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CHILDREN IN J. D. SALINGER:
AN ISOLATED WORLD

by

Glenn F. Johns

A THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Faculty

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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This thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

John A. Nist
Professor in Charge

Sept. 19, 1964
Date

J. Burke Severs
Head of the Department of English

The completion of this study was achieved only through the continuous loving encouragement of my wife Nancy.

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Abstract

This study attempts to analyze one of the most noticeable aspects of the fiction of J. D. Salinger--his consistent use of children. It attempts to point out that in Salinger's works childhood is a state so desirable that it is coveted by some perceptive adults. These adults are unable to return to childhood because of the rigid barrier that exists between childhood and adulthood.

In Salinger's works the individual child usually retains certain common characteristics. Among these are a unique sense of intelligence and perception, a state of uncorrupted innocence which contrasts with the squalor of adulthood, a disdain for outward, physical qualities as compared to inner, metaphysical qualities, and a sense of honest deception founded in make-believe and illusion.

This study chronologically traces the development of children in Salinger. It notes that many of Salinger's minor stories make little or no use of children. As Salinger's art improves, however, he relies on the use of children to a greater degree.

Some of Salinger's more memorable characters, such as Holden and Phoebe Caulfield, have their origin in early stories. Salinger reaches his height in the development of children with Nine Stories and The Catcher in the Rye. It is here that the qualities of childhood

become most apparent. His later stories concerning the Glass family explore a new vein--the perceptive child who has matured.

Foreword

One of the most noticeable aspects of the fiction of J. D. Salinger is his consistent use of children as an artistic device. One critic has said of Salinger that he "has carried the old romanticism theme of the child's proximity to truth and wisdom as far, perhaps, as any (other) romantic," while another claims he is "more grossly sentimental about children than any modern writer of similar stature."[1]

Although critics have observed Salinger's emphasis on children, they have failed to notice the particular qualities which surround these children--qualities which thematically, structurally and symbolically bind them into a closely knit fraternity with strict admission requirements.

The purpose of this study is to examine the world of children in Salinger, noting the qualities of this world and establishing the common characteristics of Salinger children, and to trace the development of children throughout his work.

Chapter One

Children in J. D. Salinger: An Isolated World

A primary use of children in Salinger is to contrast the hollowness and decadence of modern adult life with the innocence of childhood. Because they lack worldly adult experiences, Salinger's children have not been susceptible to life's disillusionments and remain spiritually unblemished. They are untainted and aloof, isolated from the empty values of adulthood. Robert Jacobs has attempted to clarify this contrast in child and adult.

> For Salinger, childhood is the source of the good in human life; it is in that state that human beings are genuine and open in their love for each other. It is when people become conscious in their relationships to one another, become adults, that they become "phony" . . .[2]

The isolation, then, is an isolation from the adult world, and the effect is achieved by several artistic devices including inference, character foils, symbolism and dialogue. Realizing the risk of oversimplifying Salinger children, one may still develop a list of qualities which many of these children exhibit throughout the whole of Salinger. These are the characteristics which help to effect their isolation.

Most obvious of these isolating qualities is a high intelligence or, in some cases, a keen intuition and sense of awareness. Michael Walzer says, "The precocity of Salinger's children takes many forms: they learn foreign languages with amazing ease and write poetry in Japanese. But the most important form is an extraordinary religious and mystical insight."[3]

Both Mattie Gladwaller ("Boy in France") in a letter to her brother and Phoebe Caulfield (The Catcher in the Rye) in a conversation with her brother reflect insight by correctly assuming what has happened to their brothers. Teddy in "Teddy" is a zen fortune teller who has adults straining to comprehend his fatalistic wisdom. The Glass children, of course, are so intelligent that they earned scholarships on the radio program "It's a Wise Child."

Aside from this unique degree of intelligence and perception, children possess a sense of naturalness and innocence which isolate them from adulthood. Their sense of naturalness allows them to experience a certain joy and satisfaction from simple, elemental things. They are not consciously motivated in their innocent, playful antics. Charles is enthusiastic about a childish riddle. Sybil plays with a beachball and rides waves. Lionel eats pickles and wins a race with his mother, and Phoebe, of course, has her carrousel ride. Teddy climbs stairs slowly because " . . . the act of climbing a flight of

stairs was for him, as it is for many children, a moderately pleasurable end in itself." And the biggest coming event for Phoebe is when she will act in the school play, an event she anticipates with childish eagerness. When Holden is in the park, he receives the innocent and sincere thanks of a young girl for tightening her skate. Here Salinger expresses his convictions that children are basically decent. "She was a very, nice polite little kid. God, I love it when a kid's nice and polite when you tighten their skate for them or something. Most kids are. They really are."[4]

This natural sincerity easily blends with another, similar characteristic--that of disregarding outward, physical manifestations and searching for what is the inner, metaphysical value. This quality recurs throughout Salinger as a trait of sensitive individuals and is mirrored almost without exception by children. Lionel will not be bribed by objects to leave his boat; Phoebe would forsake all to follow Holden. The one adult who does appear to merit Salinger's admiration because he possesses this quality is Seymour Glass. But Seymour is unique in the world of Salinger adults--he indeed can see more than his contemporaries. And Salinger emphasizes that Seymour, like Chiu-fang Kao, can be sent for horses.

> Intent on the inward qualities, he loses sight of the external. . . He looks at things he

ought to look at and neglects those that need not be looked at. So clever a judge of horses is Kao, that he has in him to judge something better than horses.[5]

When Mattie jumps up and down off the curb in "The Stranger," Salinger asks, "Why was it such a beautiful thing to see?" The answer, perhaps, is that the innocent, natural acts of children are appealing and disarming, reflecting their inward qualities.

Another characteristic of childhood that Salinger emphasizes is its extreme brevity. Childhood is gone in a flash, with a sudden leap off that "crazy cliff" that is the barrier between the worlds of child and adult. The brevity of childhood is central to Babe Gladwaller's bedroom soliloquy in "Last Day of the Last Furlough."

> "Mattie," he said silently to no one in the room, "you're a little girl. But nobody stays a little girl long--take me, for instance. All of a sudden little girls wear lipstick, all of a sudden little boys shave and smoke. So it's a quick business, being a kid. Today you're ten years old, running to meet me in the snow, ready, so ready to coast down Spring street with me; tomorrow you'll be twenty, with guys sitting in the living room waiting to take you out. All of a sudden you'll have to tip porters, you'll

worry about expensive clothes, meet girls for lunch, wonder why you can't find a guy who's right for you.[6]

It remains for adults, however, to realize this brevity of childhood and to warn, even to prevent children from stepping off the edge. This is the theme of Holden's often quoted desire:

> I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around--nobody big, I mean--except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff--I mean if they're running and don't know where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and _catch_ them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all.[7]

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Salinger children is their illusionary world of make-believe. Critics have failed to observe that many Salinger children have created for themselves a world of illusion and honest deception. Often this takes the form of invisible people or things, and usually results in isolating adults who are unable to perceive the childish creations.

High on the list of make-believe is Jimmy Jimmereeno,

whose presence causes Eloise to lament her lost childhood. The bananafish in "Perfect Day For Bananafish" is another example of a non-existent creation. These make-believe fish, created by Seymour, supposedly eat so many bananas that they expand and get caught in a death trap. Both Seymour and Sybil "see" a bananafish.

In several instances Phoebe Caulfield enters the illusionary world of make-believe, although her illusions are of a different nature and do not involve the invisible. Rather, Phoebe has created for herself an imaginary personality; she has made herself someone she is not by inventing the middle name of Weatherfield, a name which may be related to Holden's field of rye. Perhaps this false personality is further underlined by her desire to act--to assume the personal characteristics of another. In addition to these flirtations with unreality, she believes that by an assertion of will she can make the temperature of her forehead rise. When Holden puts his hand on her forehead but does not notice any temperature change, he nevertheless accepts Phoebe's illusion because he does not want to shatter what he realizes is the childish world of make-believe, or in his words, he doesn't want to give her "a goddamn inferiority complex."[8]

Phoebe, then, lives in a make-believe world of false names and adjustable senses which adults cannot experience.

It is a key to the character of Holden that he is not so far removed from childhood to acknowledge and even to experience for himself some make-believe. Frequently he play acts by imagining that he is wounded.

> When I was really drunk, I started that stupid business with the bullet in my guts again. I was the only guy at the bar with a bullet in my guts. I kept putting my hand under my jacket, on my stomach and all, to keep the blood from dripping all over the place, I didn't want anybody to know I was even wounded. I was concealing the fact that I was a wounded sonuvabitch.[9]

It should be noted that there is a great difference between the make-believe of Holden and Salinger children and the phony make-believe that is the guidon of adulthood. The unrealities of childhood are of no danger to anyone--they do not carry the ugly blow of a scrawled obscenity. Rather, they are an expression of an inward emotion enacted in natural innocence, not in hypocrisy. Michael Walzer points out the contrast that exists. "But today, Salinger seems to say, the only contrast to the innocence and fervor of the child is the affectation, the cruel conventionality, the phoniness of the adult world. The adult is not 'real'; he lives amidst sham."[10]

Finally, it can be said that childhood is a one-

way street down which hardened, insensitive adults have no inclination to travel. However, there are some sensitive adults like Eloise and Buddy and Zooey Glass, who realize the impossibility of returning, not only to childhood itself, but more importantly to the world that surrounds it. However, they are, like Holden, denied the return. Other adults like Boo-Boo and Seymour Glass actually attempt a return to a childhood environment. But Boo-Boo is refused entrance onto Lionel's boat, and Seymour sees the bananafish that prompts his suicide. Both attempts are unsuccessful. Adults may not enter the world of children that is veiled in innocence and uncontaminated by the sick values of the world.

This idea is underlined in _Franny and Zooey_ when Buddy Glass meets a four-year old girl. When asked the names of her boy-friends she replies, "Bobby and Dorothy." She does not realize that Bobby and Dorothy are of different sexes and cannot both be boyfriends. To her this difference is unimportant because she classifies them both as intimately close companions. Adults, of course, would notice the difference in outward physiology, but the acknowledged differences in life are really non-existent in the candid environment of a child. The failure to assume the unbiased outlook of a child causes the permanent adult isolation, for adults have lost their untainted sense of value. They are unable to search for

the inward qualities that makes a seeker of horses. It is spiritually that Salinger children are superior to adults. Seymour-Salinger enters his thoughts on children in a diary, and they echo the implications in other Salinger stories. "A child is a guest in the house, to be loved and respected--never possessed, since he belongs to God. How wonderful, how sane, how beautifully difficult and therefore true."[11]

Chapter Two

The Development of Children in Salinger's Early Stories

The few critics who have attempted to analyze Salinger's early stories see them in different perspectives. Gwynn and Blotner have created five catch-all categories into which they believe most of his early stories fall. They analyze briefly his early works in respect to these categories: the short short stories, the lonely girl characterizations, the destroyed artist melodramas, the marriage in wartime group, and the Caulfield stories.

Hassan, Levine and French see many of Salinger's early stories as forerunners of a specific theme or idea which occurs later in his career. Levine, for example, develops the theme of the misfit hero in Salinger and shows how the hero is forced to compromise his integrity with a pragmatic society. French sees the dichotomies of the phony and nice worlds, which he believes run throughout Salinger, as having their birth in these early stories. Hassan believes many of Salinger's heroes exhibit a religiously singing behavior which he describes as "rare quixotic gesture," and he sees the germ of this behavior in the early works.[12]

In general, critics of these early works agree that these works are, at best, superficial, In 1957 Hassan said, "The majority of these pieces makes an uneasy lot, and some are downright embarrassing."[13] William Weigand

has observed, " . . . in Salinger's early work, even the best, there was the tendency to take (these) short cuts, to slide through by means of an easy symbol or two, to settle for one of the standard explanations, or appearances of explanation."[14]

His early work, then, is understandably on the apprentice level. These stories are significant, however, because they are the roots from which grow some of the ideas and characters in the later works.

In 1940 Salinger's first attempt, "The Young Folks," appeared in the March-April edition of Story. This short story concerns a party of college students of which William Jameson Jr. is a central character. Although there are obvious differences between him and Holden Caulfield, William Jameson Jr. does appear to be similar to Holden in at least one respect--a sputtering, adolescent manner marked by prep-school inflection. This first story of Salinger's lacks any child development and is concerned only with a frustrated girl's attempt to be popular. The girl is Edna Phillips, who, although she desperately lures Jameson unto the moonlit patio, receives no attention from him. Jameson is more concerned with an English theme and a blond with peanuts down her back.

Warren French has said that Jameson is "as ill-at-ease in a sophisticated, predatory society as Holden Caulfield and most of Salinger's other edgy adolescents."

Even as early as in his first published story there is the possibility that Salinger had in mind a character like Holden.

Paul Levine, in his chronological study of the misfit hero omits Jameson from his consideration. French believes this omission is an error, for he says that Jameson is the type of social nonconformist that recurs throughout Salinger. However, French is wrong in his condemnation of Levine, for as Gwynn and Blotner have noted, it is Edna Phillips, not Jameson, who is the misfit-nonconformist.[15] Jameson fits snugly into the social pattern that is expected of him. He will not neglect his English theme because it is a requirement, and although he would like nothing better than to squat on the floor and pitch peanuts down the blond's back, he is restrained by a stuffy sense of social etiquette. Edna, on the other hand, wants to belong to the party so much that she lies about the inattention that is given to her. She is the misfit, spending the evening deserted on the patio; Jameson is the conformist.

It is French, however, who notes the similarity of Jameson to Holden and also raises the important point, in opposition to Gwynn and Blotner, of Jameson's innocence.

> Like much apprentice writing, the story could be dismissed if Salinger's nail-gnawing hero were not so patently a prototype of Holden Caul-

field, and Edna Phillips the model for the patronizing prevaricating "phonies" that make Holden's life miserable. Blotner and Gwynn completely miss the point of this story when they assume that Edna is a pathetic character and that Jameson is stupid rather than innocent.[16]

In this sense, then, Salinger's first story does have a type of innocence--the innocence that stems from too few experiences. This innocence will be transferred to children in later stories.

Salinger's first story to utilize children in any way is "The Long Debut of Lois Taggett," which appeared in the September-October, 1942, issue of Story. It is interesting to note that the child in this story resembles Salinger's art at this point--both are sketchy and undeveloped. When Salinger is at his best, his stories contain some of the most engaging children in American literature. Nevertheless, this story is a step forward from its two predecessors. It is more profound and developed; theme and symbolism are employed to some advantage.

Lois Taggett is the product of a wealthy, socially prominent family and is extremely spoiled and pampered. Her first marriage, although sudden, appears happy and harmonious. Nevertheless, her husband, Bill Tedderton,

cannot resist an urge to inflict physical pain upon her. Although he is outwardly content, Bill experiences inward unrest, presumably because his sudden attraction to Lois was inspired by her money. Lois buys a dog for the same reason she acquired Bill--she thinks they are both cute. However, the dog is soon gone, and so is Bill, the marriage ending in Reno.

Lois's second marriage is to Carl Curfman, a man who wears white socks because colored ones irritate his feet. Lois proceeds to change Carl--his direction giving to cab drivers, his socks, his hair dressing and his failure to inhale. Because of this domineering personality Lois becomes an outsider to her marriage. She is a prime example, although Levine fails to mention it, of the misfit hero, and she spends most of her mornings unoccupied at the movies.

When the marriage results in a child, things look right at last, for the baby, like some of her movies, is a successful production. The baby, however, is unable to recognize her father--the inference being that Lois, with her many changes, has stripped Carl of his personality. The sudden death of the young child brings Lois back to the common level of butchers, cab-drivers, and maids, and she allows Carl, even though looking stupid and gross, to don his white socks. The incident has apparently taught her a certain tolerance and has lessened

her emphasis on social appearances. She has emerged from her self-controlled world to make her real debut.

Gwynn and Blotner's short exposition is typical of the sketchy criticism given the early stories.

> "The Long Debut of Lois Taggett" recounts how long it takes a strange New York debutante (Lois says "ya" and "wanna") to grow up, the process requiring one marriage to a sadist and one to a boor, maternity and the death of the baby. The story's end offers the signal of Lois's maturity: she stops nagging her husband for wearing white socks.[17]

French, however, has gone beyond this cursory review by comparing the story to "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut."

> Driven into marriage--like James Purdy's Malcolm--because she cannot think of anything else to do, Lois turns into the same kind of bitch as Eloise in "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut." She denies Carl the simple pleasures he enjoys and insists that he wear colored socks. Up to the point--almost at the end of the story--at which Lois introduces her baby to his father and Carl ruefully observes that the boy doesn't know him from Adam, the story . . . seems a rough draft for "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut."[18]

Focusing on the child, we may see that, unlike Phoebe or Lionel, it is the child's death, rather than its life, which completely inverts the adult's point of view. The child is a passive force rather than an active one, and although the child has an undeveloped personality, the influence that it radiates is still felt by Lois. This is the first appearance of that intangible effect of child on adult which Salinger's best stories emphasize highly.

The next significant story in the development of children in J. D. Salinger is "Both Parties Concerned," published in 1944. While sitting at Jake's, a joint of real "class," Ruthie and Billy, a couple married too young, disagree on the amount of night life that a marriage can withstand. Ruthie accuses Billy of showing no concern toward their child, although Billy argues that he does show a type of concern (he likes his feet), but has not expressed it. The ride home occurs in silence, and the usual necking in the garage is omitted.

The following day Ruthie takes the child and runs to mother's, leaving Billy alone. This gives him an opportunity to exhibit his childish nature by performing two acts common to many Salinger children. First, he assumes another role and play-acts in the make-believe manner of Phoebe, who plays Benedick Arnold, and Holden, who plays the wounded stranger. Second, Billy creates the first evidence of an illusion in Salinger and, like

Ramona with Jimmy Jimmereeno or Sybil with the bananafish, he gives birth to Sam, the invisible piano player. These two childish acts serve to underline Billy's immaturity.

The story has a soap opera ending when Ruthie comes home, apparently dissatisfied with life with her parents and, in an evening thunder storm, receives comfort and assurance from Billy.

Critical reception of this story has been minute, and those critics who do consider it tend to belittle it rather than to see it as a step in the development of Salinger's art. French has said that "Both Parties Concerned" is "about the most trivial of all [Salinger's] stories."[19] Gwynn and Blotner dismiss the story with a two sentence summary,[20] and Levine, Weigand, and Hassan fail even to give it mention.

Yet the story certainly deserves more than this, for it is more pivotal to Salinger's artistic growth than are the short-shorts sold to <u>Colliers</u>, and it contains the raw material of techniques which Salinger later refines. Certainly the diction of the story is reminiscent of that of Holden Caulfield, although the speech of Billy is somewhat strained and not as natural as Holden's. The desire to communicate, so predominant in Holden and marked by many unsuccessful phone calls, is represented in this story by two attempts of Billy to place a successful call. Also the merging of the

opposite extremes of language--slob and refined--also prominent in Holden when he mentions the Doberman pinscher who "used to come over and relieve himself on our lawn" and when arguing with Stradlater he says, "You're a dirty stupid sonuvabitch of a moron," is first presented in this story. These relationships, fully developed in The Catcher in the Rye, were originally created in "Both Parties Concerned."

The influence that "Both Parties Concerned" has on later works does not stop here. Also present is the influence of child on adult, a theme developed in Nine Stories. Noteworthy here is the difference in attitude which Billy and Ruthie take toward their child. Billy shows a concern for the child only when embarrassed into it. Although he does harbor an interest and even a kind of love for his child, it is not spontaneous and must be ignited by the prompting of his wife. It is this difference in attitude, centering on the child, which causes the estrangement. Since this is responsible for a final and more satisfying agreement between Billy and Ruthie the child has had an indirect part in the reconciliation of man and wife, and the restorative power of a child is indicated. The groundwork for Phoebe has been laid.

Far from being a minor story of little consequence, "Both Parties Concerned" is an important story in

Salinger's development as an artist, for it contains some groundwork elaborated on in The Catcher in the Rye, and it exhibits the restorative force that is present in a little child.

"The Last Day of the Last Furlough," published in Saturday Evening Post in 1944, has received varying critical reviews. Hassan has referred to it simply as a member of a group of Salinger stories about wartime America.[21] French has gone a step farther by noting that:

> With the creation of Babe Gladwaller and his friends, Salinger began to write of characters who moved from one adventure to another in a fictional world that seemed increasingly more real and that excited and perplexed readers could identify with their own.[22]

William Weigand has added to the interpretation by observing that the Babe Gladwaller stories:

> foreshadow what is to become the chief concern in Salinger's fiction, but they remain unfocused. The war is still an irrelevant part of them--irrelevant because it was too easy to blame the war for the hero's state of mind, when probably Babe Gladwaller had an incipient case of banana fever. It took Salinger some years to define Babe's feelings

as a disease, to recognize, in other words, that so-called normal people were not affected with these strange symptoms of chronic hypersensitivity and sense of loss.[23]

"Last Day of the Last Furlough" is important in a review of Salinger's development because it is the foundation from which spring many of the childlike qualities that occur in Salinger's later stories. Also, it is the beginning of the brother-sister type of relationship so predominant in The Catcher in the Rye. Indeed, a portion of the story could well be a blueprint for the bedroom scene between Holden and Phoebe, and the characters of Holden and Phoebe may well have been traced from the outlines of Babe and Mattie. Gwynn and Blotner have noted the relationship between the two brother-sister pairs by saying that Mattie understands Babe "much as Phoebe Caulfield does Holden in the novel."[24]

This story is about the newly-drafted Babe, who is home on his last furlough before leaving for Europe and the war. He goes to school to pick up his sister, who has stayed late listening to a reading of Wuthering Heights. Characteristically, Mattie wants Cathy to marry Heathcliff instead of Linton. When Mattie leaves school and sees Babe, "She ran over to him crazily in the knee-deep virgin snow."[25] Even here the incorruptibility of the snow mirrors Mattie's innocence, and

the theme of guiltlessness for Phoebe and others to follow has been set. Speaking of Mattie, Babe says, "This is better than my books, this is better than Frances, this is better and bigger than myself."[26]

Mattie has been told not to sled down Spring street, but on the way home her brother coaxes her. She consents and shakingly climbs onto the sled. Babe senses that she would do something she fears and knows to be wrong just because he has asked. The unselfishness and the complete trust of Mattie touch Babe. He changes his mind and takes her down Randolph Street instead, for he does not yet want her to experience life's cruel realities.

At home Vincent Caulfield, Babe's army buddy, is waiting. When he sees Mattie, he makes an appropriate comparison between her and Phoebe by telling Mattie, "I have a sister just your age. She's not the beauty that you are, but she's probably far brighter."[27] This is an apt comment, for it must be agreed that although Mattie does show evidence of some insight by sensing that Babe is going to war, this quality is far more developed in Phoebe as Salinger presents her in The Catcher in the Rye.

At night when Babe rolls over in his bed, he thinks of what he wanted to tell Mattie earlier. Although he speaks to an empty room, his soliloquy is important in classifying Mattie on the youthful side of the "crazy

cliff" break between childhood and adulthood. "If you can't be smart and a swell girl, too," he says, "then I don't want to see you grow up."[28] Since Mattie has the innocence which characterizes youth, Babe doesn't want her to lose it by growing up.

"Last Day of the Last Furlough" is significant because it is the groundwork for Salinger's ideas on children and is an obvious first draft of the character of Phoebe. French has summed up this story well by saying that it depicts:

> the desperate and unavailing effort of a shy and sensitive young man to hold on to his irresponsible and carefree youth in the face of irresistible forces that are compelling him to accept adult responsibilities. Babe's addiction to ice-cold milk and chocolate cake, his close identification with his ten year old sister, his embarrassment when he discusses adult matters seriously in adult company, and his preference for his childish sweetheart are all evidences of an irrational attempt to cling to both the physical and intellectual innocence that the ostensibly wise and rational forces of maturity seem bent on destroying--just as they have destroyed the lives of the young men whom they have led to romanticize war. Since Salinger

is intent in this story upon capturing this brief, futile passion for innocence rather than upon conveying a message, "The Last Day of the Last Furlough" is one of those unusually moving artistic works that seem not to <u>mean</u> but to <u>be</u>.[29]

The obvious sequel to "The Last Day of the Last Furlough" is "A Boy in France" published in the <u>Saturday Evening Post</u> eight months later. The story pictures Babe Gladwaller in a French fox-hole and attempts to capture the "squalor" of war. Perhaps most important in the story is the close relationship between Babe and his sister Mattie, which Mattie reveals in a letter that Babe has re-read more than thirty times. The letter smacks of youthful innocence, and yet it reveals a kind of omniscience present in Salinger children. For instance, Mattie is somehow aware that Babe is in France, although everyone else in the family believes differently. She knows, too, that Frances, Babe's childhood sweetheart, is not as "nice" as Jackie, thus also reaffirming the opinion of Vincent Caulfield in "Last Day of the Last Furlough." The story ends with Babe talking to no one--a habit he has displayed before. He repeats softly the last line of Mattie's letter--"Please come home soon." But a return to youth and innocence is impossible, for Babe's "crazy cliff" is a fox-hole in France. Generally, this story is not well regarded by critics, and their

position appears quite tenable.

Salinger's next story pertinent to a study in child development is "Elaine," published in Story in the March-April issue of 1945. Criticism of the story differs widely. Gwynn and Blotner, for example, take a negative approach.

> "Elaine" represents so marked a regression as almost to suggest that the artist had been reading James T. Farrell a decade too late. Elaine Cooney is a beautiful moron of sixteen, brought up on movies and radio by a moronic mother who whisks her daughter home from her wedding to a movie usher. That's all.[30]

French, however, pays the story this somewhat restrained compliment: "By far the best and most genuinely moving of Salinger's contributions to Story is "Elaine."[31]

The story concerns the chronological development of a perennial child from her early childhood to the time when, at sixteen, she is forced to come face to face with the crisis of adulthood and instead, turns her back to remain in attitude forever a child. Elaine is the daughter of Mrs. Cooney, whose mother, Mrs. Hoover, still lives. The three have a chronic addiction to movies--a constant indication in Salinger of people who embrace unreality. These three people enjoy the phoniness of movies because they lack the normal intelligence needed

to sense the beauty of life. Salinger pictures Elaine as a carefree youth--she has not seen the squalor of life. "She seemed to be a happy child. . . . She didn't seem to mind the bilious pastel and tasteless print dresses in which her mother dressed her. She didn't seem to live in the unhappy child's world."[32]

Although Elaine is pretty, she is extremely stupid, almost retarded. It takes her nine and a half years to graduate from eighth grade. The celebration of her graduation consists of attending a Mickey Mouse movie with her mother and grandmother.

Finally Teddy, an usher in a movie theater, arranges to take Elaine to the beach--an act which would apparently begin her withdrawal from the childish shell. Elaine fails to heed the vague advice of her mother "Don't let anybody get wise with ya" and is lured under the boardwalk.

Although Salinger does not say why the two are married a month later, the implication is clear. The marriage, however, fails to propel Elaine to adulthood, for after the ceremony Mrs. Cooney repossesses Elaine because of a disagreement over a movie star with Teddy's mother. Rather than allowing and blessing Elaine's marriage, her mother provides the substitute of a movie. And Elaine on her wedding day, in a state of possible pregnancy, ripped from the arms of her lawful husband,

can only skip ecstatically and coo at the prospect of a Henry Fonda movie.

Warren French has given "Elaine" the following interpretation:

> Presumably it is more pleasant to live in the imaginary world of apparently virile Henry Fondas who cannot actually lay hands upon one than to live in the real world of effeminate Teddys with quarrelsome mothers and lecherous ideas. . . . The picture of the happy community of three generations of modern idol-worshippers after Elaine's father drops dead at an indoor flea circus and of the women's discourteous responses to the attentions of the naive superintendent of their apartment house can hardly be interpreted as anything except praise for the superiority of the life spent in the darkness of the theatre rather than the love nest. Indeed Elaine, her mother and her grandmother appear to be modern nuns cloistered in the cinema, and Salinger satirizes everything about their seedy society except their worship of movie stars.[33]

I believe French has completely missed the point of "Elaine," a point reaffirmed in The Catcher in the Rye. In the above quotation French gives two reasons why Salinger appears to offer only "praise for the superiority

of the life spent in the darkness of the theatre." The reasons, however, are misinterpreted, and the conclusion which evolves from them is unfounded. One reason French gives for Salinger's praise of movie-goers is that the women's replies to their landlord are discourteous. French fails to see that this discord with people does not, as he suggests, reflect the superiority of their life, but rather that it underlines their pathetic, ignorant character. His other reason is simply that this trio of ignorant movie-goers is happy, and yet he fails to see that this happiness does not stem from a rational evaluation of life's values but from a negation of them. These people have turned their back on life's realities, and the happiness they experience is not well-adjusted light-heartedness but a bliss of ignorance.

French is wrong when he claims that "Salinger satirizes everything about their seedy society except their worship of movie stars." By showing the hollowness of this life and by picturing these three women as woefully pathetic characters, Salinger expresses a keen sense of ridicule for anyone whose life is so shallow that he allows it to be centered in the unreality and phoniness of the movies--an idea developed more fully in _The Catcher in the Rye_.

Although French finds fault with other critics for not connecting this story thematically with Salinger's

best work, he commits the same error. "Other critics have failed to search out the story or to understand that it may throw light upon critical episodes of The Catcher in the Rye and Franny and Zooey, in both of which characters are literally sickened at the thought of sex."[34]

Elaboration on the Caulfield family began with "This Sandwich Has No Mayonnaise" in Esquire, October, 1945. The story concerns Sergeant Vincent Caulfield, training in Georgia for the Air Corps, and his distraction about the news that his brother Holden is missing. The story also mentions Phoebe and provides a glimpse at her childish omniscience. When thinking of the missing Holden, Vincent says, "I know exactly where he is. Phoebe knows too. She would know in a minute." Phoebe's keen insight is acknowledged and accepted by Vincent.

The story itself is weak. Critics like Gwynn and Blotner and Warren French have objected to the shift in interest from Vincent to an army lieutenant,[35] and their point appears well-taken, for the unity of the tale suffers badly from this shift, which serves no discernible purpose. The story is of passing interest only as a further mention and development of the Caulfield family.

In "The Stranger," published in Collier's on December 1, 1945, Salinger has returned to the Babe Gladwaller story. The war is over now, and Babe has gone with Mattie to see an old girl of Vincent Caulfield and tell

her about Vincent's death in the war. In the discussion she tells Babe that Vincent had not believed in anything since the death of his younger brother Kenneth. The story is ineffective and fails to achieve a central point.

Warren French has adequately summed up this story.

> Since the story fails to be either a satisfactory anti-war preachment or an explanation of why Vincent's relationship with the woman he loves is not enough to counter-act his grief over the death of a sibling, "The Stranger" can only be judged as one of Salinger's most complete failures.[36]

Despite its apparent artistic vacuum, "The Stranger" does contribute to Salinger's use of children with the appearance of Mattie and her display of childish innocence by her leap from the curb to the street.

After leaving Vincent's old girl, Babe and Mattie walk down the street. Babe says he is taking Mattie to a restaurant and wants to see her use chopsticks. Her reply is the concluding portion of the story: "'Okay. You'll see,' said Mattie. With her feet together she made the little jump from the curb to the street surface, then back again. Why was it such a beautiful thing to see?"[37] The position of this incident at the end of the story indicates that Salinger intends to

leave it in the memory of his readers. Perhaps the meaning here is that running parallel to Vincent's wartime tragedy is the counter-theme of Babe's childish innocence.

"I'm Crazy," Colliers, December 22, 1945, and "Slight Rebellion Off Madison," New Yorker, December 21, 1946, are the final two stories to be considered in this survey before entering the period when Salinger created those stories collected in Nine Stories. Both of these stories concern Holden Caulfield, and both are blueprints for episodes in The Catcher in the Rye.

"I'm Crazy" contains Holden's interview with his history teacher Mr. Spencer before leaving prep school and Holden's conversation with Phoebe in her bedroom. Phoebe is not yet as perceptive as she will be in The Catcher in the Rye. Rather than sensing Holden's expulsion from school, she must be told about it.

Also present in "I'm Crazy" is the young sister Viola, who is omitted from the novel. By opposing the colored maid Jeanette, Viola illustrates the theme of the widening gap between child and adult which is developing in Salinger. Viola is opposed to intimate contact with Jeanette, a representative of adult harshness. She specifically dislikes the fact that Jeanette breathes on her all the time, for it is not the breath of life but the pollution of society. Viola has also taken away her Donald Duck doll and refused her "ovvels" (olives).

It is Holden, the catcher in the rye, who gives Viola some olives and returns her the duck doll. As he leaves the room with a sense of restoration to childhood, Holden wonders about another restoration--that of the ducks in Central Park when confronted with a frozen lagoon. The child Viola has her duck returned; Holden can only wonder what happens to life's real ducks.

This scene with Viola is well done, and Warren French rightfully laments that Salinger dropped Viola, "one of his most delightful creations,"[38] from the corresponding passages in the novel.

"Slight Rebellion off Madison" is less significant to this study, for no children are used. This story, told in the third person, concerns a confused adolescent who is on vacation from his school. It is the blueprint for Holden's date with Sally Hayes in The Catcher in the Rye.

Chapter Three

Children in Nine Stories and The Catcher in the Rye

With the publishing of "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" in the New Yorker on January 31, 1948, Salinger created one of his most discussed short stories. This story is important because it marks Salinger's emergence from an apprentice to a master craftsman, and with this emergence the story has left in its wake a swirling wave of critical appraisal. Whereas the stories written prior to this had received little immediate criticism, and, except for French and Gwynn and Blotner, even to this day go unnoticed, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" and the stories which followed it, largely because they were re-published in Nine Stories, have begotten an overabundance of critical review.

The story concerns Seymour Glass, a mentally disturbed man vacationing with his wife Muriel in Miami. The character of Muriel is revealed in a telephone conversation with her mother, a meddling, gossipy woman who apparently has spoiled her daughter so that she has become too concerned with trivial matters and not concerned enough about spiritual values. This has caused Seymour to label her "Miss Spiritual Tramp of 1948."

Seymour himself is so centered in spontaneous acts which reflect his keen sensitivity that he appears irrational. For instance, he accuses people of staring at

a nonexistent tattoo, drives a car into a tree for no apparent reason and harshly questions an old woman's plans for passing away. Muriel, however, seems less concerned about Seymour's idiosyncrasies than her mother is, although neither woman appears to understand Seymour's inner feelings.

Indeed, the only person to whom Seymour is close is Sybil, his four-year-old bathing companion. Sybil is excited by Seymour's story of a fantastic bananafish, which becomes trapped and dies because of its gluttony. She claims that she sees a bananafish in the water near them, and this claim leads Seymour to return to his hotel and fire "a bullet through his right temple."

William Weigand sees Salinger's later works as having tones which are created in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish."[39] He believes all of Salinger's major protaganists have a disease of the soul which he labels "banana fever." This disease restricts the individual's perception, and as a result he suffers keenly from a lack of discrimination. The "perfect day" arrives when the suffering is eliminated because the bananafish, by its very nature, gorges itself on too many banana-like experiences and commits suicide. French points out that such an interpretation represents only one extreme in the scope of Salinger's work. "This analysis, however, tends to stress the destruction of innocence in Salinger's

work as strongly as Gwynn and Blotner's stresses the triumph of love. "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" and "For Esme" are, in fact, the most successful embodiments of what might be called the manic and depressive extremes of Salinger's vision."[40] French further points out that the story represents a dramatic improvement over previous stories, and even suggests that it can be divided into three acts. This, he implies, is due to the editorial re-focusing provided by the staff of the <u>New Yorker</u>.

Just as this story has increased his dramatic work, so too, does it mark a similar increase in the use of symbolism. These items, coupled with the theme of childish innocence, contribute to Salinger's success. James Bryan has noted both the childish innocence and the use of symbolism.

He believes that Sybil's innocence is beyond corruption and that the images of the inflated beach ball and the collapsed castle on the beach indicate that her innocence gives her a superiority over adulthood. He suggests that the bananafish may symbolically represent the gorging of the body at the expense of the soul. This bananafish, of course, would be Seymour.[41]

It remains to consider Seymour in the light of Salinger childhood. Although Salinger has given Seymour childish tendencies, he has not placed him in the realm

of childhood. Seymour is keenly aware, and although Salinger children possess an unusual amount of insight, Seymour's sensitiveness differs from the sort of awareness that is typical of Salinger children. As Weigand has observed, "Seymour, a bananafish himself, has become so glutted with sensation that he cannot swim out into society again."[42]

Seymour has seen the squalor of the world, rejected it, and has fled to the protected world of children for refuge. The impossibility of the situation is that Seymour may not live with these childish values because he is an outsider--an adult--one who has wallowed in the experiences of an adult world and gorged on them. He is, in short, a bananafish, and although childlike in nature he is somewhat like Holden--that is, he is in sympathy with the world of childhood without belonging.

Warren French apparently would disagree with this classification.

> Seymour is so much at ease with Sybil and so uneasy with adults because--as his uncontrollable desire to be the center of attention shows--he is still childish. He is not childlike, which would mean he retained the child's spontaneity while being responsible for his actions, but he is downright childish. He has retained children's most petulant characteristics, not their most engaging.[43]

However, Seymour has rejected the hollow values of adulthood and senses that the innocent world of children is untarnished and desirable. The realization which he comes to, a realization also present in Holden, occurs when Sybil sees Seymour as that which he seeks desperately to avoid--he is the adult bananafish. It is this realization which prompts him to reject society. For Holden the rejection means psychiatric care; for Seymour it means suicide. It is worth observing that it is the innocent child who senses the true nature of Seymour. It is Sybil, the seer, who indeed sees more in Seymour--more than adults like Muriel or her mother (both of whom completely misunderstand him) seem even to realize. Sybil, not Muriel, sees the true Seymour, and in a gesture of gratitude for this, Seymour bestows a kiss on her foot.

"A Perfect Day for Bananafish" also presents the most striking aspect of Salinger children--their illusionary world of make-believe. The illusion of a nonentity, here a bananafish, is central to this story, and only the child and the childlike are aware of it.

In "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut," which appeared in the <u>New Yorker</u> six weeks later, Salinger again brings out the fact that the innocent realm of a child is not only unobtainable for adults, but is also imperceptible to many of them.

Eloise Wengler lives in a tawdry suburban community

in Connecticut and finds herself caught in a loveless marriage. Eloise's memories of Walt, her lover lost in a freak wartime accident, have plunged her deeper into unhappiness and coarseness. Her degradation is revealed in a visit by her ex-roommate Mary Jane, when together they become drunk and wallow in the squalor of adulthood.

In direct contrast to this is her daughter Ramona, a child who has created her own imaginary Jimmy Jimmereeno, a sword-carrying colleague invisible to Eloise and Mary Jane. Salinger uses this illusion to emphasize the breach between the worlds of child and adult. When Eloise discovers that Ramona has created a second illusion, she orders it destroyed--as Walt was. Then Eloise realizes that, although she wishes to return to the stainless world of children, her "nice girl" days of unblemished life are past, and she is caught in the web of phony adulthood. She cannot experience any unity with Ramona. From this evidence Paul Levine has made the following conclusion: "Cut off from love, Ramona lives in an imaginary world colored by her thick glasses--her off-center vision. Her imaginary private symbols, Micky Mickareeno and Jimmy Jimmereeno, mirror not only her own loneliness but her mother's marital predicament. Eloise's attack on Ramona, the living reincarnation of Walt's innocence, results in the final insight that innocence is unrecoverable.[44]

Although Eloise wants to enter Ramona's world and see her child's visions, she can only lament the loss of her innocence and clutch Ramona's glasses--a symbol, not, as Paul Levine says, of Ramona's off-center vision, but of her childish ability to perceive.

Warren French has seen "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut" as the focal story in which the entire perspective of Salinger's work may be considered because it represents a fusion of the two worlds represented in Salinger. These worlds, according to French, are the "phony" and "nice" worlds, and he gives evidence that these two points of view are represented in the story--the phony world characterized by Eloise, the coarse, hard-as-nails, drunken exurbanite who has lost the "nice" world of her idyllic childhood, and the "nice" world as seen by her introverted myopic daughter who creates imaginary boy friends.[45]

French's conclusion that "these basic concepts of the perishability of the 'nice' world and the 'phoniness' of the persisting world" provide the foundation for the craft of Salinger is well taken. However, many of his other observations are almost unbelievably inappropriate, such as the following: "The thick 'counter-myopic' glasses that Eloise's daughter Ramona wears serve . . . as evidence that the imaginatively gifted are often physically handicapped."[46]

Not only is this point logically unsound, but it never arises as a theme in any Salinger story. In 1949 "The Laughing Man" effectively used the device of a narrator, a device present in some earlier stories and perfected in "For Esme--with Love and Squalor" and The Catcher in the Rye. The narrator, a mature adult, recollects his childhood when, as a member of the Commanche Club, he was told serialized episodes about the Laughing Man by the chief, John Gedsudski.

Running throughout this story is the theme of fancy, semblance and imitation. To begin with, The Laughing Man, as conceived by the chief, is only a creation of the mind. As an Oriental soldier of fortune, he must constantly wear a false face, for his unmasked face is too hideous to reveal. Not even Omba, the loveable dwarf, is permitted to see his face. Living in a masked world of boyhood imagination, The Laughing Man fulfills the same artistic quality of impalpability as does the bananafish.

The presence of illusion is emphatically reinforced within the story. Despite the terrifying appearance of the Laughing Man, those faithful to him recognize this as illusionary and note the compassionate side of his nature. The four confederates of the Laughing Man are described as being "blindly loyal," a description which also applies to the Commanches in their admiration for

the supposed virtues of the Chief. The animals in the forest listen to the melodious whisperings of the Laughing Man and do not think him ugly.

The world of illusion is linked with the world of children when the narrator mentions that he did believe he was a direct descendant of Laughing Man and secretly identified himself with him. That, of course, was years ago, and apparently the narrator has since become disenchanted by the leap to adulthood. In his childhood, however, he circulated throughout the city incognito, waiting for a chance to reveal himself.

The Durfarges, sly adversaries of Laughing Man, finally trick him by employing unreality--this time in the form of a false image of the friendly timber wolf Black Wing. Laughing Man falls for this illusion at first, but when he realizes his plight he discards his personal deception by stripping off his mask. Apparently Laughing Man does not realize that he must live with his illusion--that a bananafish or a Jimmy Jimmereeno is necessary, for by casting away his mask he brings an end to childlike unreality and figuratively leaps off his crazy cliff. At the conclusion of the story the Chief appears to be somewhat less than the paragon his childish followers believe him to be. The Laughing Man dies, as does the romantic affair of his creator, the Chief. These acts are symbolically related, for in the hard

world of unreality fate often opposes our desires. Small wonder the Commanches ride home with tear-filled eyes and shaking knees. They have seen life as it really is--cruel and concretely harsh without an illusion behind which to seek refuge--without the mask of unreality.

In examining this story, critics like French, Hassan and Weigand have analyzed the relationship between the private life of Gedsudski and paralleled it to the general attitude of the Laughing Man. Few critics, however, have analyzed the incidents in the Laughing Man episodes themselves to show how Salinger has interwoven the tone and theme.

Ihab Hassan, for example, sees most important in this story the link between the romantic affair of the Chief and the death of the Laughing Man. In referring to the affair between Gedsudski and Mary Hudson, Hassan says, " . . . the end of Innocence is more obviously compounded with the end of Romance."[47]

Warren French, however, takes a somewhat modified viewpoint: "Knowing the cause of the lover's quarrel is irrelevant to understanding the story; for it does not concern the romantic break-up, but the effects of the breakup on the impressionable young narrator."[48]

Obviously Gedsudski has created the last installment and the death of the Laughing Man as an outlet for the bruised feelings caused by his romantic failure. "The

Laughing Man," then, is a story of how an adult's disillusionment, conveyed through a narrated story, can affect a sensitive young boy.

At this point in Salinger's development, a new seed is growing. This is perhaps best illustrated by Warren French's comment:

> Salinger became absorbed with what had been a subordinate consideration in "A Perfect Day For Bananafish" and "Uncle Wiggily"--the reaction of a child or adolescent to the disillusioning discovery of the phoniness of the adult world. This absorption was to culminate in Holden Caulfield's recognition, in the final version of The Catcher in the Rye, that children can't be kept from grabbing for the gold ring.[49]

Salinger's next published story, "Down at the Dinghy," appeared in Harper's in April 1949. Significantly, the story concerns a portion of Seymour Glass's family, and although not involved directly, Seymour has an influence on the outcome of the story. Specifically the story concerns Seymour's sister Boo Boo and her four-year-old son Lionel. Lionel has isolated himself from the world of adults by retreating to a dinghy. Boo Boo goes to the lake to persuade Lionel to come home, but Lionel, refusing to allow his mother on board the boat, establishes the breach that is present between the worlds of child

and adult. James Bryan has said that Lionel "instinctively feels his innocence slipping away and tries, ineffectually (like the ostrich on his shirt) to hide. He rejects his mother's bribes: keys (which might symbolically unlock the doors to experience) and goggles (that once belonged to his Uncle Seymour who may be said to have seen too clearly the fact of experience."[50]

As the dinghy floats near the pier, it seems to indicate that a gap is present between Lionel's world and that of his mature mother, squatting on the pier. The dinghy is isolated, and an adult may admire it from afar but may not trespass. It is interesting to note that the boat is going nowhere. The dinghy is tied to the pier and stripped of its main and jib sails. Although Lionel mans the tiller, he remains stationary.

This world of childish isolation, then, contains a sense of permanence--unchanging and steadfast, and removed even in physical access from adults. When Boo Boo claims she belongs on the boat, Lionel tells her frankly that she is an outsider. "You aren't an admiral," he rebukes. "You're a lady all the time."[51] And when she approaches the pier, Salinger says, "Boo Boo found it queerly difficult to keep Lionel in steady focus."[52] Lionel naturally is out of Boo Boo's focus, for he is in another world.

Salinger's next story, "For Esme--with Love and

Squalor," was published a year later in the New Yorker. This story has brought an avalanche of criticism concerning the two children, Charles and Esme. Most critics have, I believe, failed in their evaluation of them, for they consider Esme, not Charles, to be Salinger's more admirable child. A close look at this problem is required.

The story itself is divided into two parts--the first of which deals with the meeting just before D-day between an English girl of thirteen and the narrator, an American writer currently in the army. Esme and her younger brother Charles hold a lengthy conversation with the narrator. In the second part the narrator, now called Sergeant X, is wallowing in the squalor of war when a package arrives from Esme and Charles. Sergeant X is reminded of his visit with them and, apparently, his outlook on life becomes modified.

Gwynn and Blotner believe that this story is "the high point of Salinger's art."[53] The reason for this acclaim is artistic balance; they see the correlation of four squalid elements in the story with four elements of love.

From this lofty point in critical review, the criticism runs rampant, with one critic even suggesting that the real identity of Sergeant X is Seymour Glass.[54] The real critical problem, however, concerns the children,

particularly Esme. The conventional mainstream of thought, with which I disagree, reaches its height in Maxwell Geismar: "'For Esme--with Love and Squalor' concerns a beautiful, dignified, precocious upper class English maiden of thirteen who saves an American soldier from a nervous breakdown. There is no doubt of Esme's grace and charm, but only whether, in this case, an adolescent's romantic affection can replace the need for theraphy."[55]

In contrast to this stands John Hermann, who believes that Esme is "the distillation of squalor" and that Charles is the "key to the story" because he is "the epitome of love."[56] Although Hermann's point appears well-founded, he has been assailed by Robert Browne, who says Hermann has "read the story in the light of a rather romantic preconception"--that is, that people concerned with statistics often are too hard and cold and are unable to love. Although Browne concedes that "Esme is comic as well as admirable," he fails to elaborate on the ridiculous aspect that would make her comical. He believes that because Esme goes uncensured by the narrator she is undeserving of censure.[57] This, of course, is a rather hollow argument, since at this point in the story the narrator appears to be "drinking in" Esme rather than evaluating her. Then too, never but in retrospect does the narrator give evidence of accurate judgement.

Warren French has added his weight to the chastise-

ment of Hermann by saying his evaluation of Esme is "ingenious misreading."[58] French believes it is a victory for the nice world when Esme compels Charles to kiss the alien soldier. He fails to see that someone like Esme, whose world is founded on outward, physical show, would believe a kiss, even if not from the heart, is sufficient. It is significant that Esme with her outward manifestations must force Charles to the kiss, and Charles rightly resists as best he can. It is Charles who places the emphasis on the metaphysical and not the physical. John Hermann has analyzed the character of Esme and Charles remarkably well. Of the latter he says:

> In contrast is Charles, disdainful of appearances like wet hair, of the facts that his sister cherishes ("He certainly has green eyes. Haven't you Charles?" the narrator asks him. "They're orange," Charles says); enjoying his game of riddles; arching his back across the chair in contrast to Esme's perfectly achieved poise; covering up his face with his napkin; giving a Bronx cheer at one point of the conversation between his sister and the narrator; engulfed with laughter at his own jokes; and furiously disappointed when the Sergeant tells him the answer to the riddle when asked the second time. He is everything his sister is not.[59]

Here is a summary of child-like acts which normally accompany Salinger children. Charles, then, fits rather well the typical Salinger mould.

Charles reaps his joy in life by reciting the riddle, "What did one wall say to the other wall?" The answer is "Meet you at the corner!" Esme rebukes Charles for telling the riddle, but the narrator gives it significance by saying, "It was one of the best riddles I've heard." Perhaps the riddle has meaning in that only after a letter from Esme and Charles does Sergeant X bring his duo-walled personality of love and squalor into a combination of a person with his "faculties intact." It is the childish riddle of love and squalor that is the symbolic key to the salvation of Sergeant X, and it is the joyful childishness of Charles that forms a contrast to the deterioration of Sergeant X.

The character of Esme, however, is more complex and not as easily analyzed. Throughout Salinger there is exhibited a disdain for outward appearances. This is the clue to many of the phonies in The Catcher in the Rye and other stories--they rely on appearances. A concern for impressions and appearances is not a virtue in Salinger characters. It is not, Buddy would tell us, the way to look for horses.

Esme, however, is over-conscious of her appearance, for she, unlike other Salinger children, wants to be an

adult. Whereas other children are apparently content in their youth, she cannot grow up fast enough and strains to possess an adult hairstyle and an adult vocabulary. She wants to be recognized, and as a result she reeks of an undesirable pretentiousness. She feels above the rest of the choir and naturally is "slightly bored with her own singing ability."

One should ask what type of girl invites a person she has met only once years ago to her wedding. The answer may be, one who wants an impressive guest list that would include a writer from a foreign continent.

The real clue to Esme, however, is provided by the choir director, who indicates that anyone who mouths words without knowing their meaning is not a real child or adult but merely a "silly-billy parrot." Although critics have failed to notice it, this is precisely what Esme does. She is concerned with using an impressive word, even though she is unsure of its meaning, for she apparently believes that an extensive vocabulary is the mark of a grown-up.

In speaking of her father, for example, she says, "He had terribly penetrating eyes, for a man who was intransically kind." "Intransically," of course, is not a word; she means "intrinsically." Rather than choose a more familiar word, however, she misuses this one in an attempt to provide an effect. Her misuse of words is

a clue to her parrot-like nature. On leaving the narrator she says, "I'll write to you first, . . . so that you don't feel compromised in any way." Careful thought will reveal that here too, compromised is not the word she should use. If the narrator agreed to write first, he would be obligated, not compromised.

She does correctly interject the word "gregarious" into the conversation, then quickly checks to see if the narrator knows the meaning of the word. A person unfamiliar with this word would be more easily impressed. After using a French phrase, she quickly asks, "Do you know French?" She hopes, of course, that he does not and will be impressed by her use of it. It is no wonder that the narrator rises from his chair "with mixed feelings of regret and confusion."

As evidenced by her use of words, Esme is truly a "silly-billy parrot" steeped in the false values against which Salinger continually speaks out. Robert Jacobs, already quoted, has said that when a Salinger character becomes conscious of relationships to others, he becomes phony.[60] Certainly Esme cannot be exempt from such a classification. She is so conscious of her relationships with others that they become too strained, too elaborate and too unnecessary. This is symbolized by the oversized watch with the mid-Victorian air. This watch is so overly elaborate that it can even double as a pedometer.

When Sergeant X receives his package, there are two gifts--one from Charles and one from Esme. It is the greeting of Charles which causes him to relax and sleep, saved from his own personal hell. The watch, a gift from Esme, is, notably enough, broken--just as the effect that Esme had on Sergeant X has been smashed. The sergeant does not even care to wind Esme's gift to see if it still functions. It is Charles, not Esme, who makes the salvation.

One must agree with Hermann when he says: "Much as we like Esme's intelligence, poise and breath-taking levelheadedness, it is her brother Charles, with the orange eyes and the arching back and the smacking kiss, who knows without counting the house, without 3:45 and 4:15 P.M.'s, the riddles of the heart."[61]

The Catcher in the Rye, published in 1951, is Salinger's most widely read and thoroughly discussed work. It is here that Salinger has developed the world of child and adult and placed an adolescent, Holden Caulfield, in their midst. Holden is aware of the barrier between the child and adult worlds and of the desirability of youthful innocence. To help children retain their youth, Holden wants to stop them before they plunge into the mire of adulthood; before they reach the vulgar signs that are scratched on the walls of life, he must catch them in the field of rye.

Holden has been expelled from Pencey prep, and before going home he wanders about in New York searching his environment for the simple truths of life. He discovers that the world belongs to adults who have filled it with sham, social compromise and pretension.

Holden is aware of the difference in innocence between a child and an adult and finally returns home to his sister Phoebe. When he enters his sister's bedroom and sees her sleeping, the difference is apparent. "She was laying there asleep, with her face sort of on the side of the pillow. She had her mouth way open. It's funny. You take adults. They look lousy when they're asleep and the have their mouths way open, but kids don't. Kids look all right. They can even have spit all over the pillow and they still look all right."[62]

Although Holden's high esteem of the guiltlessness which characterizes childhood draws him close to the world of the child, he, nevertheless, cannot return to it completely. As several critics have noted, Holden is not an omniscient child but a questioning adolescent. Arthur Heiserman and James E. Miller Jr. have observed that although Holden desires the role of a child, he is powerless to fulfill it. "As a child, he would be condoned, for a child is a sort of savage and pariah because he is innocent and good. But it is Holden's tragedy that he is sixteen and like Wordsworth, he can never be less."[63]

Paul Levine's view of Holden is similar. Levine notes that although Holden wants to be a protector of children's innocence, "he remains as he began: a remarkable adolescent going through a sensitive version of growing pains."[64]

Holden is caught by his realization that childhood is desirable, but he is frustrated because he is unable to embrace it. As Brian Way has noted: "Childhood is the only state of existence which is innocent, unspoilt, uncorrupted; escape backwards into it is obviously impossible; the despair of knowing this inexorable situation is the tragedy."[65]

If we must refuse Holden admittance to the world of childhood, we must also refuse his entrance into Salinger's world of adults. The adult world with its phony piano players, unrealistic movies, and general insincerity is not the thing to which Holden is ready to resign himself. His virgin sincerity restricts his entrance into a state that is polluted and contaminated by the sick values of the adult world.

"Holden Caulfield faces a society in which there seems to be no place for him, particularly since it is a society structured essentially to accommodate adults."[66] Holden is beyond the world of childhood, but not yet reconciled to adulthood, and his nomadic adolescence brands him as a wanderer between two worlds. His sympathy

with children is seen in his desire to be a protector of children--to protect them from the phoniness of adulthood which he, unlike most Salinger children, has already experienced.

It can be seen, then, that Holden's age and worldly experience prohibits his classification as a child. Unable to plunge himself into the world of children, he is only a sympathetic admirer of their state, allowing their virtues to affect him gravely. For the future it can be said of Holden that "he will become an adult gently, carrying with him in the phony world only a single moral image, the image of childlike simplicity."[67]

In considering Holden, one must consider also the symbolic implications of his "crazy cliff." Warren French has given it the standard interpretation on which this study is based. "Although this 'crazy cliff' may be identified in many ways, it is most obviously the border between the carefree innocence of childhood and the phony adult world that Holden himself does not wish to enter."[68]

Brian Way has given the "crazy cliff" a slightly different and less tenable interpretation.

> Falling over a cliff is a classic unconscious sexual symbol, and here represents without any doubt the dividing-line of puberty, separating the happy innocence of childhood from the dangers and agonies of sexual capability. This

perpetuates the conventional view of the innocence of children, and shows an atavistic belief in the existence of a Fall from grace.[69]

Although interpretations of the "crazy cliff" vary, Holden still remains close to children, particularly Phoebe, because of his desire to protect them from it. As Hans Bungert has pointed out:

> Holden has no trouble establishing contact with them since he understands the psyche of the child intuitively. His talks with his ten-year-old sister, Phoebe, who is precocious like almost all other children in Salinger's works, are therefore the high points in experiencing true contact. The close brother-sister relationship between him and Phoebe is a point of stability in his turbulent life, the character of which is misunderstood if one disposes of it--as Maxwell Geismar does--as "perhaps even a sentimental evasion of the true emotions in a sibling love."[70]

Holden's closeness to Phoebe raises her importance to the novel. It is interesting to note how some critics have completely neglected the role of Phoebe. In bypassing her, Robert Bowen has said, "Mr. Antolini is the only one in the book capable of constructive, virtuous action. . . . He is the only youth counselor the book offers above the level of farce."[71]

In direct contrast to this is Edwin Bowden, who says that Holden finds with Phoebe not only warmth and love but " . . . almost as important to him he finds immediate understanding. He tells her of what has happened to him and why he hates a school full of phonies and mean guys. For the first time someone really listens to him: 'She always listens when you tell her something. And the funny part is she knows, half the time, what the hell you're talking about. She really does.'"[72]

Bowen fails to see what Edwin Bowden haspointed out--that it is Phoebe who is Holden's guiding light. She takes Antolini's place as "youth counselor" and becomes a positive, not negative, force in the novel.

George R. Creeger has said of Phoebe, " . . . she is the very embodiment of the power of human love. When her brother decides at the end of the book that the only answer is flight, she insists that she will go with him. She is the negation of treacherous desertion."[73]

Phoebe's special quality is seen even in her name, which resembles Phoebus, the ancient god of light. This name is an indication of her keen insight which enables her to recognize phony movies and to understand mature conversations. Because of her genuineness, Holden classifies her as "somebody you always felt like talking to on the phone." Phoebe has the sense that is sadly

lacking in Holden's adult acquaintances.

Phoebe also represents the world of the idealistic. She believes in the ability to make her forehead hot and in the power of personal will. In the school play she has the part of the idealistic Benedict Arnold. When skating in the park, she shuns the squalor of cigar butts and skates near the bandstand, the very place where Holden skated in his youth.

Carl F. Strauch sees Phoebe as a positive force in the novel. Strauch has pointed out the Phoebe, as she wakes up in the apartment scene, begins the warm, simple currents of life. She is the real answer to Holden's question about the nature of reality. Strauch believes that by her posture, which is both secretive and dramatic, Phoebe conveys the profundity of the moment. When Holden searches in his life for a point of stability, he finds it in Phoebe, who provides this stability by assuming the Yogi position and illustrating the power of mind over matter.

> In this position, "smack in the middle of the bed," Phoebe represents the still, contemplative center of life; at the same time she is listening to dance music, and with the impulsiveness of the child she offers to dance with Holden. In this manner Salinger indicates the viable relationship between the contemplative and the active

> participation in the dance of life--a spiritual perception that is as ancient as the Bhagavad-Gita. Although the humanitarian role of savior that Holden assigns himself stands in the foreground, we must nevertheless not fail to see that Phoebe is the essential source; and if Holden, on the path up out of spiritual dilemma and crisis, must find the verbal and conceptual means of expressing his innermost needs, Phoebe, as easily as she wakes up, expresses an even more fundamental insight through symbolic gesture. The charm of the scene, when fully comprehended from this point of view, lies in the mingling of the naive and childlike with the spiritually occult. . . .[74]

Phoebe, then, represents "a dualism or polarity of contemplation and activity," and Strauch feels that Holden must retain this sense of continuity as he matures--he must not sever the relationships between childhood and adulthood. Holden's sense of permanence is indicated both in the zoo and in Phoebe's carrousel ride, which expresses "the circular activity of life." Having embraced this continuity of life, Holden can then assume a parent-like attitude as Phoebe rides the carrousel.[75]

The isolated world of children with its permanent values is indicated in Phoebe's carrousel ride. The

creaky old carrousel plays the same tunes it played when Holden was young. Phoebe selects an old beat-up wooden horse to ride while Holden, the outsider, watches from a bench. Holden is isolated from Phoebe's world as the carrousel moves around in its journey to nowhere. The old tunes, the old horse and the carrousel itself underline the permanently isolated world of Phoebe, who travels a circular route and ends where she has begun. It is here that Holden feels the calm changelessness of history and museums that he loves so much. "I felt so damn happy all of a sudden, the way old Phoebe kept going around and around. I was damn near bawling. I felt so damn happy, if you want to know the truth. I don't know why. It was just that she looked so damn nice, the way she kept going around and around, in her blue coat and all."[76]

Warren French has noted that the carrousel ride marks a high point in Salinger's art concerning his attitude about children. French believes that Holden, by allowing Phoebe to grab for the gold ring despite the risk, has modified his viewpoint by neglecting his role of catcher in the rye. Holden has become resigned to the realities that mark human behavior. French believes that this should be Holden's answer to Antolini, who warned of a horrible fall. Holden should say "if kids want to grab for the gold ring you have to let them do it. It's bad if you say anything to them." One should

learn about life for himself.[77]

If French's assumption is true, that one must learn about life for himself, then a stunning illustration of this point occurs in Salinger's next story, "Teddy," published in the New Yorker on January 31, 1953. Indeed, the character of Teddy stands out among Salinger children as a paragon of intelligence and mystical perception. James E. Bryan has said: "He is Godknower and clairvoyant, wholly immune to human pettiness, competition and (lately) passion. . . Coming at the end of Nine Stories, "Teddy" is a Zen Buddist manual, and the boy Teddy is a paragon of the sort of perfectness of soul that the Glasses of the later stories seek."[78]

Gwynn and Blotner agree with this kind of analysis. "Teddy is the only completely good, completely adjusted, completely mature human being in the entire span of Salinger's serious work."[79] They believe that even his death points to his exceptional nature. "Teddy is a mystic who receives his inevitable death with a spiritual equanimity that contrasts starkly with the logical and emotional egocentricity of everybody else in the story."[80]

This view is in contrast to that of Warren French, who says that Teddy is "one of the most obnoxious puppets in the whole history of bratty children."[81] French objects to Teddy's complete grasp of logical reasoning. He sees Teddy's acute sensitivity as merely "arrogant

conceit." French misses the point, however, in accusing Teddy of being "shrewdly calculating" by his apparent hypocrisy of claiming to be "the truly detached soul" and yet clinging to some of life's emotions. For Teddy, by his very nature, is a reincarnated soul and can select the morsels of life which his previous experience tells him are necessary.

The reason for Teddy's perfection of soul can be analyzed by viewing the consistent artistic principles of Salinger. He tells us throughout his work that it is necessary to achieve a fusion of opposites to experience the high values of life--Sergeant X must combine both love and squalor to keep his faculties intact; Buddy Glass must unlearn the illusionary differences between the world's extremes. This is, of course, exactly what Teddy has done. By living several lives through reincarnation, he is familiar with the adult world, although he remains a child in stature. This is shown when Teddy lounges on deck during his cruise. Sitting on a deck chair made for adults, Teddy is at ease, relaxed and comfortable because he knows the adult world, and yet physically his body cannot fill the frame.

In many ways Salinger has shown that Teddy is unusual and worthy of close observation. He has a concern for the minute things in the world such as a floating orange peel or a misplaced ash tray by his father's

bed. His vocabulary and insight naturally exceed those of an average ten-year-old, and of the sentences in his diary Salinger says, "In no sense--no mechanical sense, at any rate--did the words and sentences look as though they had been written by a child."[82] He has returned from conferences with the great European minds, where he has been the center of attraction.

It is his sense of permanence and oneness, like Phoebe's carrousel ride, which is the key to Teddy's character. He pantheistically advises Nicholson to discard logic and be one with God--just as milk and his thirsty sister are one with God, and in effect are God. It is this viewpoint which allows him to see everything in a relationship of harmony, to see the world in a kind of oneness. That is why he says of his parents, "They're my parents, I mean, and we're all part of each other's harmony and everything."[83]

Whereas Holden Caulfield is on a one-way street from childhood to adulthood, Teddy has oscillated back and forth from one existence to another. He indeed sees the oneness of things of the four-year-old girl in Franny and Zooey, and he realizes, as Buddy does, that the extremes of the world are meaningless--hence, his sense of harmony. Because he goes beyond the limits of other Salinger children in tasting of both the child and adult worlds, Teddy's unique outlook on life ranks him as both

child and adult.

In 1953 Salinger published Nine Stories, a collection of eight reprints and one previously unpublished story "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period." In this story Salinger has omitted the character of a child and has transferred the childish quality of spiritual insight to the nineteen year old De Daumier-Smith.

The story concerns a character with the make-believe name of De Daumier-Smith, who obtains a job in a correspondence art school that is run by a silent Japanese couple. One of his students is a talented nun, Sister Irma, whose work has a sense of truth and simple sincerity. De Daumier-Smith falls in love with Sister Irma through her drawings, and, in an attempt to erase the ugly and the unfeeling in his life and cling only to the beautiful, De Daumier-Smith neglects his other students to concentrate his efforts on Sister Irma. But Salinger seems to say that this can't be done. One can never cling only to the beautiful, for ugliness is also a part of our life.

The art school is over an orthopedic appliance shop, and, looking in the shop one evening, De Daumier-Smith has this revelation: "The thought was forced on me that no matter how coolly or sensibly or gracefully I might one day learn to live my life, I would always at best be a visitor in a garden of enamel urinals and bedpans, with a sightless, wooden dummy-deity standing by in a marked-down rupture truss."[84]

In a letter to Sister Irma, De Daumier-Smith recalls a meeting with a noseless person. This seems to be the key to the story, for he says, "I ask you to please consider that factor, in fact I beg you. It is quite pregnant with meaning."[85] The meaning is that one cannot always eliminate the hard, unfeeling part of life, but must often live with its ugly cruelties.

Looking into the orthopedic appliance shop window, De Daumier-Smith sees a girl changing the rupture truss on the dummy. When he smiles at her, she loses her footing and falls. In reaching out to help, De Daumier-Smith's fingertips are stopped by the glass barrier. It is this Experience which causes him to dismiss Sister Irma, redirect his attention to his other students and write in his diary, "Everybody is a nun."

Warren French says of this:

> When De Daumier-Smith realizes that he cannot help the girl he identifies with the nun, he realizes also that he cannot help the nun either, but he must leave her to "follow her own destiny." He reinstates his other students, for these he can help; but those with a touch of genius must be left free to learn from their own experience or institutions. The conclusion that "everybody is a nun" means only that all men live behind walls that others should not violate. We can

only help those who ask for help, and these are likely to be the untalented.[86]

French's interpretation would reinforce Holden's viewpoint that everyone must be allowed to reach for the gold ring.

John Russell has seen "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period" as pivotal in Salinger because "this is the first of Salinger's stories to present a dramatized, and so-named 'transcendent' experience, while it is the last of his stories that could be called formally excellent."[87] In considering the release of Sister Irma, Russell says: "For De Daumier-Smith, it involves a rejection of living for art's sake and an acceptance of life unrecorded, untrumpeted, unappeased. . . In making this rejection our hyphenated hero has ceased being Daumier and has become Smith."[88]

Hence, it can be seen that De Daumier-Smith does become aware through a mystical experience, and that Salinger has transferred the childish characteristic of spiritual insight to an adult.

Chapter Four

The Glass Children

With the appearance of "Franny" in the New Yorker on January 29, 1955, Salinger entered a new arena of artistic concern--elaboration on the Glass family. These seven children, including the central figure of Seymour, were prodigies who, at one time or another, appeared on a radio quiz program entitled "It's a Wise Child." The Glasses, however, are no longer children; they are adults struggling with the world through undiscriminating love.

Ihab Hassan has said of the Glasses:

> One is never quite sure whether the intensely spiritual web of relations they weave around one another betokens an incestuous or narcissistic motive--it is as if the same tortured ego were seeking to express itself in seven fractured Glass images. Of this we can be more sure: that in their separateness and cunning identity the Glasses tell us far more about the darkness of love and self-hate than about the conditions of an urban Jewish family in mid-century America.[89]

"Franny" is perhaps the best artistic attempt in the Glass family saga. It concerns Franny Glass, who is spending a football weekend at an Ivy League college with

Lane Coutell, her egotistic and unsympathetic companion.

Franny's spiritual problem, which is not solved until Salinger has her brother give her advice in "Zooey" is that she is extremely sensitive to the world and is affected by its hollowness. She has withdrawn by using a spiritual Jesus Prayer. At dinner she attempts to explain to Lane that she is sick of the world and has withdrawn, but Lane is too self-concerned with Flaubert and frog's legs to be any salvation. The story ends with Franny in the lavatory reciting the Jesus Prayer.

John Skow has seen that Franny "has about her the luminous common sense and the clear eye for life that mark all the memorable girls of whatever age, from Phoebe Caulfield on."[90]

Franny's sensitivity, however, comes not from the fact that she is feminine, but that she is childlike. French says this story completes Franny's maturation: "'Franny' is the story [Salinger] had been trying to tell for a long time about 'the last minutes of girlhood'."[91]

Ihab Hassan has attempted to connect this story to its predecessor, "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period." "In 'Franny' Salinger succeeds far better in rendering the experience of Smith's conclusion: 'Everybody is a nun.' The story reveals the lacerated bonds between human beings when the intellect is proud and the self insatiate, and it hints at the availability of mercy."[92]

Paul Levine likewise echoes the thought that "Franny" reinforces the mystical experience of "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period"--the revelation that "everybody is a nun."[93]

In "Raise High the Roofbeams, Carpenters" in the New Yorker, November 19, 1955, Salinger has continued the Glass story, here centering on Seymour. The setting of the story is the day of Seymour's marriage to Muriel. However, because he is "too happy" he neglects to attend, and they later elope. The wedding postponed, Buddy Glass finds himself crowded into a car with wedding guests, among them the indignant Matron of Honor and a deaf-mute relative of the bride. The Matron of Honor verbally assails Seymour, and in the course of the conversation unearths his "brutality" to a child, Charlotte Mayhew. Seymour has hit Charlotte with a rock. Finally at home at his apartment, Buddy erupts in defense of Seymour by revealing that Seymour's sense of values is actually above that of the child-hating Matron of Honor.

The rock-throwing incident with Charlotte Mayhew deserves consideration, since it is one of the episodes which occurred in Seymour's youth. Ihab Hassan interprets this incident as one erupting from love. "As it turns out, young Seymour had thrown a stone at Charlotte out of pure joy; just as certain people he loves leave a permanent mark on his skin, merely by touching him."[94]

William Weigand sees this incident in a more

important perspective--as reflecting a loose mannerism in the stylistic form of Salinger. He believes that Salinger's work now contains the lack of restraint needed for one to hurl a stone. Hence, Salinger is better able to expose bourgeois insensitivity. "The loosening of form, which began with "Esme," culminates with Seymour's throwing the stone at Charlotte, the affirmation of the effort for expression and communication even at the expense of exposure and pain."[95] Because Charlotte resembles Muriel, Warren French sees the stone-throwing as a key to Seymour's marriage. This resemblance, French asserts, accounts for Salinger's maneuvering of the characters into Buddy's apartment and reinforces the matron of honor's charge that Seymour has never grown up. It is the persistence of childish feelings, centered in his marriage to one who resembles his childhood sweetheart, which gives evidence of Seymour's supposed immaturity.[96]

One should note that Seymour as a superior intellect chooses the childish world, and that for a Salinger adult to be childlike is the mark of the highest achievement. Seymour wants to cross again the barrier between child and adult because he has the perception to see its desirability. The sad fact is that the world will not allow an adult, even one who has the ability to "see more" of life's hidden paradises, to cross back to the world of childhood. One cannot jump up a cliff; the

return is forbidden. The unfeeling Matron of Honor, typical of society, labels those who attempt a return as either maniacs or homosexuals. Seymour's eventual answer to the world is suicide. Buddy must explain the rock throwing incident to the only member of society who will sit quietly and not throw a verbal stone at Seymour Glass--a deaf mute.

Gwynn and Blotner and William Weigand both believe that this story is an explanation of Seymour's suicide in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," published earlier. There seems to be little doubt that Salinger had in mind a link between the two stories. However, Warren French has realized that a change in either ability or concept has occurred which prohibits the stories from being complementary. "Salinger could have had this concept of Seymour in mind when he wrote the first story, but he did not succeed--if that is what he intended--in successfully [sic] paralleling Seymour with the bananafish described in the story within the story."[97]

Arthur Schwartz has said that "Raise High the Roof-beams, Carpenters" is a succinct view of Salinger childhood. Schwartz says that Salinger "is dealing with love of a very high order," and that "salvation is open to all."[98] Then he continues: "The way salvation of this sort is managed in 'Raise High,' for example, is to reduce the world of childhood. Through a large part of

the action, Buddy is an intimidated appendage to the adult body."[99] He points out that all of the characters revert to impulsive movements or the act of a child and continues: "What has happened, is that these people have been forced to unlearn differences, those defenses and mechanisms which are acquired in order to foster the illusion of 'maturity' . . ."[100]

It should be noted that Salinger is drifting away from stories about children and the world of childhood to stories about the Glasses, a family with memories of their childhood. Having originally dealt with children, he now deals with people who act like children.

Having raised the question as to Franny's fate in "Franny," Salinger has attempted to provide a way for her salvation in "Zooey," printed in the <u>New Yorker</u>, May 4, 1957.

If "Franny" is the story of "the last minutes of girlhood," as French has suggested, then "Zooey" must be the story of her adjustment to the adult world--and although the adjustment takes some urging by Zooey, Franny is finally reconciled to living in an adult world.

In this story Franny has returned from her unhappy Ivy League weekend and has plunged into spiritual isolation. Franny's mother, Bessie, expresses her concern to her brother Zooey, and Zooey takes upon

himself the task of solving Franny's crisis. Using all of his persuasion and invoking the spiritual assistance of Seymour and the disguise of Buddy, Zooey manages to console Franny and put her into a restful sleep.

Franny is saved by the quality of love, a quality which Salinger formerly reserved for children. Arthur Mizener sees love as one of Salinger's principal feelings in all of his mature stories.

> Their subject is the power to love, pure and--in children and the childlike--simple, but in aware people, pure and complicated. Salinger's constant allusions to the Bhagavad-Gita, Sri Ramakrishna, Chuangtzu, and the rest are only efforts to find alternate ways of expressing what his stories are about. This power to love can be realized--and represented--most fully in complicated personal relations like those of the Glasses.[101]

It is this spirit of love, illuminated by Ihab Hassan, that saves Franny. "Zooey succeeds in clarifying Franny's spiritual dilemma in the absence of Buddy and Seymour. He succeeds in calling her back to things of this world, the profession of acting, just as Buddy, in his inchoate manner, had tried to advise Zooey in his own acting career. The success of Zooey is an act of love, pure and complicated."[102]

It is Franny's transition, however, that leads to her salvation by the masquerading Zooey. Her transition is backward--from adult to child, and as she walks back the hall to the phone, she undergoes a metamorphosis.

> Although there was nothing markedly peculiar about her gait as she moved through the hall--she neither dallied nor quite hurried--she was nonetheless very peculiarly transformed as she moved. She appeared, vividly, to grow younger with each step. Possibly long halls, plus the aftereffects of tears, plus the ring of a telephone, plus the smell of fresh paint, plus newspapers underfoot--possibly the sum of all these things was equal, for her, to a new doll carriage. In any case, by the time she reached her parents' bedroom door her handsome tailored tie-silk dressing gown--the emblem, perhaps, of all that is dormitorially chic and _fatale_--looked as if it had been changed into a small child's woolen bathrobe.[103]

"Zooey" is long and wordy, and it has, generally, prompted unfavorable reaction. Maxwell Geismar has said, "'Zooey is an interminable, an appallingly bad story,'"[104] and the list of critics who echo this feeling includes, among others, French, Updike, Hassan, Lyons and Didion. Salinger's craft appears to be slipping on Glass.

"Seymour: An Introduction," published in the *New Yorker*, June 6, 1959, is the last of Salinger's published work to date, and it presents elaborately the character about whom Salinger has written most. The aim of the book is to describe physically and spiritually for the reader Seymour Glass, a man whom the narrator Buddy Glass considers indescribable. As a consequence the description stumbles back and forth through the "locutions and mannerisms" of the author. The story reeks of manipulation and suffers from lack of focus.

One must wonder, however, that the preoccupation with any character would cause an artist to so distort a work of art. Hassan has drafted the proper adjective when he says that much of the story "is in disjointed diary form." Then he adds, "This unpremeditated way of narration, probably more feigned than real, exemplifies Seymour's way of playing marbles: without aiming."[105] It is Salinger himself who provides the final comparison by saying of Seymour's marble playing, "Here, too, his stance, his form, was maddeningly irregular."[106]

For Salinger, to be as a child means to bask in the warm light of innocence. The Glasses are in this sense children (or childlike) because even though they are physically mature, they are still holy innocents. By dealing with the Glasses, Salinger's entire slant on childhood has become modified since his early short

stories. With the Glasses Salinger shows how the once-innocent children must cope with an unfeeling society.

Footnotes

[1]James E. Bryan, "Salinger's Seymour's Suicide," College English, XXIV (1962, 227; Leslie A. Fiedler, "The Profanation of the Child," The New Leader, XLI (1958), 27.

[2]Robert G. Jacobs, "J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye: Holden Caulfield's 'Goddam Autobiography'," Iowa English Yearbook (Fall, 1959), 12.

[3]Michael Walzer, "In Place of a Hero," Dissent, VII (1960), 159.

[4]J. D. Salinger, The Catcher in the Rye (New York, c. 1951), p. 109.

[5]J. D. Salinger, Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenter and Seymour: An Introduction (Boston, 1963), p. 5.

[6]J. D. Salinger, "Last Day of the Last Furlough," Saturday Evening Post, CCXVII (July 15, 1944), 62.

[7]Salinger, The Catcher, p. 156.

[8]Salinger, The Catcher, p. 159.

[9]Salinger, The Catcher, p. 136.

[10]Walzer, p. 158.

[11]Salinger, Raise High, p. 106.

[12]Ihab Hassan, Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel (Princeton, 1961), pp. 259-289; Paul Levine, "J. D. Salinger: The Development of the Misfit Hero," Twentieth Century Literature, IV (October, 1958); Warren G. French, J. D. Salinger (New York, 1963).

[13]Hassan, p. 265.

[14]William Weigand, "The Knighthood of J. D. Salinger," The New Republic, CXLI (October 19, 1959), 20.

[15]Warren G. French, "The Phony World and the Nice World," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, IV (1963), 21.

[16]French, p. 48.

[17]Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner, The Fiction of J. D. Salinger (Pittsburg, 1958), p. 11.

[18]French, Salinger, p. 49.

[19]French, Salinger, p. 58.

[20]Gwynn and Blotner, p. 15.

[21]Hassan, p. 266.

[22]French, Salinger, p. 60.

[23] William Weigand, "J. D. Salinger: Seventy-Eight Bananas," Chicago Review, XI (Winter, 1958), 8.

[24] Gwynn and Blotner, p. 16.

[25] Salinger, "Last Day," p. 26.

[26] Salinger, "Last Day," p. 27.

[27] Salinger, "Last Day," p. 61.

[28] Salinger, "Last Day," p. 62.

[29] French, Salinger, p. 61.

[30] Gwynn and Blotner, p. 11.

[31] French, Salinger, p. 51.

[32] J. D. Salinger, "Elaine," Story, XXVI (March-April, 1945), 39.

[33] French, Salinger, p. 53.

[34] French, Salinger, p. 53.

[35] Gwynn and Blotner, p. 17; French, Salinger, p. 64.

[36] French, Salinger, p. 63.

[37] Salinger, "Last Day," p. 77.

[38] French, Salinger, p. 61.

[39]Weigand, p. 3-19.

[40]French, Salinger, p. 37.

[41]Bryan, pp. 228-229.

[42]Weigand, p. 6.

[43]French, Salinger, p. 82.

[44]Levine, p. 94.

[45]French, Salinger, p. 40.

[46]French, Salinger, p. 43.

[47]Hassan, p. 269.

[48]French, Salinger, p. 92.

[49]French, Salinger, p. 87.

[50]Bryan, p. 227.

[51]J. D. Salinger, Nine Stories (New York, 1954), p. 62.

[52]Salinger, Nine Stories, p. 61.

[53]Gwynn and Blotner, p. 4.

[54]Tom Davis, "The Identity of Sergeant X," Western Humanities Review, XVI (Spring, 1962), 181-183.

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Vita

The author of this study was born in Tamaqua, Pennsylvania, in 1938 to Mr. and Mrs. Samuel N. Johns. He attended the Tamaqua public school system and took the academic course. He graduated in 1956 and then went on to Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Mr. Johns majored in English and graduated in 1960 with an A. B. degree. He then took a job in the East Penn School District where he has been teaching for four years. Among his duties at Emmaus High School were head coach in track and assistant coach in football. Mr. Johns is also advisor to the senior class. Currently he is married and the father of one child.