ABSTRACT

"The True Artist-Seer, The Heavenly Fool": The Transformation of the Artist in J. D. Salinger's Publications

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This thesis traces the development of the function of art and the role of the artist throughout J. D. Salinger's publishing career, including his earlier uncollected short stories. Salinger creates a dichotomy between true art and phony art in his early stories that influences the artist characters of his subsequent publications. His short stories published in *The New Yorker* in the 1950s along with *The Catcher in the Rye* portray an image of the artist as the voice of truth in a phony world. In the third phase of Salinger's publication, his focus on the Glass family leads to the conception of the ultimate artist as a spiritual seer. Ultimately, Salinger confronts and shuns the critics at the end of his publishing career by following two lengthy, complex narratives with utter silence; he confounds his own conception of artists as those who share.

"The True Artist-Seer, The Heavenly Fool": The Transformation of the Artist in J. D. Salinger's Publications

by

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A Thesis

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DEDICATION

To my mom, who lovingly paid my library fines

And to my grandfather, who taught me the importance of the story

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Although J. D. Salinger reached the peak of his publishing career over fifty years ago, his name continues to be recognized in the ranks of literature and popular culture. This past year, Salinger celebrated his 90th birthday; even at this age, he reminded the world of his authorial presence in a lawsuit against a Swedish author who attempted to publish a sequel to Salinger's infamous novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*. The sequel presents Holden Caulfield, the protagonist of *The Catcher in the Rye*, as an elderly man escaping his nursing home to roam the streets of New York City; the character in the 2009 version mentions the same incidents and characters and uses the same narrative style as the 1951 publication. The case incited arguments in media circuits throughout the country, from those supporting Salinger's right to retain control over his characters and those lambasting the author for his inflexible grip on the past. Even more intriguing than the aging author's tenacious chase after the pseudonymous J. D. California, the writer of the later Caulfield novel, is the court's struggle between granting First Amendment rights of free speech to the later version and upholding copyright laws for Salinger. To offer a brief explanation of the struggle, Salinger retains a copyright over the book, but the issue in the lawsuit focuses on his control of the character: can a literary character, who has no physical representation, be categorized as a famous image to copyright? The District Court who heard the case upheld Holden's status as a copyrightable entity, thereby affording Salinger's rights over the character against other writers' use. The District Court's judgment explained that "Holden Caulfield is quite

delineated by word. It is a portrait by words" (*Salinger v. Frederick Colting*). J. D. Salinger not only gains victory in his effort to prevent Holden Caulfield from becoming an old man in the hands of another author, but he also garners recognition as an artist who has created iconic works of art through the power of words. The 2009 litigation battle reinforces Salinger's place in the literary canon despite his lengthy absence from the publishing arena.

Though *The Catcher in the Rye* remains J. D. Salinger's most popular work, due to its place on high school English classes' reading lists throughout the United States, the author's other publications also retain their literary merits. Salinger published his first short story as an unknown student in Whit Burnett's writing class in *Story* magazine in 1940; he published his last story, which filled the entirety of the *New Yorker,* in 1965. Over the span of his twenty-five year publishing career, Salinger wrote numerous short stories, one novel, and several novella-like works. His characters remain notorious for their larger-than-life qualities; in addition to Holden Caulfield, Salinger's Glass family contains several personas who have become icons to Salinger's readers. Perhaps the most unifying characteristic of Salinger's creations mostly ignored in criticism is their artistic inclination. The characters include college girls and high school dropouts, soldiers and society women, but above all, Salinger's characters are artists. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of the entirety of Salinger's published works is necessary to view the development of the author's ideas on the purpose of art and the artist. The judges' ruling is a timely introduction for a renewed examination of Salinger's works, since they have not lost their poignancy over the passage of time. As the author begins to craft these artist figures in his writing career, he also shifts his form from wartime vignettes to

sharply detailed and succinct stories to meandering first person narrative accounts. Salinger consistently explores the role of art in everyday life and the purpose of the artist within the modern world regardless of his form.

The following chapters will not seek to conflate Salinger, the man, with Salinger, the author. As Salinger has made clear through his refusal to give interviews and his denial to let personal information be published, he wants his art to stand on its own. Before Salinger's most recent lawsuit against J. D. California, he also sued Ian Hamilton in 1986 over the use of his personal letters in a biography Hamilton attempted to publish on Salinger; these letters, kept at various university libraries, would be considered public domain if not for Salinger's relentless insistence on their removal from the book. Hamilton's eventual publication, *In Search of J. D. Salinger*, recounts some biographical details in addition to Hamilton's legal dealings with Salinger. Although the biographer cannot include the letters in his book, he does recount their general unconstructiveness in revealing personal details. He discovers that "they were still, in the main, performances. On one occasion, a long letter to Murray [a female acquaintance] is, apart from the odd word, identical with a letter he writes on the same day to Whit Burnett" (Hamilton 68). Even in his personal letters, Salinger refrains from including intimate details; he bases his entire persona on his role as an author rather than as a person.

Therefore, only a few biographical details should be necessary in order to satiate the reader's curiosity and give a foundation to the point in time when Salinger wrote (and these details, for the most part, remain unverifiable). Jerome David Salinger was born on January 1, 1919 to Jewish and Irish parents; he eventually went to Valley Forge Military School, assisted his father overseas in the meat business after graduation, endured a brief

stint at Ursinus College, and took a writing course with Whit Burnett at Columbia University that led to his initial publications. He served in the United States Army during World War II, during which time he continued to publish, and by 1955, he was married and living in Cornish, New Hampshire, where he continues to reside today. Salinger has a daughter, who published a somewhat scathing memoir about her childhood with her father, and a son, who is a television actor. During his *New Yorker* publishing career, roughly 1948 to 1965, Salinger enjoyed widespread popularity within literary circles and the general public; he even graced the cover of *Time* magazine in 1961. After his last publication in 1965, Salinger has secluded himself from the public in his New Hampshire home save for his legal injunctions.

In the last half century, Salinger's silence has frustrated readers and critics alike. He does not provide notes on his works or even consent to interviews. Instead, he allows his works, especially his characters, to speak for themselves. Therefore, the following chapters will explore the development of Salinger's ideas about art and artists as evinced from the details within each work and the placement of the work within the Salinger canon. The second chapter focuses on the early, uncollected stories Salinger published from 1940 to 1948; although these stories are briefly overviewed in a few critical articles, their stylistic elements and characters are analyzed at length in this section to show Salinger's initial conception of what art should be and to demonstrate the development of the author's own artistic processes. The third chapter, which begins with Salinger's publication of "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" in the *New Yorker* in 1948, focuses on the development of artists and their role in society. At this point, Salinger hones in on the style for which he will become famous: the *New Yorker*-edited story with mellifluous

dialogue and misbehaved characters. The stories collected in *Nine Stories* and *The Catcher in the Rye* continue to be the author's most critically acclaimed publications, so the chapter will provide an examination of the artistry involved in these stories as well as their depictions of artist figures. The fourth chapter muses on the author's publications from 1955 to 1965. Over the course of this decade, Salinger wrote some of his most thought-provoking work that was subsequently attacked for its divergence in style from previous efforts. In these publications, the author focuses more on religious concerns, especially Eastern orthodoxies. Therefore, the chapter will examine religious influences on the artistic style of the stories and artists as religious figures. Although critical studies on the influences of Zen Buddhism and Taoism on Salinger's work have been done, this chapter takes a different stance in order to show how spiritual concerns are a part of artists' responsibilities. In addition to artists as a religious figures, the chapter will also consider artists' conception of criticism and the critic. The conclusion will consider the implications of Salinger's artistic silence over the past fifty years and Salinger's legal battles as an author over his artistic property.

In order to explore fully Salinger's developing conception of art and the artist, the role of popular critical thought and style, as well as the author's favorite artists must be considered. Rainier Maria Rilke, one of Salinger's oft-quoted poets, explained in one of his letters that "[w]orks of art are of an infinite loneliness and with nothing so little to be reached as with criticism. Only love can grasp and hold and be just toward them" (29). Salinger illustrates his distaste for the literary critic in many of his stories, and this aversion is especially blatant in his later efforts. He does not seem to align himself with any schools of literary criticism of the time. The New York Intellectuals concerned

themselves with political issues, which Salinger avoided in his writing; the Chicago school of literary criticism emphasized objectivity, whereas Salinger is criticized for loving his characters to a fault. The New Critics, however, supported the concepts of the intentional fallacy, whereby an author's intentions should have no effect on the consideration of a work, and the affective fallacy, whereby a reader's reaction should have no bearing on a work's worth. Although he dislikes critical reviews and control over his work, the author does seem to align himself with the New Critics in his attitude toward the way criticism should be accomplished; Salinger's refusal to offer commentary on his work and his unavailability to his readers certainly support these concepts. Therefore, the analyses of Salinger's work will utilize these New Critical tenets of looking at the tensions within the works themselves.

Salinger offers an artistic conception of how art should exist apart from the critic on a larger scale: art should illuminate truth, and the artist must commit himself to creating this kind of art as well as guiding others to truthful art. Like art, truth is a broad concept, but Salinger indicates in his stories that truth signifies honest interactions between people. According to Leo Tolstoy, "Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that others are infected by these feelings and also experience them" (37). This "infection" is the truth of the human experience, which Salinger seemingly elevates as true art. In this way, art is not deceitful or cunning; instead, Salinger's conception of true art is an original representation of the truth of the human experience. Artists feel uncomfortable with phony depictions of life, and must either create truth in art or lead others to truth in art. As Salinger continues to muse on the

nature of truth in art, he also includes the truth found in religion and spiritual revelations. Therefore, the ultimate artist eventually becomes the artist-seer; as shown in Salinger's later stories, other artists can coexist with the artist-seer, but they are in the process of understanding the transcendent qualities of art. These artists must look to the example of the artist-seer in order to fulfill their own callings as illuminators of truth. Although this course of development seems to be Salinger's ultimate desire for artists, he also shows artists as flawed and not necessarily successful in their endeavors. The artists can be contradictions of themselves; the prime example of this contradictory artist figure is Salinger's beloved Seymour, who attempts to illustrate the philosophy of detachment but continues to love others so much that he cannot exist in the human realm. In addition, Salinger creates many examples of "good" artists. While Franny and Zooey have not reached the existential planes of their older brothers, they still receive accolades as great actors and artists. Therefore, in addition to the artists' role of truth telling, they are also allowed to fall prey to untruth under the pretense of their journey back to truth.

Upon the publication of "Seymour: An Introduction," and "Hapworth 16, 1924," Salinger's last two published stories, critics doubted the persistence of the author's narrative skill, which seemed to be his main strength in the peak of his writing career. For Salinger, however, the development of the artist seems to be the most important part of the artist's journey. His last story, "Hapworth," chronicles the artistic odyssey of seven-year-old Seymour Glass at camp as he experiences sexual longings, philosophical struggles, and forays into literature. Rather than utilizing the closely edited style of his earlier *New Yorker* stories, Salinger experimented with the most truthful way to represent the artist and his journey to realization of his responsibilities. He attempts to mimic the

style of the artist-seer as a young child, which does indeed prove problematic. According to Nietzsche, "art moves towards its own dissolution, and in doing so—most illuminatingly—it touches on all the phases, its beginnings, its childhood, its incompleteness, its earlier ventures and trespasses, and in its decay interprets its growth and becoming" (qtd. in Rank 325). Although Salinger's art has yet to dissolve, perhaps the "Hapworth" story indicates the decay of the author's art; since he has refrained from publishing after this story, there are no signs to confirm or deny this movement. Regardless of the possibility of dissolution, Salinger's body of published work still defines what art should be, and in turn, defines who the artist should be while allowing the interruption of human flaws; the phases of his art are tangible, and they develop to a point where the stories themselves attempt to confer transcendence to the characters. Salinger's art perhaps moved toward its dissolution, but perhaps in part to do its flaws, his art continues to resist resolution.

CHAPTER TWO

The Foundations of Art: Salinger's Early Stories

Although J. D. Salinger excels at portraying seemingly minor events in his characters' lives, he refrains from creating simple, minor characters. Instead, his characters have complex back stories full of past loves, present passions, and future ambitions. They constantly allude to their sources of influence, which most commonly include their favorite movies, plays, and books. While the routine of their days may seem monotonous, the characters' interior lives are vibrant due to their mental interactions with authors and actors as well as their personal epiphanies on the necessity of art in daily life. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield comments that "what really knocks me out is a book that, when you're all done reading it, you *wish* the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it" (18). Thus, one of the most important qualities of art concerns its ability to function as distinct from the mundane but remain within the grasp of the everyday. From the inauguration of Salinger's publishing career in 1940, the author explores the elements of good art, the role of art in daily life, and the limitations of art within the culture of the mass market. His early writings are especially helpful in order to observe the author's changing ideas on the nature of art while he hones in on his own artistic strengths and weaknesses as a writer. Salinger's publications previous to "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" have been largely ignored by many critics in favor of the later stylistic efforts that the *New Yorker* rewarded through publication. They have also been ignored due to the author's own efforts to keep his early writings uncollected. Unauthorized

collections of Salinger's early stories began to appear in 1974, but the volumes were quickly removed from bookstores after Salinger filed a civil suit against the bookstores that carried them. Despite Salinger's insistence on the "gaucheries" of his youth (Fosburgh 69), these early stories depict an inquiry of art, with varied responses to and depictions of good art; these uncollected stories create a foundation for his later explorations into the role of the ultimate artist as one who creates such true and good art.

Due to J. D. Salinger's courtroom pursuit of the pirate publishers who collected the early stories, the legal battle that ensued has probably garnered more attention than the actual stories involved. Though these uncollected stories are largely ignored throughout the volumes of Salinger criticism, a few efforts have been made to classify the stories into distinct groups, ostensibly to better understand how they fit with the distinct style of Salinger's later works. John Wenke breaks the stories into three groups, including war stories, pre-*Catcher* stories, and social context stories (6); Gwynn and Blotner's critical volume, *The Fiction of J. D. Salinger*, sorts them into more complicated and somewhat subjective divisions--for example, the "Marriage in Wartime Group" (9). However, for the purposes of tracing Salinger's artistic development, the importance of these stories does not have to do with matching content so much as with the style and emerging artistic themes of the stories. Therefore, the following analyses of the uncollected stories will be grouped according to their portrayal of artistic ambitions. The first group of stories will be viewed as experiments with style and artistic form, the second will look at the impact of art within the daily lives of characters, and the third group will follow the early stories' prelude to the formation of the artist that will more fully develop in Salinger's later stories. Several stories can be placed in more than one

group, so in addition to their role within each group, each story's individual ideas about art will also be explored.

Salinger did not become widely recognized until his 1948 publication of "A Perfect Day"; he began publishing stories in 1940 with "The Young Folks," so over the course of the decade, the author exercised different styles in order to discover his artistic stride. In the biographical note for his first published piece in *Story* magazine in 1940, Salinger writes, "J. D. Salinger, who is twenty-one years old, was born in New York. He attended public grammar schools, one military academy, and three colleges, and has spent one year in Europe. He is particularly interested in playwriting" ("Contributors" 2). Salinger never published any plays as far as we know, but his early interest in playwriting offers insight into his form and characters: many of his stories could be re-imagined as one-act plays. This structural element, the ability to capture accurately a single moment with carefully drawn characters, carries through to Salinger's later works. For example, most of the stories in *Nine Stories* hinge on the actions of a few definitive moments in time, and "Franny" details the events of a couple of hours, though to differing effects from his earlier works as a result of other stylistic changes. "The Young Folks," then, begins Salinger's experimentation with this style by following the interaction of a group of young men and women at a party. Along with the familiar form of the story, the dialogue demonstrates Salinger's ability for playwriting; the conversations between characters recreate the awkward pauses, interruptions, and slang used in natural speech. In the story, Edna Phillips and Bill Jameson are introduced at Lucille Henderson's party; Bill, who has been watching a different small blonde girl all evening, excuses himself from her company by explaining to Edna that he has to write a paper on Ruskin. He

immediately leaves her to sit near the blonde, and Edna lies about his departure to Lucille in order to assuage her own ego. The storyline does not seem too unusual, but the brief conversation between Bill and Edna painfully reveals her longings. She reminisces to Bill about a past boyfriend who wanted to make a painting of her: "'He used to always say to me—serious as the devil, too—"Eddie, you're not beautiful according to conventional standards, but there's something in your face I wanna catch"'" (28). Her attempt to make Bill aware of the beauty of imperfection seems strangely wise beyond her years. Edna also comments several times about her affinity for truth over fakery, giving examples such as the beauty of natural hair color over bleached hair and her longing for true love over social dating rituals. Edna's honest conversation with Bill does not garner his affections; not even Edna is satisfied by the evening's turn of events as she returns to her chair alone. However, Edna's awkward revelations on true art clearly indicate the author's admiration of genuine feeling rather than falsely constructed interactions. In addition to Edna's endeavor for honesty, Bill's homework assignment also indicates the author's subtle hints at the role of art: John Ruskin affirmed that art should communicate truth. Obviously, Bill has yet to complete his composition on the Victorian artist and critic.

Salinger's first "short short story" effort published in *Collier's* from 1941 marks the beginning of several military-related pieces; in "The Hang of It," Salinger experiments with a very brief form that occupies one page of the magazine. The story, narrated by the father of a young man enlisting in the army, recalls a clumsy young man much like his son who enlisted to fight in World War I. The twist, of course, is that the young man the narrator recalls is the narrator himself. Since the story is comprised of

only two columns on one page, the twist seems to be the point of the entire story. "Personal Notes on an Infantryman," published in *Collier's* the next year, accomplishes the same type of twist. The narrator, an officer in the army, observes an older man's trials as he insists on enlisting in the army; the man who insists on enlisting is revealed to be the narrator's father. These stories work well as examples of popular subjects of the time. They are not the detailed observations of his first story nor his later one-act-like creations. Instead, Salinger creates stories that have good commercial value. In the introduction to a 1951 volume of *Collier's* best short stories, the magazine's short story editor, Knox Burger, forthrightly explains that "[t]o please everyone, a story must violate no assumptions of any kind; it must offend no one" (ix). By the time Salinger published "Seymour: An Introduction" and "Hapworth 16, 1924," his fiction definitely violates normal conventions of form and subject matter of the time. His *Collier's* short short stories do not even resemble Salinger's popular works, and his later artist-heroes would likely poke fun at his more commercial attempts. However, these stories are important as markers of Salinger's stylistic progression, as well as his artistic principles. Salinger's later artistic ideals fight against these clever anecdotes, as they do not contain the stuff of true art. They merely consist of sleight of authorial hand and no honest feeling; though most of Salinger's earlier stories lack some of the substance found in his later works, the short shorts seem entirely devoid. Salinger's foray into commercial writing also shows the imperfections of art in a mass-produced society: in order for financial survival, some art is created merely for consumer satisfaction. This fact is perhaps the most painful truth related to the publication of these short short stories.

Still, Salinger seems to be well aware of his artistic faux pas when he satirizes his efforts, as well as the general readership of *Collier's* magazine, in his *Esquire* story from 1941, "The Heart of a Broken Story." A man named Justin is on a bus near a woman named Shirley, and he immediately falls in love. An authorial voice interrupts the story after a few paragraphs to explain how these two characters would never have a chance to sensibly meet, so the love story that he planned to write for *Collier's* would never work. The narrator puts forth a few outlandish scenarios about how Justin could possibly steal Shirley's purse to get noticed, but this action would logically land him in jail; after the inevitable jail break, Justin would accidentally be shot and killed. Then, the narrator interrupts again: "And thus, my plan to write a boy-meets-girl story for *Collier's,* a tender, memorable love story, is thwarted by the death of my hero" (132). Salinger comments on both the silly characteristics of the commercial love story as well as the somewhat vapid quality of the magazine's publications. The *Esquire* reader would appreciate this inference; George Douglas's book on the so-called "smart" magazines, including *Vanity Fair, The New Yorker,* and *Esquire,* explains that "*Esquire* was a magazine for smart men. It was a smart magazine. It didn't appeal to the poseur or the upstart" (177). During this phase of his publications, Salinger seems to be well aware of the audiences for his pieces; he can adapt his art to be inoffensively clever for his *Collier's* audience and sarcastically clever for his *Esquire* readers. Later, his intuitive ability to understand his audience contributes in part to his successes in the *New Yorker*. The satirical nature of "The Heart of a Broken Story" also points to Salinger's obvious awareness of the quality of his art. His story marks a developing style in that Salinger shows that he can poke fun at the writing industry as well as poke fun at his own

blunders. This attempt at metafiction anticipates Salinger's more complicated endeavors fifteen years later in "Zooey" and "Seymour: An Introduction."

"Both Parties Concerned," published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1944, relates the events of an argument between a husband and wife; sweetly enough, they reunite by the end of the story. The style of this story is interesting in that the narrative closely anticipates the speech patterns Salinger uses in *Catcher in the Rye*. Critic William Purcell points out this resemblance, explaining that "Both Parties Concerned" uses the same "skaz," which sounds like spontaneous speech, that Holden speaks in *Catcher* (278). Salinger tentatively samples the style for which he later becomes famous with Holden Caulfield's character. The husband's skaz in "Both Parties," however, seems much less endearing than Holden's, probably due to his inability to voice true understanding of his wife. She insists that he does not want to spend time with their child, and after he finds a note explaining her departure to her mother's house, he simply misses her presence. He memorizes his wife's note and recites it out loud, backwards, echoing his convoluted understanding of his wife. One interesting aspect of this story occurs when the husband gets drunk over his wife's exit: he reenacts the famous scene from *Casablanca* where Rick asks Sam to play his and his former flame's favorite song. This part of the story, where he pretends to be both Rick and Sam, is the most intense section as he contemplates the implications of his wife leaving him; interestingly enough, he reacts to the situation through the plot of a movie about heartbreak. The husband views the important events of his life through the lens of a film camera. In addition to the story's experimentation with the skaz style, the story illustrates the influence of movies

over the general population. The husband does not understand his wife's reasoning for leaving, and he cannot process his heartbreak on his own terms.

Salinger published two stories in anticipation of his only novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*; they begin to narrate the life of Holden Caulfield and experiment with the artistic form necessary to present such an artist. The first story, "I'm Crazy," was published in *Collier's* in December of 1945; the second, "Slight Rebellion Off Madison," appeared one year later in *The New Yorker*. Both stories forecast scenes included in *The Catcher in the Rye*. However, Salinger experiments with voice and point of view in his earlier versions. "I'm Crazy" utilizes the first-person narration found in *Catcher*, but the voice sounds more formal than Holden's eventual narrative style. His "skaz" lacks the spontaneity and abundance of slang found in *Catcher*'s narration. Also, many of Holden's declarations to his teacher, Mr. Spencer, become internalized dialogue in the eventual novel form. With more explanations to his fellow characters in the *Collier's* story, Holden loses some of the mystery he commands in *Catcher*; for example, when he lists all of the facets of the school that he will miss to Mr. Spencer in "I'm Crazy," he appears to be alerting the old man to his sensitive side. His speech sounds rehearsed and pretentious. Although the Holden of *Catcher* admits to being a great liar, the novel-length character tends to lie in order to sound more outlandish than insightful. In addition, the plot in "I'm Crazy" is much more compressed than the novel's plot, to lesser effect. Holden immediately rushes home from his meeting with Spencer, which seems uncharacteristic of a young man who has flunked out of three schools. Notably, Holden also says that he flunked all of his courses in the story version, whereas he failed every

course *except* for English in the novel. Salinger creates more of an artistic role for Holden in the novel version.

"Slight Rebellion" has another significant difference from the eventual novel form due to the story's use of third-person narration. The story narrates the date between Sally and Holden recorded in the book; though the events that conspire remain the same in the later version, Holden acts more confident in the short story. He takes Sally to see a play, and they "vehemently agreed with each other that the Lunts were marvellous" (82). In the novel, internal dialogue allows Holden to muse at length on the actors' skills and Sally's undiscerning love of them without simply agreeing with her opinion. Also, Holden's character is on a break from school in this story, instead of being expelled. This small change in detail makes his proposal of departure with Sally to move "'somewhere with a brook and stuff'" (83) sound out of character and almost flippant within the confines of the story. Salinger obviously reforms Holden's character in his later version to become the endearing angsty teenager that we recognize from the more annoying first person narrator and almost unknowable third person versions in the short stories. These changes all seem to relate to Holden's sensitivity to art and truth, in that he has the gifts of an artist and he attempts to use them for genuine interactions with his audience. These changes also indicate that good art sometimes involves reformation and recreation; Salinger works on an ongoing process of creating interesting characters, highlighted in his later work with the Glass family.

The next category of Salinger's early works includes the stories that illustrate the impact of art on daily life. These stories utilize movies as the ultimate artistic influence in characters' daily lives, and Salinger calls for a re-imagining of this art form into a

more truthful representation of life. Even a story that presumably operates as a wartime story comments on the necessity of truth in movies. Salinger's first war-themed story in the *Saturday Evening Post*, "Soft-Boiled Sergeant," relates the narrator's memory of a former army sergeant whose rough appearance belied his caring nature. Interestingly, the narrator, Phil, begins to tell his story after attempting to inform his wife of the true nature of war not depicted in the movies. He contrasts the death of his friend and sergeant, Burke, with the pomp and circumstance given to soldiers in war movies; in stark contrast with the movies, Phil says that "he died all by himself, and he didn't have no messages to give to no girl or nobody, and there wasn't nobody throwing a big classy funeral for him here in the States, and no hot-shot bugler played taps for him" (85). Salinger recognizes the false depiction of war glorified in popular movies, and he strives to shed light on this problem through the examples in his story. Instead of a handsome actor playing a soldier, the narrator describes Burke's strikingly ugly appearance. Burke dies while saving others, but his journey across the fort was to a refrigerator to retrieve men instead of a foxhole. The role of the movies in Phil's life seems to be very important, since he begins his tale with an anecdote about the false nature of popular war movies; the very first line introduces his main concern: "Juanita, she's always dragging me to a million movies, and we see these here shows all about war and stuff" (18). Also, he gives details of his time out with the sergeant when he saw a Charlie Chaplin movie, whose humor assuaged Phil's fear of war. Salinger explains in a contributor's note to *Esquire* that "so far the novels of this war have had too much of the strength, maturity and craftsmanship critics are looking for, and too little of the glorious imperfections which teeter and fall off the best minds" (34). Therefore, "Soft-Boiled Sergeant" attempts to dispel commonly

held notions of war presented in popular movies while presenting the inextricable impact of movies on one's daily remembrances and interactions. In one of the few critical articles on Salinger's WWII stories from *The Saturday Evening Post,* William Purcell explains that "what sets these stories apart from other 'war fiction' of the time and relates them more directly to Salinger's later stories is that they are not so much critiques of war itself as they are examinations of inner life and the human condition" (78). This observation is particularly true for "Soft-Boiled Sergeant," since the story attempts to address both the impact of war and art on the soldier.

Published in *Story* in 1944, "Once A Week Won't Kill You" presents a different kind of war story, narrating the morning of a man's departure for the army. As Dickie Camson finishes packing, he asks his wife to take his Aunt Rena to the movies at least once a week. His insistence on his wife's promise to take her to the movies is the only true conversation they have in their bedroom; throughout the rest of their dialogue, he merely corrects his wife's grammar or word choice. At the end of the story, he meets his wife at breakfast after visiting with his aunt. He repeats to his wife at the end of the story, "'You can take her to the movies once a week. […] It won't kill you,'" (27). Although the story ostensibly denotes the protagonist's pain of leaving the last remnants of his childhood (his mother and father are dead, and his wife indicates his aunt's increasing senility), Dickie's persistence about the movies reveals his avoidance of coming to terms with his enlistment. As long as he can focus on the artistic creations of the movies that will soothe his aunt, he does not have to think about his impending involvement in war. Going to the movies with his aunt will not kill Dickie's wife, but by repeating "it won't kill you" as a mantra, Dickie has not accepted his own mortality as a

soldier. For Dickie, the movies symbolize both enjoyment and a joint activity that contrast with his solo departure for the army; the movies impact Dickie's life as an escapist tool even when he is not bodily at the theaters.

"The Long Debut of Lois Taggett" (1942) and "Elaine" (1945), both published in *Story*, are narratives that span a number of years in the lives of individual women. Salinger follows Lois Taggett's development as she comes out into society, gets married twice, and has a child. There are a couple of unusual incidents recounted in the story: Lois is abused by her first husband and her only child dies in his crib. These events seem to warrant a bit more explanation, but the narration becomes cold and distant, and the painful occasions in Lois's life are recounted a bit too briefly. Lois matures greatly from her selfish notions of merely fitting into the crowd at the beginning of the story, but the form suffers from its lack of carefully detailed scenes. Instead, the story reads more like a laundry list of the events in a society woman's disappointing life. Perhaps the story can be credited with giving insight beneath the upper class veneer of New Yorkers to portray the true pain of living in a world of carefully constructed appearances. Much like Lois and her family, the author also seems to hold the characters at arm's length, thereby nullifying the intended effect of creating sympathy for the characters in "The Long Debut."

Salinger has another go at his one-woman narrative with "Elaine," his last publication in *Story* magazine. Although Elaine, the person, is described by everyone as strikingly beautiful yet obviously dumb, Elaine, the character, is wonderfully wrought: she loves her family, she loves the movies, and she has no concept of her own individual will. She even walks away from her own marriage at the call of her mother, happily

skipping away to go watch a movie. The importance of the movies is part of the main theme of this story, continuing a common thread of movie-going in Salinger's later works. Elaine has no point of reference outside of what she views at the movie theater. While watching a Mickey Mouse cartoon as a child, her mother had to "slap and half-punch her on her lovely back to shock her out of hysteria, reminding her irritably that it was only a *picture*" (41). When she goes to the beach with her future husband (whom she meets at the movie theater, where he is an usher), Elaine panics when she realizes that the beach is empty; all she understands is what she has seen on newsreels about Coney Island: "…the occasion of being on a crowded beach all day had not estranged her violently from the dimensions of her own world" (44). Instead of accommodating what she sees in the movies into her own worldview, she accommodates her worldview to what she sees in the movies. Her marriage is no less influenced by the movies. When her mother and her husband's mother get into a huge fight over the merits of a famous actor at Elaine's reception, the mother and grandmother leave, calling Elaine to go with them. She dutifully follows, and she skips down the sidewalk in anticipation of seeing a Henry Fonda film. Although Salinger presents her character with sympathy, Elaine has an overwhelming folly in that she cannot act for herself. The role of art, via the movies in this story, is to allow the audience to consume rather than to be entirely consumed. Holden's character rails against the movies in *The Catcher in the Rye*, and "Elaine" seems to be an earlier experiment with this folly of turning oneself entirely over to the world of cinema. The style of "Elaine" is a bit more compelling than "The Long Debut" in its descriptions and insights; though Salinger narrates Elaine's childhood and teenage years much like Lois's, he picks a few choice events to fully develop, creating a more

developed and sympathetic character. Although he continues to experiment with form, Salinger creates more believable and memorable stories through his talent with close descriptions of a few events, as shown by the greater perception of characterization over the three year period between the publications of the "The Long Debut" and "Elaine."

The last group of stories in Salinger's uncollected works portray very different contexts and characters. These stories represent an early exploration of the formation of the artist as well as the artist's goals. The characters in these stories are not as tangible and compelling as Salinger's later artists, but they serve as intriguing experiments with personality, tone, and, perhaps most important, shortcomings. Salinger's second published story, "Go See Eddie," published in *The University Review* in 1940, begins an inquiry into the role of the artist as an actor. Like "The Young Folks," published earlier that year, the story also recalls the events of a few minutes of interaction, this time between a brother and sister. Salinger stays true to his detailed form, and the dialogue between the characters, Helen and Bobby, points to Helen's affinity for acting on the stage and Salinger's ability to write for the stage. Bobby insists that his sister try out for a part in his friend Eddie's new play; Helen resists, explaining that she is not interested in mere chorus parts. She only wants starring roles. Her preference for being the center of attention is echoed by her open infidelity with a married man, Phil. Helen's words and actions toward her brother are deceitful and mocking; she sarcastically rebukes him when he threatens to reveal her actions to Phil's wife, then she quickly kneels at his feet, cooing her assurances to him when she perceives his anger. She coyly remarks to him: "'I mean you don't just think I'm playing around, trying to hurt people?'" (123) Helen's art of playacting is harmful to the people around her, so that her misused talent is an example of

bad art. Edna's character is superficial, reaffirmed through her extended beauty routine that continues throughout the argument in the story. In her bedroom, "the sun was on them both, lushing her milky skin and doing nothing for Bobby but showing up his dandruff and the pockets under his eyes" (121). Bobby's appearance is a foil for Helen's, much like his attitude about caring for others contrasts sharply with his sister's. Instead of taking Bobby's advice upon his departure, Helen glibly dials up Hanson, a man with whom she assured her brother she was not involved. Unlike Edna in "The Young Folks," Helen creates her own truths, causing pain for others without the necessity of feeling any pain for herself. Although Salinger initially relishes working for the theatre, he seems to understand the painful fakery prevalent in a world of professional actors and actresses. Bobby sadly remarks to his sister that "'you used to be such a swell kid'" (123). Presumably, Helen hones her talent for deception in the surface-driven realm of try-outs and callbacks. Many of the author's later works mention acting in a positive manner, so we can assume that this art can be redeemed; still, Salinger pens an early warning against the dangers of using talents solely for one's own gain. The moral of "Go See Eddie" could be viewed as a simpler version of Salinger's later effort in *Franny and Zooey*.

From 1943 to 1945, Salinger had quite a stint in *The Saturday Evening Post* with five publications. Three out of the five broach the subject of the ongoing war, while the first *Post* story, "The Varioni Brothers," emphasizes the importance of creating true art as an artist. The structure of this story is a bit odd. "The Varioni Brothers" is initially narrated by a guest columnist for a newspaper, who asks if anyone knows the whereabouts of a certain Sonny Varioni. He explains that the Varioni brothers were a popular music act of the '20s, and after Joe was killed at a party, his brother Sonny

disappeared. The narration then switches to the voice of Sarah Daley Smith, a former English student of the dead brother. She explains all of Joe's failed artistic ambitions as a writer since his brother Sonny needed him as his songwriter; Sonny currently lives with the narrator as he attempts to piece together Joe's unpublished manuscript. Salinger highlights the misuse of art in this story, in that Joe does not fully utilize his talent as a writer; he writes powerful songs for his brother, but he never fulfills his potential for writing his beloved novel. Even Sarah, Joe's English student, disapproves of her teacher's choice to write songs over his novel: "He had just told me that Robert Browning had been hired to play third base for the Cards" (13). Although Joe produces beautifully written popular songs, his art ultimately fails in that it has the potential to endure and transcend in a different form. Joe's brother, Sonny, realizes this fact too late, and he must spend the rest of his life with the burden of reconstructing his dead brother's true art. The story loses some of its power with the trite line from Sonny as to why he wants to work on Joe's masterpiece at the end: "'Because I hear music for the first time in my life when I read his book'" (77). Salinger mocks lines like this in his later work when he imitates the clichéd screenplays of television movies. Still, the story introduces several integral themes to Salinger's work, including the importance of the artist's goals, the power of good writing, and the sustained influence of the dead brother over the living brother. Also, Salinger clearly shows in "The Varioni Brothers" that monetary success will not lead to artistic happiness. The brothers garner fame and riches upon their musical debut, but Sonny gambles all of his money away while Joe intends to go back to writing his novel. Another interesting aspect of the dead brother/alive brother motif that carries over into Salinger's later work is Sonny's belief that publishing Joe's work will

bring about his own salvation. Buddy must also struggle with creating the perfect remembrance of his brother in "Seymour: An Introduction." Although the sentimental style of "The Varioni Brothers" seems formulated to fit the audience of *The Saturday Evening Post*, the story is notable in the development of Salinger's views on art as he portrays the far-reaching repercussions of the unfulfilled artist.

The Gladwaller-Caulfield alliance begins in Salinger's *Post* stint as well. Babe Gladwaller and Vincent Caulfield appear throughout a series of the uncollected stories, including "Last Day of the Furlough," "A Boy in France," "This Sandwich Has No Mayonnaise," and "The Stranger." Babe, an avid reader, comes early in a long line of Salinger characters whose main concerns are family and literature. "Last Day" opens with Babe immersed in *Anna Karenina, The Great Gatsby,* and a story by Ring Lardner (all books and authors whose names will carry over into later Salinger stories). Even in the brief sketch "A Boy in France," a follow-up to "Last Day," Babe crouches in a foxhole and contemplates being with a woman who will read Emily Dickinson and William Blake to him. Babe's army friend, Vincent Caulfield, is no less affected by an artistic bent. He directed radio programs and wrote poetry before the war; in "This Sandwich," Vincent calms himself as he waits in the rain by thinking: "[Y]ou can write an immortal poem about this truck. This truck is a potential poem. You can call it 'Trucks I Have Rode In,' or 'War and Peace,' or 'This Sandwich Has No Mayonnaise.' Keep it simple" (54-55). Even more overtly than in "The Varioni Brothers," Salinger's characters in this series of stories seem to be templates for future creations. The character of Holden Caulfield is also introduced in "Last Day" and "This Sandwich," though some

of the other Caulfield family members' names change over the course of their journey toward *Catcher*.

Both Babe and Vincent exhibit characteristics of the artist trapped in a world in which they do not belong. At dinner with his family in "Last Day," Babe tells his father that if soldiers return from war "'talking, writing, painting, making movies of heroism and cockroaches and foxholes and blood, then future generations will always be doomed to future Hitlers'" (62). Much like his disdain for war movies in "Soft-Boiled Sergeant," Salinger reiterates the necessity of truth in art for later generations in the form of film. Babe desires the worlds within his stacks of books, and he resists valorizing war efforts to the same level of art. Instead, the truth of the horror of war is the only acceptable response, much like Salinger resists creating pretty scenarios for his soldier characters. For example, in "This Sandwich," Vincent endures the pain of silent grief after his brother goes missing, and as revealed in "The Stranger," Vincent does not escape the annihilation of war. After Babe returns from the war without Vincent, he goes to see his friend's ex-girlfriend. He bluntly explains how Vincent died to negate any romantic notions she may have held about the war; then, he hands her a poem written by Vincent during the war. Art seems to be the only aspect of humanity that truly perseveres in wartime. Moreover, truth must take precedence over all aspects of the telling. Perhaps the war stories are not the author's most artistic efforts, but Salinger takes pains to recreate the truth of wartime involvement, which is, according to his characters, the important part of his artistry. According to the young soldiers in the Babe Gladwaller stories, art should be an honest portrayal of the world. Moreover, Babe and Vincent's proclivity for poetry and literature during their times of service highlight the essential

nature of art throughout all stages of life. The artist will persevere despite hardship; Salinger's contributor note in an issue of *Story* magazine from 1944 states this truth for him as an artist during wartime: "I'm twenty-five, was born in New York, am now in Germany with the army. […] Am still writing whenever I can find the time and an unoccupied foxhole" ("Contributors" 1).

Salinger's next few publications diverge from the Caulfield storyline. They involve an assortment of characters published in a variety of women's magazines, including *Mademoiselle, Good Housekeeping*, and *Cosmopolitan*, but they all portray an artist in some state of development. "A Young Girl in 1941 With No Waist At All," from the May 1947 issue of *Mademoiselle,* describes the adventures of Barbara and Ray over the course of a night spent on and off of a cruise ship. Although Barbara is engaged to another man, she accompanies Ray to a bar, dances with him, and kisses him late into the night. The ending wraps up quite neatly as a tale of entry into adulthood: "The fragile hour was a carrier of many things, but Barbara was now exclusively susceptible to the difficult counterpoint sounding just past the last minutes of her girlhood" (302). The undertone of impending war resembles many of Salinger's earlier stories, but the "young girl enlightened" motif seems almost awkward in this story, much like the protagonist herself. She insists to Ray that she's dumb, and she reacts to others with timidity and awkwardness. However, the narrator comments that she surprises Ray with her kisses, with "the generously qualified and requalified innocence of her kiss" (296). Barbara's physical actions signify the presence of some sort of inner resilience; perhaps these kisses summon her ability to assert herself when she tells her future mother-in-law that she is no longer interested in marrying the woman's son. The description of Barbara's would-be

mother-in-law, a woman who would rather not read books with unattractive subjects, indicates a lifestyle replete with boredom and riches. By involving herself with Ray, Barbara comes into contact with the real world happening around her; this realization of truth is Barbara's impetus for resisting the false cheer that will comfort her in a life with her fiancé. In later works, Salinger continues to utilize the tenets of a *Bildungsroman* tale, most notably in *Catcher in the Rye*. However, his somewhat clichéd musings on growing up placed at the end of "A Young Girl" are thankfully excised from later narratives.

Salinger's next publication from December of 1947, "The Inverted Forest," is a short story of novella proportions. *Cosmopolitan* introduced the work by admitting to its abnormal volume: "To say that this short novel is unusual magazine fare is, we think, a wild understatement" (73); the magazine even uses a triangular icon on various pages to denote that it is a "Cosmopolitan complete short novel." As the author's longest work thus far, "The Inverted Forest" anticipates Salinger's later creations of lengthy "unusual magazine fare." Salinger again chronicles the highs and lows of the feminine maturation process, as in "The Long Debut" and "Elaine"; while the events in the text are similar to earlier stories, including school vignettes, scenes of courtship, marriage, and eventual marital disintegration, "The Inverted Forest" develops these episodes with much more depth of understanding, probably due in part to length allowances. The novella also explores broader themes beyond the boy-meets-girl romantic failure via Raymond Ford, the female protagonist's true love who is also a disturbed poet with a troubled past. Through this character, Salinger emphasizes the difficulties of relationships between the

sexes exacerbated by the struggles inherent between the creation of art and the strictures of the outside world.

Corinne von Nordhoffen, the protagonist, takes a romantic interest in Raymond Ford at a young age. The novella follows the protagonist as she becomes an adult and reunites with Raymond. The narrator, who is also a character involved in the plot, identifies himself much in the same manner as the second narrator in "The Varioni Brothers" by explaining his involvement with the protagonist as a former love. His intrusion, like earlier narrator interruptions, seems awkward and plodding; the narrator even admits "I don't really have a good reason for taking myself out of third person" (79). The narrator's disturbances are brief and sparse, almost like a delayed attempt at humor. For example, the narration about Corinne and Raymond's marriage is brief and informative, until the narrator cheekily comments that "I know nothing at all about their honeymoon. That's a statement, not an apology" (90).

At this point in Salinger's writing career, the pattern of self-aware narrators involved in the plot of several stories indicates the author's attempt at authorial distance, narrative autonomy, and the destruction of straightforward author-narrator-reader interaction. Although his use of the deconstructed relationship in this story seems more awkward than artistic, "The Inverted Forest" is a good foil for later, longer works. Another important aspect of this novella is the characterization of the artist in the person of Raymond Ford. Corrine possesses some qualities of the artist, in that she has a job as a journalist and is a "good, if not brilliant, drama critic" (80); in stark contrast, the narrator describes the poet's art as "'Coleridge and Blake and Rilke all in one, and more'" (80). She stumbles into her career partly due to her intelligence, but also due to her good

fortune as a young aristocrat. Raymond, however, has fought for his position with years of hard work and sacrifice. He constantly works on his poetry, and only takes a short break to stand at his own marriage ceremony. The narrator/character Robert Waner explains Raymond's all-consuming desire for art in an attempt to dissuade Corinne's feelings for him: "'I mean a man just can't reach the kind of poetry Ford's reaching and still keep intact the ability to spot a fine hat-straightener" (90). In other words, Raymond is oblivious, and will remain oblivious, to the physical attractions that exist between men and women. As textual proof, his first kiss with Corinne was "the average, disenchanted kiss of the average, disenchanted husband just checked into the living room straight from the office" (88). There is no semblance of physical passion in his relations with her throughout their courtship and marriage.

When Ford later leaves Corinne to live with another woman in relative squalor, he remains in a drunken stupor that continues to prevent him from experiencing any pleasure or pain in his new life. While he numbed himself with his art during his time with Corinne, he anesthetizes his life with Bunny through alcohol. He comments that Bunny ridicules his poetry and his appearance, but her insults do nothing to truly shake him out of his daze. Also, Bunny's artifice and complacency with her life satisfy Raymond's desire for a societal hermitage; unlike Corinne, she likes having a stagnant relationship so that she, in essence, can have the life of a single woman. Neither of Ford's stunted relationships with these women is productive for his artistry; he fails to publish another book during his marriage to Corinne or during his stint with Bunny. Raymond Ford is Salinger's first cautionary tale for the artist: one who cannot exist in both corporeal and spiritual realms cannot truly express his artistic vision. Strangely, the presence of the

women seems to exacerbate Ford's tendencies toward earthly retreat. Perhaps the actual physicality of the women unsettled his previously idealized world of being about which he wrote so that he no longer has any justification for his poetic notions. As Ford comments, "'[a] poet doesn't invent his poetry—he finds it'" (95); once Ford loses his vision due to the actuality of living in communion with others, he effectively cuts himself off from poetry by inventing a sordid life with Bunny. Ford's poetry seems similar to other Salingerian artists' in its affinity to the sounds of Rilke and the absence of verse. However, Salinger displays many weaknesses inherent in the one who creates the art in "The Inverted Forest," which contrasts sharply with the varied strengths of the artist portrayed in later works.

"A Girl I Knew," from the February 1948 issue of *Good Housekeeping*, and "Blue Melody," from the September 1948 issue of *Cosmopolitan*, were published rather unceremoniously amidst the conversations that the publication of "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" in *The New Yorker* caused during the same year. Still, both stories have merits of their own; strangely enough, although the stories have very different subjects, they are both voiced by soldiers who relate happy memories of innocence before the Second World War. These narrators also exhibit characteristics of the artist as they recall periods of artistic maturation in their narratives. "A Girl I Knew" relates the adventures of a young man, with a background similar to the Salinger's, who drops out of college and enjoys a brief stint abroad in order to prepare himself for business with his father. The protagonist, John, forms a friendship with a girl named Leah during his stay in Vienna; they meet through a shared song that Leah intones from her balcony and John plays on his phonograph. The beauty of their relationship occurs through their stilted

efforts to spend time together merely repeating blasé phrases in the other's language, devoid of any actual romantic efforts. In the second part of the story, "A Girl I Knew" hails back to Salinger's previous efforts at war stories—the protagonist is now an army officer after World War II, and he travels back to his previous residence in Vienna to locate the girl. Like the standard Salingerian unrequited love story, Leah is not there; even worse, the American army has entirely appropriated the Viennese building. Although John does not exhibit any overt concerns for art, other than recommending *Gone with the Wind* as reading material for Leah, he exhibits more concern for his fellow man than his other compatriots. When asking permission to go up to his old apartment, John explains that he knew a girl who lived in the building who was now presumably dead. The American officer on duty loses interest in his story and instead concerns himself with the fate of a bottle of champagne. As Salinger has previously illustrated, a true representation of war concerns both the joys and pains of mankind; "A Girl I Knew" portrays the numbness of soldiers amidst a background rich with cultural history and newfound tragedy. The story encompasses a greater amount of time than later stories, but Salinger crafts this story more carefully than some earlier efforts at war stories. Also, the ending occurs swiftly and abruptly. Not only does this kind of closure become a trademark of Salinger's short stories, but it also reinforces the protagonist's exasperation with the officer's blatant disregard for human life.

"Blue Melody" overtly narrates the story of the artist, although its characters and action differ greatly from Salinger's other subject matter. *Cosmopolitan* summarizes the story with the following inscription: "The saga of Lida Louise who sang the blues as they have never been sung before or after" (51). Vaguely resembling "The Varioni Brothers"

in the story's exploration of the forgotten artist, "Blue Melody" delves deeper into the human psyche to portray the impact of good and true art on the maturing child. The narrator of the story relates the memories of a fellow soldier in the war; though the story begins within the confines of an army truck, the action soon meanders down the sunny streets of a small town in Tennessee. As a young man, Rudford and his friend Peggy frequented a run-down café where Black Charles played jazz piano. The two neophytes' job was to wake him from his drunken sleep, then marvel at his musical prowess. After Lida Louise appears at the joint, however, Rudford and Peggy are enamored with her, along with the rest of the town. The narrator comments that Lida Louise was actually a jazz singer who recorded several famous records; the tale becomes a sad recollection of the destructive nature of racism when Lida dies because of race restrictions at the town hospital. Although the story ends with Rudford meeting Peggy as adults, their romantic notions of childhood are not the focus of their reunion. Instead, they ask each other about memories of Lida Louise and her records. Their time with the artist represented more than a struggle against racism in the South: they understood how to fully experience life through the euphonies of Lida Louise's artistry. After the first time Rudford and Peggy heard the woman sing, Peggy "started to cry so hard that when Rudford had to ask her 'What's the matter?' and she had sobbed back 'I don't know,' he suddenly assured her, himself transported, 'I love you good, Peggy!' which made the child cry so uncontrollably he had to take her home" (115). The children perceive the depths of human emotion and their own ability to love by listening to a powerful expression of song. Lida Louise even recorded a song about the children's relationship, entitled "Soupy Peggy" (written for her by Salinger's own Varioni brothers). After the singer's

untimely death, Rudford and Peggy only see each other again on one occasion as adults, but their relationship has drastically changed, much like Rudford's copy of "Soupy Peggy": "It was terribly scratchy now. It didn't even sound like Lida Louise any more" (119). Time naturally wears away the physical properties of art and changes the viewer's perception of that piece of art; still, the narrator points out that "[a] story never ends. The narrator is usually provided with a nice, artistic spot for his voice to stop, but that's about all" (118). Although Rudford no longer has any contact with those involved in his experience with true art, his time with Lida Louise will continue to influence his life through the memory of the encounter. Like a sad tune, "Blue Melody" portrays the memorably haunting quality of the true artist's conceptions for the audience.

At this point in J.D. Salinger's publishing career, he finally reaches the big time: "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" appears in the January 31st issue of *The New Yorker*. Although Salinger published "Slight Rebellion Off Madison" in the magazine, the cool style and jarring subject matter of "Bananafish" caught the public's eye anew. Although Salinger had to rewrite the story several times for the *New Yorker* editors, their appreciation was well worth his efforts. The week it was published in 1948, John Cheever wrote to Gus Lobrano, "'I thought the Salinger piece was one hell of a story'" (qtd. in Yagoda 234). In this short story, Salinger finally achieves the style for which he has become renowned, and his most beloved character, Seymour Glass, finally materializes. However, Seymour vanishes as quickly as he appears; the shot heard 'round the world lodges itself into Seymour's brain at the end of "Bananafish," leaving Salinger with a character so intriguing that he spends the rest of his publishing career

deciding exactly who this artist figure is and how he fits within the ideals of art Salinger has created for himself.

CHAPTER THREE

The Formation of the Artist: *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Nine Stories*

As J. D. Salinger's writing becomes more sophisticated compared to earlier efforts, his pointed references to other authors and literary works become more frequent and varied. Salinger's characters mention the names of their favorite authors as frequently as they talk about their family members: Seymour loves the German poet Rilke and the Japanese poet Basho, Holden enjoys Isak Dinesen's novel and Ring Lardner's short stories, and Buddy quotes the philosophical ponderings of both Kafka and Kierkegaard before beginning his own narration. In his last publication, "Hapworth 16, 1924," Salinger makes exhaustive lists of writers, replete with the seven-year-old Seymour's judgments of their works' literary qualities. By exploring the canon of established artists through the musing of his characters, Salinger evaluates the necessary qualities of a good artist. In turn, some of these characters become exemplars, as writers and actors, through which to fulfill the characteristics of the true artist. While he explores the characteristics of the true artist in *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Nine Stories*, Salinger also begins his crusade against the "phony" in his works. Many characters, especially the artists, both denounce the phony world and live in constant dread of becoming a part of that world. For example, Holden flees boarding schools in order to escape the phoniness he finds there, and Eloise in "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut" cries out in a drunken stupor, "I was a nice girl, […] wasn't I?" (38) Although the loathing of the phony eventually becomes one of Salinger's best known tropes, he sets up this persona in opposition to his primary concern, which is the plight of the true artist. At this

point in Salinger's budding career, he also begins to reflect upon his own role in the literary community as an artist through the voices of his characters. They long to escape a reality of fake sentiments and dishonest people; instead, the characters seek for truth in the endeavors of other artists and, most importantly, in themselves. The characters from his most popular writings during the period from 1948, the publication year of "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," through 1953, the publication of "Teddy," question their roles as artists in a world permeated with the phoniness of mass-produced culture.

These stories, along with the novel, will be arranged in this chapter according to three different stages of the artist portrayed in the texts: the child artist who experiences intimations of the nature of art, the developing artist who discovers his way, and the jaded artist who struggles to find his way back to truth. Some stories occupy more than one category due to two characters who are in different stages, so this overlap will be noted and explained. Salinger presents these artists in different stages of development in order to explore the relationship between innocence and true art, to show the process by which one understands true art, and to warn against the dangers of ignoring true art as well as offer advice to the jaded artist.

Salinger's first depiction of the child's intimations of art occurs in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" through the character of Sybil and her effects on the character of Seymour. Perhaps the most consequential story of Salinger's publishing career, "A Perfect Day" introduces Seymour Glass, whose character and family become the muse for the author's subsequent writings. The story itself is a perfect example of Salingerian style from the era that was often published in *The New Yorker*: the prose is tersely and carefully composed, the characters are mysterious but intriguingly developed, and the

conclusion provides an unexpected twist. This standard twist, however, eluded the understanding of readers and scholars alike; Seymour's suicide has prompted several critical articles over the last half century that all attempt to explain the reasons for his decision through the vague details provided in the story. Though "A Perfect Day" begins by focusing on Seymour's wife, Muriel Glass, in their hotel room, the spotlight quickly shifts to her husband due to a nagging phone call from Muriel's mother while the couple honeymoons in Florida. The reader becomes aware of Seymour's psychological "sickness" before he bodily appears in the story. However, the subsequent interactions between a young child named Sybil and Seymour on the beach make previous assessments of his character seem completely unfounded. His conversation with the girl is odd but charming, and he teaches her lessons about being kind and not greedy. Seymour's easy relationship with Sybil indicates an important aspect of his character: he regards the world with childlike wonder and a vivid imagination. Seymour's playful agreements with Sybil about the necessity of olives and wax highlight his awkward perch in an adult world that seems more concerned with surfaces than significant interactions with others.

As Sybil insightfully babbles, "see more glass" (10) is an appropriate moniker for the man who clearly perceives life in a different manner than his fellow beachgoers. While Sybil allows Seymour to exercise his childlike need for play, she also catches a glimpse of the importance of art. After Seymour tells Sybil a story about the tragic lives of bananafish, she immediately claims to see one: "'My God, no!' said the young man. 'Did he have any bananas in his mouth?' 'Yes,' said Sybil. 'Six'" (16). Critics have worked diligently at attributing symbolic significance to these bananafish, but it seems

that the *telling* of the anecdote in the short story is more important than the precise meaning. The bananafish are obviously fictional creations, yet Sybil recognizes their existence after hearing Seymour's tale; this newfound cognizance of truth is the goal of the artist, and Seymour achieves this mutual perception through the telling of his bananafish story. Although the tale points to the negative repercussions of greed, the young girl now understands the power of the artist to create beyond the physical realm. Before Sybil gets out of the water, Seymour kisses the arch of her foot, physically marking her with his affection; from the ultimate artist, as Salinger will later characterize Seymour, this kiss seems like a blessing for Sybil's future as a perceiver of true art as she has perceived Seymour as a true artist. "A Perfect Day" also illustrates the problems of the jaded artist, so the end of the chapter will return to Seymour's relationship with his wife and his suicide.

"Down at the Dinghy," originally published in April of 1949 in *Harper's*, chronicles a time of adult revelation for a young boy, Lionel Tannenbaum. Salinger also connects the "Dinghy" family to his "Bananafish" protagonist—Lionel's mother, Boo Boo Tannenbaum, is Seymour Glass's sister. Her son is a precocious four-year-old of few words who routinely attempts to run away; Boo Boo notes a couple of his excursions in the city during her conversation with Sandra and Mrs. Snell. Most of the story focuses on Boo Boo's repeated efforts to get Lionel off their boat during his current effort to escape his home. In order to get her son to talk, Boo Boo plays the role of an admiral for Lionel, showing off her nautical expertise and bugle-calling skills. Although Lionel still refuses her entry onto the boat, she captures his interest with her bugle performance: "In all probability, he was aware that the call was bogus, but nonetheless he seemed

deeply aroused; his mouth fell open" (81-82). The ease with which Boo Boo attracts the attention of her son is no simple task because Lionel seems to only believe in the literal nature of the world. When he tells his mother that his father said she was a lady instead of an admiral, his pronouncement sounds like a final judgment: "'You aren't an admiral. You're a lady all the time'" (81); in Lionel's mind, his mother cannot inhabit both the worlds of being a lady and being an admiral at once. Still, her performances affect her son. As noted by several critics, their race back to the house is marked by Lionel's victory because Boo Boo allows her son to triumph in her game. For Lionel, gaining success over a tangible game with actual winners and losers, rather than over an abstract play on words, allows him to move beyond the pain of Sandra's slander.

More importantly, Lionel creates a way for his mother to move beyond the pain of hurtful words. When Boo Boo finally determines his reason for attempting to run away on this occasion, he reveals the anti-Semitic slur he overheard their housekeeper call his father: "'Sandra—told Mrs. Smell—that Daddy's a big—sloppy—kike'" (86). Boo Boo is rightly concerned about her child's understanding of the word, and she calmly asks her son to define the term for her. With the innocent perception of a four-year-old, Lionel describes to her what he knows about the physical properties of a kite. Although his misunderstanding almost seems like a cute one-liner to end the story, Lionel's replacement of "kite" for "kike" points to the child's comprehension of concrete truths not connected to the adult world of racial slurs. His transference of meaning for the term does not allow him to fully understand Sandra's prejudice, and he also protects his mother by demonstrating the phoniness of offensive words. In this way, Lionel is an illuminator of truth for his mother, just as she is a protective performer for her son. The

pair are not typical examples of artists within the Salinger canon, but they use their art to overcome anti-Semitic sentiments, a shameful force against which Salinger cleverly tried to reckon in this *New Yorker* story.

Published in 1949, "The Laughing Man" presents the art of storytelling on two levels: the narrator tells of a formative time in his childhood, which presents the ongoing telling of a story by his childhood club leader. This story presents a child's comprehension of art to show the far reaching effects of his experience; as an adult, the narrator remembers this time of insight and continues to utilize the experience as he tells his own story. The storyteller of the narrator's youth, John Gedsudski, resembles other Salingerian artist figures in his strange combination of features: he was short, had a large nose, and his top half was proportionally equal to his bottom half. However, his charges regarded him as almost god-like, especially when he began a new installment of his sprawling epic, "The Laughing Man." According to Gedsudski's story, the Laughing Man's terrifying appearance belied his tender nature and wily talents for spy activity. As the narrator reveals more details about the Laughing Man's adventures, he also includes contiguous details of group dynamics at the time. John begins dating a girl named Mary Hudson, who accompanies the group on several trips to play baseball. When the group waits for her one day, John tells an installment in which the Laughing Man gets shot as a cliffhanger; when Mary never shows up, he angrily drives the bus to their usual field. The dynamics of Mary and John's relationship have obviously changed, as evinced by her quick departure from the field in tears when she appears later. Heartbroken, the Comanche leader ends the Laughing Man and his saga on the way home. The Laughing Man's character obviously gets a few cues from the storyteller's life: he is unattractive

with a good heart, and his life ends just as the love of John's life runs away. The story allows for John to act out in ways not available to him (speaking animal languages and crossing the Parisian border several times a day, for example), but he can never truly separate himself from his art. Just as DuFarge, the Laughing Man's arch enemy, shoots him for showing his ugly face to DuFarge's daughter, some transgression has passed between John and Mary to cause the storyteller's uncertainty on the bus. When John finds out that the problem cannot be repaired, he allows the shot in his story to hit its target, killing the creative extension of himself. John's audience of Comanches is dismayed, and rightfully so, as John's story has brought them into a deeper understanding of themselves beyond their normal lives as nine-year-olds. The narrator explains, "I happen to regard the Laughing Man as some kind of super-distinguished ancestor of mine […] Actually, I was not the only legitimate living descendant of the Laughing Man. There were twenty-five Comanches in the Club, or twenty-five legitimate living descendants of the Laughing Man" (61-62). Therefore, the artist has succeeded in creating inseparable connections between his art and his audience; in addition, the boys now understand the pains of loneliness through their vicarious relationships with the Laughing Man and the grief of losing a loved one upon the character's death. Perhaps inadvertently, John Gedsudski imparted painful truths of human existence to the boys through a kind of sprawling bedtime story.

"The Laughing Man" not only marks a point of emotional discovery for the narrator, but the story also elucidates a turning point in the development of the narrator's artistry. The narrator establishes his own tenets for a good story while observing that John's creation "may even have had classic dimensions. It was a story that tended to

sprawl all over the place, and yet it remained essentially portable. You could always take it home with you and reflect on it while sitting, say, in the outgoing water in the bathtub" (58). The narrator implies that a good story must be thought provoking but carefully contained so as to be memorable at any time. In addition to what a story should be, the narrator also intimates that he learns what not to include in a good story. For example, the narrator admits that "some of the minor mechanics of his [John's] genius were often subject to mysterious little breakdowns" (67); the narrator recognizes the inconsistencies in the Laughing Man installments, seemingly in order to excise such inconsistencies in his own retelling of his Comanche Club experience. In his own story, the narrator achieves these artistic goals: the story sprawls, mainly because of the inclusion of Laughing Man adventures, the story is portable, in that its length is manageable and it only mentions the important meetings that the boys witness between Mary and John, and the story is memorable as a tale of childhood innocence disturbed. Just as John abruptly leaves the Laughing Man to die, the narrator swiftly ends his tale upon his arrival home after the last installment of John's story. "The Laughing Man" not only serves as an adult's reckoning with the discoveries of his childhood, but the story also functions as an artist's treatise on his inauspicious beginnings. Along with "A Perfect Day" and "Down at the Dinghy," "The Laughing Man" portrays a child's first grasp of the concept of true art in order to show the connection between art and innocence, as well as the impact of true art on a child. Art does not have to be a complicated, out-of-reach concept; instead, Salinger shows that art is best understood and developed by the young mind who discovers its truth and power.

The artist does not jump from childhood revelation to perceptive artist. Salinger writes several stories, as well as an entire novel, which portray the painful transition of the artist as he moves into the adult world while attempting to hold on to the truth discovered in childhood. Salinger's 1948 *New Yorker* publication, "Just before the War with the Eskimos," portrays two characters during an important moment of artistic development in a brief and somewhat awkward interaction. Ginnie Mannox meets Franklin Gaff in his sister's apartment after their tennis match one morning, when Ginnie follows Serena to get money the latter girl owes for cab fare. His entrance into the living room where Ginnie waits is loud and off-putting, as he holds his bleeding finger close to his chest; Ginnie thinks he is "the funniest-looking boy, or man—it was hard to tell which he was—she had ever seen" (43). Although he is a few years older than Ginnie, Franklin still seems to be in the process of developing into an adult. Ginnie and Franklin engage in conversation, mostly over his injured finger, and his frequent complaints cause her to become interested in his words. At one point, he mimics her question, but Ginnie "was much too involved now to feel affronted" (48). Whereas Ginnie's conversation with Franklin's sister is full of annoyed silences and exasperated concessions, her interaction with Franklin portrays piqued interests and an attitude of conversational give and take. She also conveys physical concern for him, when she interrupts him to point out that "your finger'll start bleeding more if you hold it *down* that way" (48). Franklin even offers her his leftover half of his chicken sandwich, which Ginnie awkwardly accepts and stuffs into her coat pocket. Critics have made much of this offer and acceptance, explaining that Franklin has taught Ginnie how to love by accepting someone else's gift. Perhaps Salinger teaches the reader how to love as well by accepting his art through his

story. James Bryan compares Franklin to Christ offering Ginnie the Eucharist, pointing out that Franklin "has an abnormal heart condition (perhaps signifying his heretical ability to love in a loveless world)" (227). This symbol of love can also be viewed as a symbol of true interaction, in that Franklin causes Ginnie to see him as a person of worth rather than a mere subject in a world based on financial reciprocity. Franklin's proffered bloody finger and chicken sandwich create a space in which Ginnie can engage with another person, thus allowing her to view the truth of another's experience. As a work of art, the chicken sandwich remains in Ginnie's possession since she cannot bring herself to throw away its gift of truth.

Salinger contrasts Franklin's character with his friend Eric, who establishes himself as a pretentious artistic figure. Upon his entrance, he dramatically begins to rub his eyes and proclaims, "'This has been the most horrible morning of my entire life'" (51). Although Eric says that he does not want to involve Ginnie, he still relays a saga of non-importance: his roommate has apparently taken some of Eric's belongings. He sneers at his former roommate, who lived as a poor, common writer, and the first aspect of Ginnie that he notices is her camel's hair coat. Eric is materialistic and snobby. He has personal contacts with theatre producers, which he discreetly reveals to Ginnie, and he mocks Franklin's taste in movies: "'His taste. During the war, we both worked at the same horrible place, and that boy would in*sist* on dragging me to the most impossible pictures in the world'" (53). Eric also touts Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast*, boasting that he has seen the picture eight times and that it is "'absolutely pure genius'" (53). Although other critics point out the character's undertones of homosexuality (French, "J. D. Salinger, Revisted" 71 and Wenke 42), his purpose in the story is much more than

sexual tension; instead, he acts as a foil to Franklin's honest actions and conversation with Ginnie. Eric only engages in superficial discourse, ostensibly to prove his wealth and station in the world. His influence on Franklin could indeed be harmful, but not necessarily involving sexual morals. Eric's phony behavior is the real danger to Franklin's desire for true communication. Salinger shows that during the artist's development, he must be discerning in his choice of companionship; perhaps the chicken sandwich is a sacrament that will lead Ginnie and Franklin to experience communion in the future.

The narrator of "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period" looks back on a period of artistic development as a nineteen-year-old art instructor, which Salinger published in London's *World Review* in 1952. In "Blue Period," Salinger provides an entertaining yet edifying glimpse into the world of correspondence art schools while illustrating the lessons that the young art instructor learns. The overarching theme in this story involves the artist's struggle between true art and commercial art, the ability to discern between the two, and the problems inherent in teaching this discernment. The narrator of the story creates another problem: how can an artist be true to himself while faking his own credibility? The narrator applies to an advertisement for art teachers in a Canadian newspaper; although the narrator notes receiving several art awards in France, he forges a persona for himself that includes his French lineage and a friendship with Pablo Picasso. Even the narrator's pseudonym, De Daumier-Smith, borrows authority from another artist, Honore Daumier. Throughout his stay with the Yoshotos, the couple who own the art school, Daumier-Smith feels the need to keep adding to his Picasso stories. The Yoshotos show no semblance of interest in his supposed friendship, but the narrator

continues to flaunt his lies because he "actually was beginning to think [he] *was*" friends with Picasso (144). By repeating his lies, he creates an artistic identity that is more true to him than his actual teenage self. Notably, the narrator never reveals a name other than his pseudonym; during the period of the story, the narrator actually becomes this Daumier-Smith person. In this way, the narrator overlooks his own resignation to commercial art. He wants to put forth a personality who would be typically attractive to the art school, and therefore hireable for a paid position.

The narrator creates several "typical examples of American commercial art" to include in his application to teach at the art school (135). The images he describes are literally commercials: couples in evening wear who do not worry about underarm stains, children pleading for more wholesome breakfast food, big breasted women without blemishes, and housewives whose problems were solved with the right brand of dish detergent. Commercial art is not only unimaginative, but the images are also attempting to sell a product. Ironically enough, Daumier-Smith's new job as an art teacher also focuses on attractively selling a product to a consumer; this consumer pays fourteen dollars in order to have their drawings "corrected" by the instructors at Les Amis Des Vieux Maîtres. When the narrator observes M. Yoshoto's teaching techniques, he realizes that the instructor "couldn't for the life of him show anyone how to draw a beautiful pig in a beautiful sty […]. It was not, need I add, that he was consciously or unconsciously being frugal of his talent, or deliberately unprodigal of it, but that it simply wasn't his to give away" (143-144). Although the art students pay for instruction, they can never be more than simple consumers of true artists or generators of more commercial art.

This inability to teach true art is what attracts Daumier-Smith to Sister Irma's work; he recognizes that her work was "steeped in high, high organized talent and God knows how many hours of hard work" (150). Because she already possesses an ability to create true art over commercialized representations, he wants to help her to refine her technical skills. If not, the narrator tells her that he fears she will "only be a very, very interesting artist the rest of [her] life instead of a great one" (160). The distinction between interesting and great art is important aspect of "Blue Period," especially in regard to the nun's religious role: "great" art seems to suggest holy significance whereas "interesting" art merely entertains mortals. Although Daumier-Smith insists to Sister Irma that he is agnostic, he ruminates over the character of Mary Magdalene in her painting and says that a quote from St. Francis reminds him of her art. However, religious revelations do not necessarily signify great art; upon his mystical epiphany outside of the orthopedic appliances shop, he does not realize that everyone is an artist. Rather, he decides that "everybody is a nun" (164). Therefore, Salinger shows his readers that the role of the artist is not necessarily to teach, but to inspire truth and to illuminate true art for others.

The ultimate tale of the developing artist, and probably the most well-known portrait of the artistic adolescent, is Salinger's only novel of his career: *The Catcher in the Rye*, published in 1951. Utilizing the characters and scenarios from two earlier stories, "I'm Crazy" and "Slight Rebellion Off Madison," Salinger's *Catcher* follows the angsty adventures and revelations of Holden Caulfield after his expulsion from Pencey Prep. Though Salinger declares in a contributor's note in *Esquire* that he is "a dash man and not a miler" (34), the novel continues to be Salinger's most widely recognized

publication. However, the time period occupied by the novel's events resembles the frame for Salinger's short stories, in that all of the action occurs over the course of a couple of days. In addition, the novel provides careful details for each event, like Salinger's short stories. Although the novel is seamlessly put together, the author could have presented different parts of the book as separate short stories. Therefore, the novel operates within Salinger's distinctions of the developing artist.

The book created quite a stir in the literary community of the time, partly due to Holden's excessive use of curse words and mostly due to the novel's unique insight into the mind of society's most feared creature, the rebellious teenager. In an article from 1963, critic Lawrence Jay Dessner lambastes the book for being immoral and unloving; he vehemently protests the idea that *Catcher* could represent the voice of younger generation: "*The Catcher in the Rye* is no more than an insult to all boys, to us who have been boys, and to the girls and ex-girls too. It is an insult to childhood and to adulthood. It is an insult to our ideas of civilization, to our ideal land in which ladies and gentlemen try to grow up, try to find and save their dignity" (97). Admittedly, Holden may not be a very dignified character, but Salinger's astute portrayal of troubled youth impacted many generations to come. Although the novel continues to be taught mostly in high schools, *The Catcher in the Rye* does not speak only to younger readers; instead, Holden's constant struggle with the true and the phony resounds with people of all ages who question their role in normalized society. Holden comments on phony affectation in behavior, language, and forms of entertainment such as books and movies. For the protagonist, these three aspects of the human experience are forms of art in their most honest state. On many occasions, Holden expresses both delight in and disgust for the

nature of human beings, their power over language, and the human's ability to represent himself and his words through books and movies. His ambivalent relationship with these parts of the human experience allows fresh insight into the mind of the young artist along with the author's artistic ideals. The choice to present these insights in the lengthier form of the novel also allows the character enough space both to show and tell his struggles with these forms of art.

The Catcher in the Rye presents the paradox of being truthful while being human; while being genuine is possible, dishonest motives are impossible to perceive and increase with one's age. Through Holden's eyes, the world is populated with phonies and nice people who have the potential to be phonies. Some individuals can be both at once, such as Mr. Spencer, about whom Holden comments to his sister that "'even the couple of nice teachers on the faculty, they were phonies, too'" (168). The headmaster at Pencey is "a phony slob" (3), a previous school, Elkton Hills, was full of phonies (13), and a bar is the perfect place for "watch[ing] phonies for a while" (142). Holden recognizes his own tendency to toe this line, and he fears the possibility that he, too, could become a phony. This fear seems to be the impetus for Holden's perpetual escape; every high school he leaves is full of phony students and phony teachers from whom he wants to separate himself. When he talks to his younger sister about the problem of being a lawyer, he questions their motivations while pondering his own: "How would you know you weren't being a phony? The trouble is, you wouldn't" (172). While Holden can readily perceive the phony nature of others, he balks at the thought of not being aware of his own phoniness. Perhaps this explains Holden's tendency to lapse into playacting; he forces himself to pretend to be someone else in order to prove the stark contrast between

his real self and his fake self. Holden knows that certain behavioral characteristics are constructions, and he revels in the art of acting to an audience. The distinct separation between the theater and the real world is necessary for Holden's sanity, though; faking is commendable in the confines of a playhouse but deplorable in the strictures of a relationship. His most frequent role is that of dying man, and while he plays the scenes humorously, there remains an underlying darkness. While tap dancing around his dorm room, he tells the reader "[a]ll I need's an audience. I'm an exhibitionist" (29). Holden tries to be honest about his motivations for acting a certain way, thereby being genuine, but he never seems certain about the validity of his actions. While acting is an art for some, it is more of an escapist tool for the protagonist. He insists that true art is found in the actions of the unaffected individual.

Holden reveres the few people in his life who live up to this standard of limited affectation, including his sister Phoebe, two nuns he meets in a diner, and his brother Allie. Out of this group, the nuns are separated from normal society and his brother is dead. Therefore, he can entertain high ideals for these people without the risk of being disappointed. Since Phoebe is in elementary school, she, too, is safe from the risk of phoniness. He reveres the state of childhood as being the ultimate state of truthful being. For example, he cannot forget the song "If a body catch a body" that he hears a young boy singing on the street; although he knows that the boy sang the wrong words, the child's mistake makes the protagonist realize that "'I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be'" (173). Holden's greatest desire is to prevent the prevarications that accompany adulthood. For him, the truest art of human nature is only found in the beautiful naivety of childhood. Sadly,

society will not accept Holden's searches for truth and honesty without a fight; instead, he must reveal his discoveries from the confines of a mental institution, where he begins and ends his story. The presence of the mental institution, or the place Holden went after he "got sick and all" (213), seems to be yet another method for questioning the truth of human nature: as an institutionalized character, can Holden's revelations be trusted at all?

The artistic forms of language color the entirety of the novel. Holden's discussion of the uses of language begins when he disinterestedly tells the reader in the first line, "if you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, […] but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth" (1). He sounds bored and unwilling to reveal his personal life to the reader, but the part of his life he recounts actually uncovers more about the protagonist than any list of factual information could. Holden refuses to narrate his life just as he does exactly that, portraying his ambivalence toward the power that language affords him. He even dislikes the fakeness of specific words: "Grand. There's a word I really hate. It's a phony. I could puke every time I hear it" (9). Still, Holden admits that he is not immune to fakery, as he is "the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life" (16). This theme is prevalent throughout Salinger's later works as well. Critics Irving Deer and John H. Randall note that "[h]is [Salinger's] preoccupation with the limits of language is reflected in the ambivalent attitude many of his protagonists display toward language. One moment, they revere it as a primitive high priest might have revered incantation and magic; the next, they resent its capacity to destroy deeply personal communion or even basic communication" (14). As an artist of language, Holden is unsure about how to properly exercise his gift of words. He gladly sneers at and rebukes others' affected use of

language, but he still has difficulty with expressing himself honestly since he fears merely using the same phony language as others. For example, Holden often thinks about his dead brother, Allie, but the only time he truly expresses his relationship with his brother through his gift of words occurs in an essay he writes for his roommate's composition. He does not actually write on the assigned topic for his roommate, though, so he still manages to buck the system and destroys the paper upon his roommate's dissatisfaction. *The Catcher in the Rye*, then, is obviously a portrait of a rebellious teenager, but the novel also captures the unease of the artist who attempts to represent truths in a world of constructed fakeries. In addition to the protagonist's struggle, Salinger implicates himself in the language problem through his authorial choice to utilize the "skaz" style for Holden's narration. This style imitates spontaneous speech, perhaps causing Holden to seem even more forthright by excising the appearance of premeditated thoughts and discourse.

Holden's search for truthful representations of behavior and speech crop up throughout his adventures in the novel. He explains the rationale for his favorite books, jeers at bad movies, and recounts the plots of several popular plays. His own family contains artists, including his sister (Phoebe writes detective stories under the name "Hazle Weatherfield"), although the most recognized artist in the family is his older brother, D.B. He explains that D.B. published a wonderful book of short stories called *The Secret Goldfish*, but now "he's out in Hollywood, D.B., being a prostitute" to movie producers (2). Holden differentiates his idea of true art versus fake art from the first few pages: true art, to Holden, includes portrayals of life that have a lasting and profound impact on the audience, while fake art encompasses commercialized or sentimental

representations solely for entertainment purposes. Holden explains that he prefers "a book that, when you're all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it" (18). In addition to the necessity of true art having an impact, he insists on the genuine nature of the true artist as well. Some of his favorite authors include Ring Lardner, Thomas Hardy, and Isak Dinesen, all of whom write with completely different styles; however, Holden only concerns himself with the truth of their individual writings. For example, he comments that he thought *Of Human Bondage* was a good book, but he would never call Maugham on the phone. Instead, he likes the character Eustacia Vye, one of Hardy's most maligned yet honest creations. Holden also prefers *The Great Gatsby* over *A Farewell to Arms*, since a character in the latter novel, a lieutenant, is a phony. Again, he judges the merit of a book based on the truth of its characters. Holden's opinions on films are much more difficult to discern. He insists on proving to the reader his animosity toward movies, yet his actions on several occasions hearken back to scenes in popular movies. After Maurice punches Holden in the stomach in his hotel room, Holden reacts with a tough-guy scene from a movie in his head: "I pictured myself coming out of the goddam bathroom, dressed and all, with my automatic in my pocket, and staggering around a little bit. […] Then I'd crawl back to my room and call up Jane and have her come over and bandage up my guts. I pictured her holding a cigarette for me to smoke while I was bleeding and all. The goddam movies. They can ruin you" (104). Although Holden remarks that he could never be with a woman who sat in the movies all day (reminiscent of the character of Elaine from Salinger's earlier work), he certainly appreciates the overwrought scenes of emotional revenge and death. He maintains a

love-hate relationship with the cinema in that movies allow him to experience danger vicariously while emphasizing the lack of excitement in his prep school existence. Holden refers to so many movies and plays that books could be written to explore their cinematic qualities and their significance to Holden's critical views. In general, these varied references show Holden's need to explore others' artistic representations of truth, proving to him that there are genuine aspects of existence apart from the general phoniness of adulthood. As an example of the artist's process of maturation, Holden's account in *The Catcher in the Rye* is the most comprehensive of Salinger's illustrations; importantly, he refrains from offering the reader his own conclusions: "That's all I'm going to tell about. I could probably tell you what I did after I went home, and how I got sick and all […], but I don't feel like it. I really don't. That stuff doesn't interest me too much right now" (213). Holden's artistic development offers the reader vicarious understanding of the predicament of the artist without telling the reader what to do with this newfound knowledge. The artist must show instead of teach, as illustrated in "Blue Period." This ending seems antithetical to later Salinger stories, which were criticized for telling too much and showing too little; perhaps this resistance to telling explains *Catcher*'s persistent popularity.

Although the protagonist of "Teddy" is younger than the other artists in this second group, he is much more intellectually and artistically aware than the child artists in the first group. In fact, the titular character's insights, especially his foresights, cause him to be the subject of many psychological studies. His family does not appear to be out of the ordinary. Teddy's mother and father constantly bicker with each other, and his younger sister is a bossy brat. Perhaps their normal relational states are what cause

Teddy to seem so unusual; the young boy does not seem to exhibit any extremes of behavior, and he comments that he does not understand the importance of emotions. He even denies having actual love for his parents: "'I have a very strong affinity for them. They're my parents, I mean, and we're all part of each other's harmony and everything'" (187). Teddy even dissociates himself with the emotions found in most poetry. He tells Nicholson, a man who sits next to him on the boat's deck on which he travels, that poets misplace their emotions into "things that have no emotions" (185); as a counterexample, he quotes two Japanese poems that are seemingly devoid of emotion. Although Teddy lacks the love factor that seems so important for artists in Salinger's other stories, he still wants to illuminate truth for others. Later, Teddy tells Nicholson that logic prevents people from actually knowing the truth: "what you have to do is vomit it [logic] up if you want to see things as they really are" (191). As noted by several critics, including James Bryan and Andrew Kaufman, Teddy seems influenced by the tenets of Zen Buddhist thought; he attempts to teach transcendence over death to both Nicholson and the groups of professors who study him (Kranidas 91). Therefore, Teddy's role as the artist is to illuminate the ultimate truth of life: death is not the end. Although Teddy seems very sure of himself during his interaction with Nicholson, Salinger's inclusion of Teddy's journal pages show a young artist still in the process of learning how to love. He notes to himself, "See if you can find daddy's army dog tags and wear them whenever possible. It won't kill you and he will like it" (180-181). In addition to being intellectually aware of art, Teddy must learn how to spiritually understand true human interaction through love. Although Teddy is a much different character than Holden, both young men must learn how to love others despite their awareness of phoniness.

The next group of stories portrays the jaded artist's journey back to truth. In several stories, the adults must look to the innocence of children in order to realize their misguided direction. "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut" appeared in the *New Yorker* in 1948. In 1949, a film version of "Uncle Wiggily," melodramatically entitled *My Foolish Heart*, appeared in theaters nationwide. Critics denounced the film for its formulaic tearjerker tendencies; since Salinger had no part in the film version, the screenplay retained none of the commendable qualities of the story, which succeeds in its shadowy reminiscences of the past and enigmatic characters. The purpose of *My Foolish Heart* is to relate a story with a tangible beginning and end: youthful love turns into mature heartache. The short story, however, reveals more of a process of becoming, in that both the child and the adult are on a search for truth and understanding. The adult must recognize herself in her child before she can truly experience resolution with the past. "Uncle Wiggily" focuses on a scene of reunion between two former college roommates, Eloise and Mary Jane, as they ruminate on their younger selves. As Eloise continues to pour drinks for the duo and the snow keeps falling outside, the conversation focuses on Eloise's relationship with a soldier named Walt who died in the war. Her remembrance of their interaction shows her younger self to be a completely different girl; the sarcasm in her speech disappears, and she recalls several incidents of their brief time together. When Mary Jane asks her questions about her family, however, Eloise evades answering by naming random movie stars. Eloise pokes fun at her daughter and her husband while talking to Mary Jane, and she never attempts to have a true conversation with Ramona in the living room nor with her husband on the phone. When her husband calls Eloise to get a ride home in the snow, she unconcernedly remarks, "'Well, that's tough, kid. Why

don't you boys form a platoon and march home?'" (35) She even relates some ambivalence toward motherhood to Mary Jane, explaining that "'There are no little boys in the neighborhood. No children at all. They call me Fertile Fanny" (27). She numbs herself with alcohol and sarcastic humor so that she can ignore the feelings involved with being in relationships with other people; however, Mary Jane's arrival triggers her memories of true laughter and youthful love with Walt. Although Eloise never concedes to change by the end of the story (and, after all, she is still noticeably drunk), she admits to a former self not disguised by insincere communication and sarcastic armor: another girl at college actually made her cry all night.

Eloise is the main character of "Uncle Wiggily," but her daughter Ramona is an intriguing ancillary creation. Ramona appears a bit strange looking; her glasses, with their "thick, counter-myopia lenses," obscure her true thoughts, and her mother says that she is "'lousy with secrets'" (25). Eloise establishes the importance of Ramona's imaginary friend, Jimmy Jimmereeno, when she explains to Mary Jane that Ramona even leaves space for him in her bed. Later, then, when Ramona calmly reveals Jimmy was run over in the street, her story points to a greater significance. Does Ramona intuit her mother's pain over her own lost love, and create tragedy of her own? If so, she reacts much differently to her newfound situation: she easily creates another friend, Mickey. Eloise initially reacts with anger to her daughter's effortless acceptance of tragedy by forcing Ramona to lie on top of Mickey's spot, thereby suffocating Ramona's new love. Her angry response triggers her realization of her own pain; Eloise attempts to suffocate her loved ones in penance for the loss of Walt. Ramona causes her mother to recognize her mistreatments. While Ramona cannot physically see without the help of her glasses,

she triggers her mother's recognition of her own shortcomings. Eloise cradles her daughter's glasses while crying "Poor Uncle Wiggily" repeatedly, recognizing that Ramona's glasses encompass impairment, not her daughter. Much like the wordplay with Seymour's name, Ramona's glasses signify the character's otherworldly sight; like Seymour, the young girl is also a seer who guides her mother to recognize the phony walls she has built around herself. Eloise attempts to find her way back from the jaded adult world she occupies within the story. Although the author does not definitively show Eloise's reconciliation with her former self, he portrays the artist's ability to return from the phony world she inhabits.

"For Esmé—With Love and Squalor" illustrates a soldier's recovery from the harmful experience of war through a connection with a young girl. Unlike Eloise's phony world created by her own stunted social interactions, the soldier's phony world was created for him by the inhumanity of war. Harking back to Salinger's earlier experience with war stories, "For Esmé—With Love and Squalor" demonstrates the effects of war on the artist-soldier type. The story appears to borrow themes from several previous efforts, especially "A Girl I Knew" and "Soft-Boiled Sergeant," both of which featured soldiers who attached importance to artistic endeavors separate from wartime and who retained humane attitudes in opposition to the cruel nature of war. However, "For Esmé" succeeds in ways the previous stories did not, due in part to keener observations, sharper dialogue, and the two-part structure of the story, which allows for effective narrative experimentation. Critics Gwynn and Blotner actually decree "For Esmé" the "high point of his [Salinger's] art, the moment at which particular narrative and general truth are identified most successfully with one another" (4). Granted, the

story does highlight several important themes of the author's works in one compact story: the inescapable horrors of war, the insights of youth, the necessity of love, and the importance of truthful art in a bleak world. These motifs weave throughout the story so that "For Esmé" functions as an artistic treatise on how to love and how to tell about this love.

As noted by Fidelian Burke, the pretense of the story is to perform as an epithalamium from the narrator, a former soldier in World War II, to Esmé, a young girl he met during his stint in England (341). This dedication to Esmé is not the narrator's first attempt at storytelling; in his recollection of meeting the girl, he reveals to her that he thinks of himself as a "professional short-story writer" (99). The narrator's descriptions of his time in England for a training course reiterate his literary proclivities. He informs the reader that his gas mask container served as a book satchel and that his only interactions with fellow soldiers were requests for extra ink. He even writes letters to his friend Clay's girlfriend when the narrator is disguised as Sergeant X in the second half of the story. His writing does not create open communication between the narrator and others; instead, his writing habits create walls between him and the other men. Even at the beginning of the story, the narrator notes the "uncomradely scratching of many fountain pens on many sheets of V-mail paper" (88). He has also "become addicted to reading bulletin boards" (89) in order to obtain information without having to talk to anyone else. John Wenke aptly explains that "nowhere else in Salinger's fiction does he more intensely present the paradox and dilemma of modern man: to speak is not to express; to employ forms of expression is often to evade the difficulties of significant communication" (252). The narrator establishes himself as a man apart from the rest of

the soldiers in his group, so his brief communication with Esmé and her brother Charles, two young people he did not even know, seems almost extraordinary. He easily talks to Esmé, who shares details of her family life with him, and he even receives a perfunctory kiss from Charles. Most importantly in their meeting, Esmé requests that he write a story for her involving squalor; the second half of the story, told in third person, is the narrator's promised squalid offering to Esmé as her wedding gift. Although the narrator's true revelation about love through Esmé's letter occurs in the second half of the story, she has already made inroads toward the narrator by asking him to create for her. As an artist, the narrator must be reminded of his true purpose in order to remain unconsumed by the desolations of war. He has been unchallenged in his other relationships with people during the war; he does not speak to his fellow soldiers, and the letters he received from home merely relate the bad service at a restaurant or ask for special yarn. In the second part of the story, when a fellow soldier remarks "Christ almighty," the narrative voice explains "it meant nothing; it was Army" (107). The narrator is fenced in by a world in which words do not actually mean anything. Therefore, Esmé motivating the narrator's creativity represents a loving gesture on her part, in that she wants to cause true communication between them through the form of a story. Esmé breaks down the phony walls between herself and the narrator by simply asking the artist to share. The narrator's gesture of love in return is the work itself, the squalid part of the story that causes Sergeant X to once again become a man with all his faculties intact. Instead of creating epistolary fakeries of his friend's relationship, the narrator relates the true events of his own struggles after returning from war.

As in "The Laughing Man," part of the purpose of "For Esmé" is to demonstrate how to tell a story. First, the narrator admits that a true war story is, by definition, a squalid story; the act of war itself is nasty and offensive, and the effects that war has on the characters involved is deplorable. However, the story does not remain stuck in that squalor. Esmé requests a story that is both "'squalid and moving'" (103), and her very role in the second part of the story is to move Sergeant X, both physically and mentally, beyond his entrapment in squalor. The storyteller knows that a good story must contain forward motion. The narrator introduces his own story section by explaining that "from here on in, for reasons I'm not at liberty to disclose, I've disguised myself so cunningly that even the cleverest reader will fail to recognize me" (103). Although the reader knows that the narrator is the character Sergeant X, the narrator attempts to create a third person account of the effects of the war in order to make his story seem more credible. This appears to be a good approach, especially when Sergeant X admits to feeling "his mind dislodge itself and teeter, like insecure luggage on an overhead rack" (104). An omniscient narrator can objectively relate this experience to cause a justifiably horrified reaction from the reader, whereas a first person speaker would merely sound, as he actually was, mentally unstable and therefore untrustworthy. In addition, the names he gives characters in this section, such as Sergeant X and Corporal Z, suggest brisk army lingo to give the account greater authority. Even more notable about this war story is its hopeful and satisfied ending for the war hero; after Sergeant X reads through the letter he receives from Esmé, "suddenly, almost ecstatically, he felt sleepy" (114). This conclusion did not occur through the efforts of army hospitals or military camaraderie. Instead, Salinger indicates that a true war story only achieves a happy ending through the

efforts of meaningful communication. Before Sergeant X read the letter from Esmé, his fellow soldier grows weary of Sergeant X's sarcasm: "'God damn it!' Clay said, his lips thinned. 'Can't you ever be sincere?'" (110). Sergeant X immediately vomits in his trash can. The sergeant recognizes the dangers of his cynicism, but he cannot work past his flaws until he reads Esmé's correspondence. The girl's honest words elucidate Sergeant X's path back to truth beyond the horrors of war. Again, as in "Uncle Wiggily," the innocent child can sometimes become the artist's inspiration.

"Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes," published in 1951 in *The New Yorker*, reveals the hollow relationships between three adults in the city: Joanie, Arthur, and Lee. Unlike the adults in the previous stories, these characters do not reach a point of redemption. The story reads like a carefully scripted scene of a movie; every action is meticulously described, down to the exactness of hand movement: "He reached for the phone with his right hand. To reach it without groping, he had to raise himself somewhat higher, which caused the back of his head to graze a corner of the lampshade" (115). This characteristic reinforces the empty soap opera-like quality of the actions that take place in the story: Arthur calls his friend Lee, looking for his wife, who turns out to be the woman currently in bed with Lee. "Pretty Mouth" also contrasts with the rest of the stories in the collection for the trio of irritating personalities. None of the characters seem sympathetic, and they continue to fabricate more lies throughout the course of the story. The only activity at which the characters excel is creating falsehoods. Therefore, "Pretty Mouth" presents the dark side of artistry. Since the characters are not likeable, Salinger is able to present a cautionary tale of those who misuse their art. While Lee is on the phone with his friend Arthur, he pretends to be concerned about his friend's

dilemma, telling him to relax and reassuring him that his wife is probably over at a friend's house. In reality, he lies (physically and metaphorically) in bed with her, moving around her in order to get another cigarette and glancing at her beside him. After he hangs up with Arthur the first time, Joanie applauds Lee's performance: "'You were wonderful. Absolutely marvellous'" (127). She praises him for his playacting abilities, and even seems like a star-struck movie fan in reaction to his performance: "'I'm *limp*. I'm absolutely *limp*. Look at me!'" (127). As evinced by her repeated praise, Joanie also seems to perform through her exaggerated remarks to Lee. About herself, Joanie keeps swearing, "'God, I feel like a dog!'" (127) Although Joanie has few speaking parts in the story, her lines sound overly emphatic, almost as if she must prove to herself and to Lee that she actually feels bad about her adultery. As for Arthur, his performance becomes pathetic when he calls Lee a second time to announce Joanie's falsified return. He creates an entire back story for her tardy arrival, and he begins to wax poetic about needing to find an escape from the city. Earlier in the story, Arthur offers an example of an honorable artistic creation in his poem to Joanie; he wrote about her green eyes, though he knew her eyes were blue. The point of the poem was an honest representation of the subject, not the actual color of her eyes. By the end of the story, however, Arthur negates this honest representation by faking Joanie's return and blaming their marital problems on the city. Their true problems result from their need to act out parts that they have falsely created for themselves. These jaded adults allow for a negative example of the artist against which to compare the other tales. Although "Uncle Wiggily" does not present a completely happy ending, Eloise reaches a point of realization. Except for Lee at the end of the story, none of the characters in the story even express discomfort with

their phony behavior. "Pretty Mouth" shows readers the dangers of ignoring their participation in phony interactions.

To come back to where the chapter started with the example of Sybil's experience of true art, "A Perfect Day" also shows the journey of the jaded adult with the character of Seymour Glass. Seymour's wife, Muriel, spends her honeymoon painting her nails and reading a book entitled "Sex is Fun—or Hell." When she speaks to her mother on the phone, she talks about a dress they saw in a department store and casually reassures her mother of her husband's mental health. Seymour's character starkly contrasts with the other adults in the story, including Muriel and Sybil's mother, who only chatter about clothes and social engagements. According to his mother-in-law, Seymour's views are indicative of mental instability; she commands her daughter, "'Call me the instant he *does*, or *says*, anything at all funny—you know what I mean'" (10). Seymour attempts to find his way back to artistic truth in his romp with Sybil on the beach, and he does successfully tell her the story about bananafish. However, Seymour's other tales in "Bananafish" do not seem as winning; he refuses to take off his robe due to an imaginary tattoo, and he illogically snaps at another hotel guest for staring at his feet. Still, Seymour's complexities are so well developed over the course of the short story that the reader is perplexed by his calm suicide: can he no longer endure the false nature of society as seen in his own wife, or is he so overwhelmed with the beauty of childhood that he cannot handle the struggles of adulthood? Warren French posits that as an artist, Seymour drops life altogether rather than learning to like the bad aspects of life or equating good aspects with the bad ("Salinger's Seymour: Another Autopsy" 563). Seymour's solution to the phony adult world is to leave it. As several critics have

pointed out, the Seymour Glass of "Bananafish" seems antithetical to later visages of Seymour. After Salinger destroys his favorite artist, he continues to write about Seymour as a means to understand how the artist can choose death over life; his next envisioning of Seymour, then, incorporates the religious concerns as the artist moves beyond development in the physical world to progression within the spiritual realm.

CHAPTER FOUR

Going from One Piece of Holy Ground to the Next: The Artist in *Franny and Zooey*, *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction*, and "Hapworth 16, 1924"

J. D. Salinger became famous for *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Nine Stories* in critical circles and on school reading lists; due to his subsequent *New Yorker* publications, he became infamous. He never again published a short story in the concise form for which he was critically praised and notably mimicked. Instead, he published lengthy works that focused solely on the members of one family. These Glass family chronicles were published in *The New Yorker* despite their nonconformity to normal magazine requirements; they were lengthy, sometimes confusing, and almost cliquish, but the reading public became fascinated with Salinger's growing Glass family cadre. Critics, however, were dubious about Salinger's authorial shift. John Updike admits that an object placed at the end of one of his stories "owes something to the Easter chick found in the bottom of the wastebasket at the end of 'Just Before the War with the Eskimos'" (qtd. in Greiner 116). In spite of this praise, Updike's relationship with Salinger's work is most notorious due to Updike's somewhat negative review of *Franny and Zooey* from 1961. The critical reception of the post-*Nine Stories* publications was quite mixed and even confused; the critics who hailed Salinger's short story form throughout *Nine Stories* and his *Catcher in the Rye* style had trouble understanding Salinger's direction in his Glass stories. After the publication of "Zooey" in *The New Yorker* in 1957, critic Maxwell Geismar states that "'Zooey' is an interminable, an appallingly bad story. […] Yet in terms of Salinger's career, and of the fashionable

school of writing which he represents, it is also a very illuminating story" (125). And so the sentiment goes with the criticism of "Franny," "Zooey," "Raise High the Roofbeam, Carpenters," and "Seymour: An Introduction"; these stories are stylistically atrocious to critics, yet the subject matter still mystifies and intrigues them. Warren French, one of the foremost Salinger critics, explores the ramifications of "Seymour: An Introduction," for several pages, and ultimately ends his critique by making the following comparison: "*The Catcher in the Rye* is serious art; 'Seymour: An Introduction' is self-indulgent kitsch" (*J. D. Salinger* 160). Salinger's last publication, "Hapworth 16, 1924," continues to be critically denounced and mostly overlooked as an aberrant entry in the Salinger oeuvre. Even Salinger deplores his last published story through his refusal to publish it in book form over the last half century.

Interestingly, French published *J. D. Salinger, Revisted* in 1988, in which he recants and rewords some of his earlier attacks on the later Salinger works. In his entry on "Seymour," French admits, "Even if 'Seymour' is not a convincing work, it is a fascinating exercise. What Salinger is attempting to do is basically religious rather than artistic—he is trying to share a dream, as prophets who have succeeded and the many who have failed have always tried to do" (108-109). French's assessment holds true for the other post-1953 works as well, although this chapter argues that Salinger is attempting to combine these religious and artistic efforts. In Salinger's last five publications, the author has progressed to a more religion-centered philosophy of the artist; specifically, he models the ultimate artist, Seymour Glass, as a religious guru with Zen Buddhist proclivities. Although Salinger portrays all of the Glass children as extremely intelligent and gifted individuals, Seymour instructs his siblings in the ways of

religious truth and ultimate love. Seymour, as the artist-seer, offers his family the tools with which to understand their artistic callings, even though they cannot fully comprehend his obscure advice and eccentric ways during his lifetime or after his suicide. Salinger's focus shifts from the dichotomy of the true artist and the phony as social and intellectual entities to the dichotomy of the true artist and the phony as spiritual entities. He wrestles with his responsibility as the author: how can an author truly represent a holy artist without desecrating his nature through the act of presenting him to the public? Therefore, in the last decade of his publishing career, Salinger experiments with style, narration, and religious symbolism in order to wholly write the artist. Through the process of writing, Salinger attempts to understand his role as the author; within his writings, he shows the Glass family in search of understanding their brother, the ultimate artist, and, in turn, understanding their own roles as artists. Buddy asks in "Seymour: An Introduction," "Isn't the true poet or painter a seer? Isn't he, actually, the only seer we have on earth?" (122) In this way, Seymour Glass has evolved from the strange seer of nonexistent objects in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" to the ultimate example of how one must view the world as a true artist. Although *Franny and Zooey* and *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction* were later collected together in book forms, the stories will be viewed as separate entities and analyzed chronologically, due to the progression of Salinger's style according to the order of his publications.

"Franny" neatly bridges Salinger's earlier stories with the later Glass chronicles due to the story's exacting third person narration combined with a growing concern for the role of spirituality for the true artist; although Salinger never actually denotes Franny's relationship to the Glass family in the text, her struggles later become indicative

of the Glass family's journey toward understanding. The story's close attention to details and carefully drawn characters stylistically resemble Salinger's other *New Yorker* pieces, and the motifs of faltering relationships and the struggle with truth versus pretension thematically echo Salinger's *Catcher* and *Nine Stories* publications. "Franny" portrays the formation of the artist through the protagonist's struggles with affected society, much like Holden's battles against the phony in *Catcher*. In addition, Salinger expands upon *Catcher*'s distinction between truth and phoniness, as well as genuine art and artificial art, to include a space for religious implications. Franny's resistance to ego and the fakeness of social interactions takes a different turn from previous stories as her solution to her frustrations relies upon the chanted murmurs of a prayer.

Alfred Kazin suggests that "what makes Salinger's stories particularly exciting is his intense, his almost compulsive need to fill in each inch of his canvas, each moment of his scene" (160). Salinger justifies this compulsion in "Franny," where his efforts to detail each minutiae of the interaction between Franny and her boyfriend succeed in portraying the confusion and disappointment of being unable to communicate honestly. Lane Coutell, Franny's boyfriend, openly seeks approval in social and academic realms; Franny, however, questions her participation in the theatre department at college and her role in an upper-middle-class, secular society. Even from the first moments of their reunion on the train platform where Franny meets Lane for the weekend, they express themselves in antithetical manners. Lane "tried to empty his face of all expression that might quite simply, perhaps even beautifully, reveal how he felt about the arriving person," whereas Franny "greeted him pleasurably—and she was not one for emptying her face of expression" (7). Although their affection for each other merely seems to be

acted out in different ways, the narrator later reveals that Franny touches him with "simulated affection" and squeezes his hands out of guilt (10). Later, after Franny passes out in the middle of a restaurant, Lane comments on how long it had been since they had sex: "'Too goddam long between drinks. To put it crassly.' He looked down at Franny more closely. 'You really feel better?'" (45) The couple does not seem to connect on a physical level, nor on mental and emotional levels. Franny is bored by Lane's academic prater, and Lane talks to his food while Franny explains a religious text to him. When Lane gets excited over his Flaubert paper, he thinks that his girlfriend "seemed to him to have been listening with extra-special intentness" until she asks him for an olive (13). Their time at the restaurant is riddled with miscommunication and misunderstanding due to their lack of true intimacy. Franny's letter to Lane at the beginning of the story indicates a youthful and happy courtship. She exclaims to Lane that "I just got your beautiful letter and I love you to pieces, distraction, etc., and can hardly wait for the weekend" (4). However, their love only holds true on paper; their face-to-face relationship is a work of painful imitation. Franny recognizes this fakeness as soon as they get into a cab on the way to the restaurant. Although she still pretends on their date, her awareness of their insincere relationship shows her greater perception of truth compared to Lane.

Lane's focus on superficiality also highlights Franny's growing attention to substantive concerns. Lane flaunts his date in a popular college restaurant due to Franny's beauty and fashionable clothes; after she expresses her dislike of English departments and anthologized poets, however, Lane becomes annoyed with her: "it was very clear that the sense of well-being he had felt, a half hour earlier, at being in the right

place with the right, or *right-looking*, girl was now totally gone" (20, emphasis added). Lane approves of Franny's intelligence and independence until she comes to conclusions that do not agree with his fashionable conceptions of literature and academia. He desperately wants to participate in the world of the highbrow critic. Lane goes on at length about a paper he wrote for class, using terms like "testicularity" and "*mot juste*" to justify the grade he received, a "goddam 'A' on it in letters about six feet high" (11-12). Franny, on the other hand, reveals her departure from the theatre department only after Lane pointedly asks her about her play. She explains that she "began to feel like such a nasty little egomaniac," in stark contrast to Lane's bragging about his professor's recommendation to publish his paper (28). He cannot fathom Franny's desire to depart from a circle that provides constant approval and chalks her problem up to a fear of competition. His drive to be popular within trendy circles spills over into every facet of his life. Even the food he orders, snails and frog legs, indicate his need to show off his sophistication; he almost seems embarrassed when Franny asks for a chicken sandwich and milk. Lane must also constantly check his emotions, making him seem forced and unnatural. He sees a classmate across the restaurant and makes himself "smoke and look bored, preferably attractively bored" (21). Whereas Franny questions her involvement in a world where "'people in a certain social or financial bracket can name-drop as much as they like just as long as they say something terribly disparaging about the person'" (25), Lane desires prominence in this realm.

In addition to Franny's resistance to empty social concerns, she also protests collegiate standards for good poetry as well as their standards for literary criticism. After Lane's speech on his Flaubert paper, Franny details his resemblance to a "section man," a

person who "ruins" authors and literature for readers by pointing out flaws. Her view of the poets in her English department is no more favorable, as she indicates that their position is based solely upon their amounts of publication. Instead, Franny explains that a real poet simply does "'something beautiful'" (19). She cannot thoroughly explicate her views on the poet and poetry, but she resists popular opinions on poetry and investigates for herself. When Lane accuses her of liking one of her school's poets, Franny retorts, "'I'm sick of just liking people. I wish to God I could meet somebody I could respect'" (20). She yearns for a deeper connection to an artist. The only time she seems confident in her speech is when she tells Lane about a book she has been reading, *The Way of a Pilgrim*; Lane promptly ruins her religious ponderings with another department of popular academia, psychology. He calmly advises, "'All that stuff…I don't think you leave any margin for the most elementary psy*chol*ogy. I mean I think all those religious experiences have a very obvious psychological background—you know what I mean'" (40). Lane implies Franny's foolish simplicity with his instruction on "elementary psychology" and "obvious" psychological connections. However, Franny still comforts herself at the end of the story by silently moving her lips, probably going through the motions of the Jesus prayer modeled in her book.

As a story that presents the shallow nature of societal interactions and one character's exasperation with this superficiality, "Franny" is refreshing in that it refrains from being entirely negative. Franny explains that after a person repeats the Jesus Prayer constantly, the person's heart synchronizes with the prayer so that she, in effect, prays without ceasing, "'which has a really tremendous, mystical effect on your whole outlook. I mean that's the whole *point* of it, more or less. I mean you do it to purify your whole

outlook and get an absolutely new conception of what everything's about'" (37). Franny yearns for a new conception of her society and herself, and the Jesus Prayer offers her this respite. She does not reserve this ability to obtain a new outlook to Christians; in addition to a Western conception of prayer, Franny mentions similar repetitive meditations in Hinduism and Buddhism through which to gain access to God. She even offers this prayer to unbelievers: "'But the thing is, the marvellous thing is, when you first start doing it, you don't even have to have *faith* in what you're doing'" (37). Franny's own conception of God is precarious, but she reaches out for a refreshed view of life, perhaps even for the truth that she cannot find in her collegiate existence, through the potential of prayer. Robert Lee Stuart suggests that "Franny" illustrates the necessity of the writer-in-waiting, who is "a more productive member of the human family than the glib and slick word-vendor who tosses off affirmations so easily that they become mockeries of themselves" (648). Salinger offers the reader an example of an artist who waits and who questions; the artist does not have to be overly confident in themselves or their role. Instead, the artist should be discerning against phony representations of art while being open to otherworldly guidance.

Salinger steps back from his overt religious ponderings in "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters," published in the *New Yorker* later in the same year as "Franny." The tone of "Raise High the Roof Beam" shifts from the serious revelations between Franny and Lane to the comic chain of events of Seymour Glass's wedding day as related by his brother Buddy. The story is notable in the Salinger canon due to Buddy's initiation as narrator, as Buddy will eventually become Salinger's sole mouthpiece. The style of "Raise High" resembles "Franny" and other earlier stories in its keen observations and

representations of wedding guests and its chronological rendering of a single event. In addition to the story's more lighthearted recollections, the storyline also seems to be more straightforward than "Franny." By Buddy's own admission, his report of the wedding day is "a self-contained account, with a beginning and an end" (6); however, Buddy's experience of Seymour through the eyes of the wedding guests as well as through Seymour's diary left in their apartment gives a higher purpose to the story than mere epithalamic remembrances. Buddy arrives at a new understanding of his brother, the absent artist. The narrator begins his story with a Taoist tale Seymour read to his younger sister, Franny. In the story, Po Lo recommends his friend, Chiu-fang Kao, as a "superlative" horse discerner to Duke Mu, but Duke Mu gets upset when Kao describes the horse he chose for Duke Mu as completely different than how it actually appeared when the horse arrived. Po Lo excitedly explains that Kao now has the ability to view objects spiritually, contrary to exterior appearances. This ability causes the man to be the supreme judge of beauty, or the ultimate artist: "In making sure of the essential, he forgets the homely details; intent on the inward qualities, he loses sight of the external. He sees what he wants to see, and not what he does not want to see. He looks at the things he ought to look at, and neglects those that need not be looked at" (5). Throughout the events in the narrative, Buddy discovers that Seymour, too, follows this path in his view of life. Buddy illustrates that Seymour's wedding day is the perfect example of his brother's comprehension of the essentials, from Seymour's seemingly odd choice of wife to his happy abandonment of the wedding ceremony. In the same way that Buddy defends Seymour against the judgments of the wedding guests, he also presents "Raise

High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" as a defense of Seymour, who is this supreme judge of beauty, the true artist.

Buddy attends Seymour's wedding due to a letter he receives from his sister Boo Boo; she urges him to attend in their family's stead, and she describes the bride to Buddy with some reservation: "She's a zero in my opinion but terrific-looking" (9). Buddy never meets the bride, Muriel, over the course of the wedding day, but he does watch her leave the church in anguish after Seymour fails to arrive. He describes the scene like a moment in a soap opera, with the distraught bride being led back down the aisle in the arms of her parents to a dark car. Buddy calls the event "a tabloid moment" with the bright sun shining so that "the image of the bride, as she made her almost invalided way down the stone steps, tended to blur where blurring mattered most" (15). Both Buddy's and Boo Boo's description of the bride negate her personhood and focus on external appearances; they cause Muriel's relationship with their brother to seem absurd and superficial. A large part of Buddy's narrative is spent in a car with other wedding guests, along with the matron of honor, who are outraged about Seymour's absence. Much like Buddy's judgment of the bride, the matron of honor makes several hasty generalizations about the groom, whom she has never met. She agrees with Muriel's mother's opinion that Seymour is "a latent homosexual" with a "schizoid personality" (42-43). She rails against his widely discussed intelligence while attempting to psychoanalyze his motives for avoiding the marriage. In the same way that Buddy and his sister inaccurately represent Muriel as a superficial beauty, the matron of honor distorts Seymour's personhood by only focusing on his IQ. Buddy has no qualms about setting the wedding guests straight about his brother. He rants that Seymour is "a poet, for God's sake. And I

mean a *poet*. If he never wrote a line of poetry, he could still flash what he had at you with the back of his ear if he wanted to" (69). However, he does not recognize his own shortcomings in his perception of Muriel. Seymour's diary allows Buddy to see her, as well as the other wedding guests, apart from their "homely details."

Buddy comes across his brother's diary after leading the wedding guests from their car, which was stuck in a parade, to his shared apartment with Seymour to escape the heat. He sees the diary on top of Seymour's open suitcase, and he takes the volume into the bathroom to peruse and then hide from his guests. Rather than relating the entries in his own voice, Buddy includes the exact entries as Seymour wrote them, in order to allow the reader to see through his brother's eyes as well. All of the diary entries describe Muriel and Seymour's delight over her entire person, and he also happily details their many differences. Seymour enjoys the mundane parts of their relationship; he elatedly watches her reactions to a movie, he cries over a dessert that she makes, and he adores her honesty when she sounds relieved not to see him. However, Seymour clearly shows that his affections for Muriel are not exactly reciprocated, which offers an interesting insight to Muriel's character. Whereas she loved a kitten in a movie they watch, Seymour recognizes that she "worries over the way her love for me comes and goes, appears and disappears. She doubts its reality simply because it isn't as steadily pleasurable as a kitten" (78). His comment could sound disparaging, but Seymour loves her for this uncertainty as a symbol of her humanity. In another entry, Seymour recognizes her true feelings for him: "But on the whole I don't make her really happy. Oh, God, help me. My one terrible consolation is that my beloved has an undying, basically undeviating love for the institution of marriage itself. She has a primal urge to

play house permanently" (83). Again, he does not criticize her for these differences in affection; instead, he is moved by her essential qualities: her simplicity, her honesty, and her undiscriminating heart.

Seymour's words have an immediate effect on Buddy, as he "slams" the diary shut and "with an almost vicious wrist movement" threw the diary into the bottom of the laundry hamper (88-89). In a way, Seymour also affects Buddy's interaction with the wedding guests. Whereas he had been previously reticent about his knowledge of Seymour's past, Buddy's frustration with Seymour's views in the diary leads him to drink scotch and share a personal story with the group. Rather than remaining an outsider, he puts aside his external views of their shallow conversation to participate in communication. Eberhard Alsen notes that the story focuses on the disparity between intellectual and anti-intellectual Americans, with Buddy and Seymour occupying the former group and Muriel and the wedding guests the latter. He also contends that Seymour "has decided to marry Muriel Fedder because he knows that he needs to be strengthened just as much by her simple and natural approach to life as she needs to be elevated by his intellectual and spiritual values" (Alsen 47). Seymour, however, intends for their marriage to focus on service over strengthening and elevating, which indicates a need for change: "elevate, help, teach, strengthen each other, but above all, *serve*. […] How wonderful, how sane, how beautifully difficult, and therefore true" (106). Service to another person is an example of true human interaction, and therefore, a work of art. Seymour's language is almost Biblical, in its call to "serve one another." For Buddy, his service is making the wedding guests drinks and sharing his childhood. Not only does he come to a new understanding of his brother's decision to marry Muriel, but he is also

inspired to act in a manner based on essentials and not exteriors. Though Buddy can perceive beauty in the written word and "a smile that was at once worldly, wan, and enigmatic" (40), he looks to Seymour to learn spiritual discernment. Buddy is an artist, no doubt, but Seymour is an artist-seer, one who knows true beauty beyond mere intellectual appreciation. Buddy notes that the wedding "was a day, God knows, not only of rampant signs and symbols but of wildly extensive communication via the written word" (74). The narrator is right. "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" cannot be read simply as an entertaining account of a wedding day gone crazy. In this story, Salinger refrains from lengthy asides and exhortations so that the narrative style belies its mystical concerns of art and spirituality. Salinger more obviously shows his contention that the true artist should engage in meaningful human interaction; although the reader notices Seymour's extreme differences from his wife, the artist-seer's ultimate desire is to experience complete unity with her. "Raise High" uses the occasion of marriage, which is at once both a physical and a spiritual union, to illustrate the necessity of true shared experience with one another.

"Zooey," Salinger's follow-up to "Franny" published in *The New Yorker* in 1957, picks up where the previous story leaves off. In "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters," Salinger establishes Seymour Glass as the ultimate artist-seer; in his next publication, "Zooey," he presents two of the Glass siblings processing this anxiety of artistic influence from their brother. Reviewers immediately responded with confusion over Salinger's shift in narrative style, the unusual length for a short story (it took over 100 pages of the magazine), and a barrage of literary and philosophical references. Salinger, in the guise of Buddy Glass, slyly anticipates all of these criticisms and admits

that "people are already shaking their heads over me" (48). Warren French claims the style, which is much more heavy-handed with extended commentary, changed due to Salinger's concern for his audience: "Authors often become depressed or exasperated when readers miss subtle points, just as Lane misses the significance of Franny's increasing excitement. The author may then begin to worry about making his meaning so clear that it cannot be missed or mistaken, and his art begins to suffer" (*J. D. Salinger* 143). French views the quality of the author's work from "Franny" on as degenerating efforts; however, other critics praise Salinger's ability to create a word portrait of the Glass family apartment and his portrayal of the Zen process of enlightenment. Bernice and Sanford Goldstein's article on Salinger's use of Zen, the first in-depth analysis of the author's religious conceptions, assert that "the highly endowed, overburdened, critically conscious Glass children are representative of our time in history" ("Zen and Salinger" 324). Perhaps most importantly, "Zooey" shows a brother reaching out to his sister in her time of philosophical uncertainty. Zooey offers wisdom to Franny that he was offered in a letter from Buddy, who, in turn, has learned these concepts from Seymour; the Glass family of artists work together in order to support one another's art as well as their spiritual development. Maxwell Geismar argues that in the Glass family, "it is difficult to distinguish between the doctors and the patients, as these self-appointed spiritual saviors play out their dubious roles" (127). However, each member of the family is in need of healing in the absence of their oldest brother. Rather than a self-important invitation to fix one another, Buddy, Franny, and Zooey focus on their love for each other and for their dead brother in their efforts to serve one another, as Seymour advises in "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters." Ultimately, "Zooey" shows the Glass family coming to

terms with the absence of Seymour, their beloved brother, sublime artist-seer, and spiritual teacher, and learning how to follow his example in their own artistic endeavors.

Although Buddy is bodily absent from "Zooey," he still claims an important role within the story as the narrator and creator of the form, which, as Buddy relates, "isn't really a short story at all but a sort of prose home movie" (47). Buddy is not only the teller of the story, but as a movie, he is also the director; he creates the images and then manipulates them according to his purposes. Fittingly, his two main characters, Franny and Zooey, are gifted actors. Buddy claims that the plot is a "collaborative effort" between Zooey, Franny, and their mother, but the narrator controls the angles of the shots so that he can highlight the aspects of the action he wants the audience to see. Buddy reports that Zooey "feels the plot hinges on mysticism, or religious mystification," so Buddy explains that the movie is "a compound, or multiple, love story, pure and complicated" (48-49). In defining the genre of the story for the reader, he already controls how the story will be read. Buddy also emphasizes his importance within the Glass family by showing his mother worrying about him to Zooey, by including his letter to Zooey, and by Zooey posing as Buddy in order to get Franny to listen to him. His letter that Zooey reads in the bathtub near the beginning of the story serves as an introduction to the theme: at the end, Buddy instructs his brother to "*act*, Zachary Martin Glass, when and where you want to, since you feel you must, but do it with all your might" (69). Although Zooey does not mention the letter to Franny, Buddy's inclusion of his letter creates a pattern in the story of sibling guidance and initiates the theme of truly fulfilling one's call as an artist.

Buddy's role as the director of the prose home movie also provides the reader with detailed descriptions of the Glass family's home, including the varied contents of the bathroom medicine cabinet and the living room brimming with family memorabilia. The precise lists of items cluttering the living room create a cinematic pan of the family's home as well as imply the family's close attachment to the past, especially the younger years of all the children. Franny finds sanctuary in the living room upon her return from college directly under a collection of Glass family scrapbooks. Buddy reiterates this nostalgia by following Zooey as he enters Buddy and Seymour's old bedroom; their books remain in stacks where they placed them as young men, a phone, with its private line, is still on the desk, and a stacks of shirt cardboards with diary entries on them stay hidden in the desk drawer. However, "other, more emphatic signs of adulthood […] had been removed from the room" (181). Buddy shows the dangers of holding on too tightly to the past. Rather than trying to relive moments with Seymour, which Buddy constantly mentions in his letter to Zooey, the storyline suggests that the family should learn from their brother's advice in order to fully experience their gifts as artists. Buddy acknowledges that Zooey was "the only one who was bitter about S.'s suicide and the only one who really forgave him for it" (68); therefore, while Zooey instructs Franny in using Seymour's teachings in order to fulfill her calling as an artist and move forward, Buddy experiences their process of acceptance through his retelling, possibly allowing him to accept Seymour's absence in the same manner as through his narration in "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters."

As actors, Franny and Zooey have a much different journey than Buddy to learn how to exhibit truth in their artistry. As Franny points out, ego runs rampant in the

theatre department due to the inevitability of being in the spotlight and performing for others. Zooey admits that the acting profession is "loaded with mercenaries and butchers" (197-198). Still, he encourages Franny to realize her desires to act because, according to Zooey, it is the only religious thing she can do. He proves to her that she cannot truly be detached enough to be a seer like Seymour; by repeating the Jesus Prayer, Franny wants to be able to transform herself rather than waiting for the prayer to transform her. Her attempt at spiritual enlightenment is therefore false. Franny must use the gift she already possesses as an actress in order to be true. Zooey pushes her to "shoot for some kind of perfection" in her acting as well (199). In order to truly fulfill her role as an artist, she must be ambitious in her acting and offer only her best, her true self, to the audience. Zooey's Fat Lady story illustrates his point very aptly. He reminds Franny of a time when he refused to shine his shoes for a performance on "It's A Wise Child," a radio show that the Glass children participated in, because the studio audience was full of morons. Seymour, however, tells him to shine them for the Fat Lady. Zooey exhorts Franny to act for the Fat Lady, since she is actually "Christ Himself" (202). Zooey brings Franny to terms with her role as an artist through Seymour's advice; just as he urges truthfully serving in his diary entry in "Raise High," Seymour tells Zooey, and by extension, Franny, to illuminate truth for their audience by acting with all their might. James Bryan notes that "Franny has been seeking salvation in the most mystical terms and in world negation. Zooey thinks this is futile" (229). Zooey alleviates Franny's uncertainty and heartache over the absence of Seymour by offering her a tangible solution through acting in honor of Seymour's Fat Lady, and, in turn, Seymour himself.

Upon her moment of epiphany, wherein her art and desire for spirituality combine, Franny can now peacefully rest.

Zooey's revelations in the story occur much like Buddy's, in that he admits the purpose of his art and his true calling in life through instructing Franny. Throughout the first part of the story, Zooey seems sarcastic and irritated. He reads through a script in the bathtub entitled "The Heart is an Autumn Wanderer," and he knows the dialogue is silly and poorly written. He speaks with disenchantment to Franny about the scripts he has been given; he mocks popular television productions: """It's down-to-earth, it's simple, it's untrue, and it's familiar enough and trivial enough to be understood and loved by our greedy, nervous, illiterate sponsors""" (135). He also tells Franny about his impulse to ruin others' opinions of themselves and their performances. Zooey has a habit of tearing down. Therefore, Franny's breakdown is a significant moment for Zooey because he works to encourage Franny's involvement in acting. In lieu of Buddy or Seymour, Zooey stands in as the inspirer. Notably, Zooey must confront Seymour's absence in order to have a constructive conversation with Franny; he goes into his room, peruses selections from Seymour's quote wall, and even reads one of Seymour's diary entries, much like Buddy's experience of Seymour in "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters." From Seymour's room, Zooey can conjure Seymour's spirit and advice to share with Franny. In the process of affirming Franny's artistry and ability, he also reminds himself of his own goals as an artist as one who inspires truth instead of one who denigrates others. "Zooey" portrays Franny in the process of understanding her role as an artist and Buddy and Zooey coming to a greater comprehension of their roles through the words that Seymour has left behind.

Salinger's dedication of *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction* asks "if there is an amateur reader still left in the world—or anybody who just reads and runs—I ask him or her, with untellable affection and gratitude, to split the dedication of this book four ways with my wife and children." Though some amateur readers may be able to make their way through the first story in the book, even seasoned readers may get trapped within the artistic ponderings of Buddy Glass in the second story, "Seymour: An Introduction." "Seymour" was originally published in *The New Yorker* in 1959, and the story received even more critical harangue than "Zooey." The story seems formless, didactic, and intentionally obscure; however, upon closer inspection—not accomplished by the amateur reader—"Seymour" is filled with intriguing philosophies of the artist, self-referential conundrums, and affecting vignettes about Seymour, the man. Warren French explains that the Buddy Glass narratives "are highly experimental because they are not so much representational as presentational, […] to give communicable form to a vision" (*J. D. Salinger, Revisted* 103-104). Though the style is sometimes too verbose and tiresomely witty (Seymour calls cleverness Buddy's wooden leg in "Zooey"), "Seymour: An Introduction" provides a theoretical framework for viewing the other Glass family stories as artistic entities. Within the story, Salinger elaborates on Seymour's duty as the artist-seer, the function of the author, and the relationship of the critic to the artist and his works. Buddy ostensibly attempts to catalog the person of Seymour Glass, but he ends up commenting on the artistic process as well as the religious implications of creating art through his remembrances of his brother.

Buddy begins his narrative with two self-referential quotes on the difficulty of expressing oneself wholly and accurately. The first quote, by Kafka, describes the

frustrations of writing from the heart combined with the inability to skillfully render those thoughts. Kierkegaard's quote that follows ponders the possibility of fated errors in the writing process. Arthur Schwartz dismisses the quotes as "solo defensive attempts by Salinger in anticipation of critical comment on the inadequacy of his art" (93). Salinger, via the voice of Buddy, does seem rather self conscious in "Seymour," but these quotes also serve to acquaint the reader with the artistic process Buddy struggles with over the course of the story. His struggle to accurately represent Seymour is a major theme of the story; in Kafka's words, "The actors by their very presence always convince me, to my horror, that most of what I've written about them until now is false. It is false because I write about them with steadfast love" (111). Buddy opens his narrative with a search for the truth in his work. He writes about Seymour and the rest of the Glass family with this steadfast love, so he questions the truth of his efforts; in addition, Salinger, who has been criticized for his absurd love for the Glass family, ponders the verity of his stories. The Kierkegaard quote, which could be viewed as providing a rationalization for authorial error (he illustrates an error gaining consciousness and the power to disregard the author's corrections), also posits more insight than an excuse: Buddy admits that errors are an essential part of the writing process. He also points out his departure from the short story form, lest the reader become frustrated with his digressive recollections of his brother: "I want to introduce, I want to describe, I want to distribute mementos, amulets, I want to break out my wallet and pass around snapshots, I want to follow my nose. In this mood, I don't dare go anywhere near the short-story form" (125). In addition to his admission of incomplete truths and errors, he concedes that his narrative is overwhelmingly personal and therefore difficult for the reader to wholly appreciate. He

explains his distaste for the normal divisions of beginning, middle, and end, and he even admits his "perpetual lust to share top billing with him [Seymour]" (248). His recognition of flaws allows Seymour to stand out even more brilliantly within Buddy's introduction.

The inaugural quotes from Kafka and Kierkegaard also lead Buddy to the main subject of his story. He points out that the sentiments in both selections are "cries com[ing] straight from the eyes" (122); he classifies the authors of the quotes as "artist-seers" along with Seymour, whose eyes take the most abuse as they perceive the human experience much more acutely than others. Buddy defines the artist-seer, and his brother, as "the heavenly fool who can and does produce beauty, is mainly dazzled to death by his own scruples, the blinding shapes and colors of his own sacred human consciousness" (123). In his next to last publication, Salinger finally offers the reader a semblance of a reason for Seymour's suicide: he was overwhelmed with the entire human experience. This cause of death is baffling to the reader, so Buddy elaborates on his reasoning with the designation of Seymour as "a *mukta*, a ringding enlightened man, a God-knower" (124). Buddy seems to insinuate that the ways of God are not known to man, so Seymour's suicide cannot be properly explained to anyone who is not similarly enlightened. The reader, like Buddy, remains on an earthly plane, destined to never fully understand the true artist-seer. Instead, the reader can only begin to deduce Seymour through Buddy's categorized illustrations, first through a description of what Seymour did and then how Seymour looked. Like exorcising a ghost, Buddy attempts to call forth a visual shape of Seymour in order to "get him off his chest" (188).

According to Buddy, the most important aspect of Seymour's tangible accomplishments is his poetry. He describes Seymour's poetry as belonging in the company of Chinese and Japanese verses, which, according to Buddy, "are intelligible utterances that please or enlighten or enlarge the invited eavesdropper to within an inch of his life" (138). Seymour's distinction as a poet in the manner of Chinese and Japanese poets is important to his synthesis of religion and art; these poets write of simple subjects that choose the poet rather than the poet choosing the subject. This caveat of Asian poetry makes the poet seem divine, which is precisely how Buddy describes Seymour. In addition to the prevalence of Eastern religious thought, Buddy mentions how their Semitic heritage also influences the specific images in his poems, especially the symbolism of hands. The form of Seymour's poems is usually in the structure of a haiku, with one Seymour specialty of a double haiku; the poems are "as unsonorous, as quiet, as he [Seymour] believed a poem should be, but there are intermittent short blasts of euphony" (149). Though Buddy admits several times to being "too garrulous" (156), he holds Seymour's terse simplicity as the standard of good poetry. Again, Buddy emphasizes Seymour's high art through the inconsistencies of his own writing, creating a convoluted environment in order to allow Seymour to shine. Buddy's estimation of Seymour's talents is almost sycophantic. He believes that within American poetry, "we have had only three or four very nearly non-expendable poets, and I think Seymour will eventually stand with those few" (157). Buddy posits Seymour's talent as nearly unparalleled and enduring.

In order to actualize Seymour as being even bigger than his poetry, Buddy also describes Seymour's physical attributes and sports acumen. Even these straightforward

categories are colored with Seymour's artist-seer predilection. When Buddy visualizes his brother, he sees images of him at several different ages; he ponders using "some sort of literary Cubism to present his face" (199), which makes Seymour appear more expansive than a straightforward portrait would allow. Therefore, when Buddy begins with Seymour's hair, he describes it in action, jumping across a barbershop. Even the individual parts of Seymour's countenance have existences of their own. Seymour's "every expression was ingenuous," his ears were reminiscent of the Tang dynasty, his eyes had "something like a here-again, gone-again, super-gossamer cast," and Seymour's nose was "definitely not [a] romantic Cyrano protuberance" (202-207). Although Buddy attempts to create a physical description of Seymour, each detail concludes enigmatically. Just as Seymour cannot be justifiably explained to the reader in "Seymour: An Introduction," his physical appearance defies portrayal as well. Buddy admits that Seymour is "the one person who was always much, much too large to fit on ordinary typewriter paper" (176), so the narrator's attempt to introduce Seymour to his reader is a spiritually grueling effort. In this way, Buddy also strives for a metaphysical bent in his art. Buddy ends the story by recounting some of Seymour's athletic endeavors, which, of course, lend their talent to Zen practices, especially Seymour's marbles expertise; as a boy, Seymour advises Buddy how to play marbles by asking, "'Can you try not aiming so much?'" (236) Every facet of Seymour's existence is bound to his identity as the artist-seer, and every facet of Buddy's existence is bound to his need to fully understand Seymour.

Though Buddy claims to have a notebook with one hundred and fifty of Seymour's poems in it, he hesitates to publish them due to his misgivings about critics as

well as the critical reader. He muses on the public reception of the poems, bitterly expecting that "they'll be tersely introduced to the poetry-loving public by one of the little band of regulars, moderate-salaried pedants, and income-supplementers who can be trusted to review new books of poetry not necessarily either wisely or passionately but tersely" (134). This is only the beginning of Buddy's scathing representation of professional critics. Due to his post as a college English teacher and a publishing writer, he understands the power the critic wields over public opinion. He knows his own faults as a writer due to the critics: "critics tell us *everything*, and the worst first" (196); however, he does not think the typical critic is enlightened enough to truly comprehend the greatness of Seymour's poetry nor his own writing. Buddy does believe that good criticism exists, but it can only be voiced through one who understands good art, or namely, the true artist. Obviously, the best critic in Buddy's eyes would be Seymour, so he includes a few of Seymour's critiques of Buddy's writing. Seymour advises Buddy to remove distorted details, to like his characters, and to make peace with his cleverness. Interestingly, Seymour also tells Buddy to include some semblance of imperfection in his writing: "I know what the dangers of getting into sentimentality must have been. You got through it fine. Maybe too fine. I wonder if I don't wish you'd slipped up a little" (180). Instead of making judgments on the content and the form, Seymour emphasizes the transcendence of the writing process and the truth of the writing as the most important characteristics. Seymour writes to his brother, "I think I'd give almost anything on earth to see you writing a something, an anything, a story, a poem, a tree, that was really and truly after your own heart" (187). Salinger shows the reader that the ultimate duty of art falls to the artist himself, and the critic must serve to remind the artist of his calling.

In addition to Buddy's problems with the critic, he also has issues with the critical reader. He knows that he must "keep a steady and sober regard for the amenities of such a relationship" between the reader and the author (112), but as in "Raise High the Roof Beams," Buddy has problems relating to the world outside of his family. Though he affirms that he has written two stories about Seymour (a strange usurping of Salinger's authority), he does not enjoy talking about the stories with the critical reader. However, through the process of writing Seymour's story, he realizes that he actually knew Seymour more intimately than anyone else. As a teacher, he must present the ultimate artist-seer to his reading public, so he decides to welcome "the callow and the enthusiastic, the academic, the curious, the long and the short and the all-knowing!" (167) Seymour's presence through Buddy's recorded memories inspires him to realize that he "can't finish writing a description of Seymour […] without being conscious of the good, the real" (247-248). He comes to an acceptance of this critical reader, knowing that he must teach his class of writing students; just as Seymour instructs Buddy, Buddy must also pass on his understanding of truth in art to his listening students. As long as the artist is aware of his responsibility to illuminate truth, his location in the classroom or in the compilations of good literature is irrelevant. Buddy relates that "Seymour once said that all we do our whole lives is go from one little piece of Holy Ground to the next. Is he *never* wrong?" (248) The artist's life is one of holy performance, so just as Zooey tells Franny to act for God, Buddy understands that in order to truly be an artist, he must allow this holy ground to affect his relationships with others. Buddy discovers in the process of writing "Seymour: An Introduction" that the artist cannot exist in solitude. According to Eberhard Alsen, "the meaning of the Seymour novel, therefore, does not lie

only in Seymour's life and death but, more importantly, in his posthumous influence on his siblings" (115). Now that Buddy understands Seymour's call to serve others in truth, Buddy must venture forth from his house in the woods to share his art with his students, who are potential artists just like his siblings.

Although the form of "Hapworth 16, 1924" seems to resemble "Seymour" in its structure-less organization and exhaustive length, the story performs in stark contrast to his previous efforts. "Hapworth" takes the form of a letter from the seven year old Seymour Glass while he and Buddy stay at a summer camp, and the story filled the entirety of the June 19, 1965 issue of *The New Yorker*. The prose is didactic and ornate, and the lists of authors and books requested by the young Seymour from the library are almost annoying. "Hapworth" purports to be a story of the artist as a very young man, but whatever affection the reader may have had for Seymour in previous publications is quashed by Seymour's pervasive, knowing judgments on everyone from his cabin mates to famous authors. The story includes three major divisions, including a description of the events and people at camp, various advices to the Glass family at home, and a list of the books Seymour wants to receive along with an explanation for the list. Although Seymour seemingly understands the hidden secrets and pains of fellow campers and camp employees, he lists their troubles with a matter of fact tone that sounds unfeeling. The brothers avoid participating in camp activities, and they finagled their way into being in the same cabin so that they would have each other with which to converse. They are actively disliked and shunned by other campers; Seymour even disregards Mrs. Happy, whom Seymour views rather sensually for a seven-year-old, with the remark, "One is obliged to take everything she says with innumerable grains of salt" (37). About another

camper, Seymour predicts that he will become an alcoholic because "he is too kind and impatient a boy to use his entire mind for anything" (55). Though the reader gets a glimpse at Seymour's artist-seer powers at a young age, his predictions and interpretations of people's intentions are almost offensive. He seems to disregard feelings in his attempt to be forthright in his letter. In contrast to the Seymour revealed in the diary entries in "Raise High," the young Seymour lacks the celebratory language of reveling in imperfection. Instead, he notes others' shortcomings with a scientific eye, more like Teddy's observations in his journal. Like "Teddy," "Hapworth" shows a young man with extraordinary potential who is all mind and no soul. Salinger indicates that this spiritual awareness develops with age, but Seymour does make several references to the nature of God.

In his section to his familial advice, Salinger once again shows Seymour's role as the guru within his family. He beseeches Boo Boo to practice her reading and writing at the age of four, and he commands Walt and Waker to continue their tap dancing and juggling endeavors. At this point, Salinger reveals perhaps a bit too much of his affection for the Glass family; their random skills make the family sound like a silly caricature. However, Seymour's book list steals the attention back from the family. The list continues page after page, asking for volumes from John Bunyan to Chinese Materia Medica. Amid the different requests, Seymour wanders off at random to discuss different important points found in the books; he creates lists about the flaws of certain authors within his list. The book musings continue until the letter's end, upon which Seymour includes a postscript that covers two more pages. Bernice and Sanford Goldstein believe that through the style of "Hapworth," "Salinger is moving from an actual presentation of

a problem to an experimental attempt to come to grips with the specifics of a solution (namely, enlightenment)" ("Ego and 'Hapworth'" 167). This explanation does seem plausible. Although the story is rambling and difficult to follow to the very end (just as Seymour encourages his father, the reader must keep a stiff upper lip to finish the piece), "Hapworth" indicates the inception of the ultimate artist-seer; apparently, he must also work at his progression into a proponent of truth and a servant to others. Salinger illustrates that the young Seymour is too preoccupied with his own development to experience true interactions with those around him. Since most readers have difficulty connecting to the experiences of the young boy in the story, "Hapworth" illustrates the failure of art to connect man to man. Seymour, the artist, must learn to consider those outside his family or his art will fail to live on.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

After the publication of "Hapworth" in 1965, Salinger cut all ties with the outside world. He ceased to publish, and he refused to talk. In doing so, Salinger created an enigma of himself. Nosy reporters continue to stalk the mailbox at the end of his driveway in Cornish, New Hampshire, waiting for a glimpse of the reclusive author. A writer for *Esquire* made the pilgrimage to Salinger's house in 1997, only to later feel shame over his antics when he was discovered at the end of the author's driveway by a car with indiscernible passengers. In his article, he reveals other Salinger devotees who have tried tactics from faking wounds to bringing a tired, young child in order to earn passage into the author's walled home. The writer ponders the public's obsession with the silent author:

> The problem, the rare phenomenon of the unavailable, invisible, indifferent writer (indifferent to our questions, indifferent to the publicity-industrial complex so many serve), is the literary equivalent of the problem of theodicy, the specialized subdiscipline of theology that addresses the problem of the apparent silent indifference of God to the hell of human suffering. (Rosenbaum 49)

Though detachment is the goal for the student of Zen Buddhism, the Westernized reading public of America cannot deal with the silence of the Zen student. This obsession with Salinger also portrays America's craving for celebrity figures. Though the writer is much less glamorous than the movie star, the consumer expects artists to maintain an image for the public eye. Even as Salinger urged his characters to act for the Fat Lady, the author remained uncomfortable in a public role; he even prevented his portrait from being

reproduced on book jackets in his later works. Salinger advocates the artist's role as one who highlights truths without being in the spotlight. In fact, Salinger's involvement in popular society would go against his distaste for "all those egos running around feeling terribly *char*itable and *warm*" ("Franny" 28). Salinger's writings anticipated his silence long before he quit publishing.

Ihab Hassan also anticipates Salinger's silence in an article published in 1963; he claims that Salinger's later works' aesthetic depends more on the author's love than the author's purpose: "It seeks to honor things rather than to coerce them. It accepts, therefore, the possibility that things may sometimes wish to speak in their own voice. Let the artist, for a time, remain silent!" (19) Perhaps Salinger does wish to remain silent in the publishing world, but he claims to continue to write. In a rare interview afforded to *The New York Times* in 1974 after the illegal collection of Salinger's early stories, he tells the journalist that he still writes: "'There is marvelous peace in not publishing. It's peaceful. Still. Publishing is a terrible invasion of my privacy. I like to write. I love to write. But I write just for myself and my own pleasure'" (Fosburgh 1). Perhaps Salinger truly stands by Seymour's position that "the human voice conspires to desecrate everything on earth" ("Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" 78). Instead of allowing critics to dissect his stories in their articles and thereby desecrate their holiness, Salinger remains in his backyard unless called to court to defend the sacred quality of previous creations. Ironically, Ben Yagoda claims that before Salinger's big break with "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," "the main objection in the *New Yorker* offices seemed to be that he [Salinger] had no sense of decorum, no recognition of when to be silent" (233). If the

editing group of the *New Yorker* were still around, they would surely be regretting their attitude.

By the end of Salinger's published works, artists develop into those who understand the necessity of truth in art and attempt to show these truths to others while understanding that their own fulfillments of their artistries are diverse and somewhat contradictory. Salinger shows his readers that art is not inaccessible within everyday life; the reader must honestly communicate with his fellow man in order to experience the beauty that occurs through true service and sharing as well as truthful representations of the human experience. Salinger famously begins his *Nine Stories* collection with the Zen koan, "we know the sound of two hands clapping, but what is the sound of one hand clapping?" The sound of two hands clapping occurred throughout the literary world when Salinger won his court case against J. D. California for the copyright of Holden Caulfield; the American public understands lawsuits, and they reveled in Salinger's return to the limelight. However, Salinger's readership continues to struggle with the concept of the sound of one hand clapping, which is the noise of Salinger's furious penning of stories, sequestered in his New Hampshire backyard. Salinger contradicts his own conception of artists as those who share with others; does Salinger cease to be an author if he refuses to publish his works?

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