be completely reflective—a mirror. From different angles, a reflection captured in a mirror offers a skewed perspective to the corporeal that we would not otherwise see or notice. In Salinger's stories—"A Perfect Day for Bananafish," Franny and Zooey, Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour—an Introduction and "Hapworth16, 1924"—the Glass family is the reader's mirror to the world.

Salinger, therefore, seems to ultimately argue that literature and art are the best means to approach an understanding of truth in the world. While a pure reflection of the world is impossible, art allows us for the most authentic imitation we are capable of—including the genius. Even as Buddy Glass endeavors to capture Seymour's character and legacy, he can only do so through various reflections:

> My original plans for this general space were to write a short story about Seymour and to call it "SEYMOUR ONE," with the big "ONE" serving as a built-in convenience to me, Buddy Glass, even more than to the reader—a helpful, flashy reminder that other stories (a Seymour Two, Three, and possibly Four) would logically follow. Those plans no longer exist. Or, if they do—and I suspect that this is much more likely how things stand—they've gone underground... ("Seymour," 125)

Buddy's initial endeavor to describe, truthfully, who Seymour was in a series of catalogued short stories is a failure. The mode in which the Glass stories are written is telling of Buddy's failed attempt. He is never able to write a finite series of stories about Seymour. The stories we get, instead, vary greatly in their length and do not focus solely on Seymour. In order to understand Seymour, the reader must know (primarily) Buddy, Franny and Zooey. And, in order to understand Buddy, Franny and Zooey, the reader must understand Seymour. Either way, the Glass narratives do not form a flat plane that can perfectly reflect the family. But, it is as close as we can get. While the stories do not fit together in a clean series nor in what some refer to as a composite novel, their union does render a reflection, just not a perfect one. Instead, as readers we see the Glasses as if walking through a succession of funhouse mirrors; though the image is not the truth, it is still a reflection of the truth. As Salinger takes his characters through the various options of refuge—the university, Bohemia, the family and monastic withdrawal—we are allowed to view the truths of the antagonist world of the 1950's through the Glass family prism.

Figure 1: The Glass Family

Les Glass: Married to Bessie (Gallagher) Glass. Jewish. Retired vaudevillian.

Bessie (Gallagher) Glass: Married to Les Glass. Irish Catholic. Retired vaudevillian.

Les and Bessie Glasses' children:

Seymour Glass: Born 1917. Goes to Hapworth overnight camp 1924. Appears on "It's a Wise Child" 1927. Drafted into the army 1941. Marries Muriel Fedder 1942. Sent overseas in World War II 1944. Confined to military psychiatric war 1945-1948. Commits suicide in Florida 1948.[1]

Buddy Glass: Born 1919. Goes to Hapworth 1924. Appears on "Wise Child" 1927. Drafted into army 1942.

Beatrice "Boo Boo" Glass: Born between Buddy and the twins. Ensign stationed at Brooklyn Naval Base during war ("Carpenters," 7). Marries Tannenbaum, has son, Lionel, moves to suburbs ("Down at the Dinghy").

Walter "Walt" Glass: Born 1921 ("Hapworth" PAGE"). Waker Glass's twin brother. Killed in "absurd G.I. accident" in Japan 1945 ("Carpenters," 7).

Waker Glass: Born 1921. Walt Glass's twin. Conscientious objectors' camp during war ("Carpenters," 7). Carthusian monk ("Seymour," 134).

Zachary "Zooey" Glass: Born 1929 ("Zooey," 50). Television actor.

Frances "Franny" Glass: Born 1934 ("Carpenters," 3). College student and actress.

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[1] Alsen, 115-120.

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