"Intellectual man had become an explaining creature," complains the elderly Artur Sammler in Saul Bellow's latest novel, *Mr. Sammler's Planet*. Fathers explain to children, wives to their husbands, lecturers to listeners, experts to laymen, colleagues to colleagues, doctors to patients, man to his own soul. They explain the roots of this, the causes of that, the source of events, the history, the structure, the reasons why. "All will explain everything to all, until the next, the new common version is ready." This, too, will be like the old, a fiction. All these many explanations remain on the surface of reality and never penetrate within. Man's soul sits "unhappily on superstructures of explanation, poor bird, not knowing which way to fly." Sammler himself is trying to condense his experience of life into a single statement, a testament. "Short views, for God's sake!" Though a voracious reader in his younger days, he has come to wish to read only certain religious writers of the thirteenth century, and now in his seventies his choice has further narrowed down to two, Meister Eckhardt and the Bible. It seems to Mr. Sammler that man's options in the present-day world have been reduced to sainthood and madness.

We are mad unless we are saintly, saintly only as we soar above madness. The gravitational pull of madness drawing the saint crashwards. A few may comprehend that it is the strength to do one's duty daily and promptly that makes heroes and saints. Not many. Most have fantasies of vaulting into higher states, feeling just mad enough to qualify.

Teddy, the eleven-year old prototype of Seymour Glass in Salinger's story of the same name, tells Nicholson, the reporter, that in the apple eaten by Adam in the Garden of Eden was "logic and intellectual stuff," and that if he wants to see things as they really are, he will have to vomit it up. Most people, he continues, are apple-eaters who "don't want to
see things as they really are," do not want to stop and stay" with God,
where it's really nice." When Mrs. Glass in the story, *Zooey*, proposes
calling in a psychiatrist to help Franny get over her spiritual crisis, *Zooey*
objects to calling in some analyst who is experienced in adjusting people
to the joys of television and the H-bomb, to what most people consider
to be "gloriously normal". If she does, Franny in reaction will end up
either in a "nut ward" or in some desert with a burning cross in her
hands (madness or sainthood?). In their disgust for the shallow,
superficial logic of the world in which they live and in their horror of
becoming adjusted to what that world considers "normal," and in the
attempt to penetrate more deeply into the heart of things and to live
their lives in that dimension, the Glass children turn to the great sages
of East and West, just as Artur Sammler turns to Meister Eckhardt. The
motives for both are the same, as are also the "short views" both
eventually arrive at concerning the meaning of life.

In Salinger's stories of the Glass family — *Franny; Zooey; Raise
High the Roof Beam, Carpenters; Seymour: An Introduction; Hapworth
16, 1924* — and in the short story, *Teddy*, there are to be found a multitude
of references to Eastern and Western thought and religion. Christ and
Buddha, Huineng and St. Francis, Lao-tse and Meister Eckhardt, the
Jesus Prayer and Namu Amida Butsu, the Upanished and the Bible, the
Diamond Sutra and the Sermon on the Mount — Hinduism, Taoism,
Buddhism (especially Zen), and Christianity all make their contribution.
It is the purpose of this paper to analyze what use Salinger makes of
these elements, and what thematic significance he gives to them.

The most natural place to begin this investigation is with Seymour
(See more) Glass, the eldest of the Glass children and the central figure
in the family. Seymour is the *guru* who first discovers for himself and
then introduces to the others the mysticism of East and West, and who
even after his untimely death remains the central influence in their lives.
He is a highly enigmatic figure. The reader is first introduced to him in
the short story, *A Perfect Day for Bananafish*, where after a pleasantly
imaginative conversation with the little girl, Sybil Carpenter, on a Florida
beach, he returns to his hotel room, in which his wife lies sleeping, and
shoots himself. There is nothing in the story to give adequate explanation
of his motive for suicide, nor is there yet any indication of his interest
in mysticism, unless it be in his liking for the German poet, Rilke.
Though, admittedly, it seems somewhat far-fetched, there is a possible allusion to Zen that might give indication of both motive and interest. In the course of his conversation with Sybil, the subject of *Little Black Sambo* comes up, and Sybil makes quite a point of the fact that there were six tigers running around the tree. (They run, of course, until they are melted down into butter). Then later in the conversation Seymour tells her about the mythical bananafish who eat so many bananas that they grow too fat to get out of their holes again, and die; and Sybil immediately thereafter tells him she has just seen a bananafish with six bananas in its mouth. At this he suddenly kisses the arch of her foot, abruptly ends their play, rushes to the hotel, and shoots himself. It would almost seem that her professing to see the bananafish with six bananas in its mouth had in some inconceivable fashion triggered off his suicide.

Now, D.T. Suzuki, who we discover in other stories was well known to Seymour, refers in one of his books to the six lions which are the symbols for the five senses (six in Buddhist psychology), and says that Zen tries to get beyond the six lions (to melt them down?) to pure subjectivity, "to the realm of nondichotomy which is the beginningless beginning of all things, where consciousness is caught at the very moment of rising from the unconscious — an absolute present, the crossing point of time and timelessness, of the conscious and the unconscious."3

If the tigers of *Little Black Sambo* are in fact the lions of Zen, then the bananafish, who will eat as many as seventy-eight bananas, is the self surfeited with the sensations of the physical world and unable to get beyond. The motive for Seymour's suicide would then be the desire to rid himself of a corporeality which he feels at this moment to lie very oppressively upon him, and to penetrate deeply into the enticing world of mystery and spirit. In this interpretation, Sybil's innocent remark about the bananafish with the six bananas may have had a kōan-like effect upon him, inducing a sudden illumination into the nature of his life and world. (In this connection it is interesting to note that the nine stories, of which this is the first, are introduced by the kōan:

We know the sound of two hands clapping,

But what is the sound of one hand clapping?)

James E. Miller, Jr., proceeding along other lines of reasoning,
comes to much the same conclusion with regard to Seymour's death. Seymour sees himself as a bananafish, "not because he has indulged his senses to the point of grossness, but rather because of his keen sensitivity to the overwhelming physicality of existence." Seymour's senses have been ravaged by the physical world to the point that he finds himself trapped and must die. "He has begun to possess—a magnified spiritual consciousness. Every physical fact has become a spiritual maze." Professor Miller is, of course, reading the story in the light of those that follow.

In *Seymour: An Introduction*, Buddy, the second son, cannot find adequate words to eulogize his brother. He was everything to them: genius, conscience, poet, mystic, Godknower, enlightened man, saint. He was able to find God in "the queerest imaginable places—e.g. in radio announcers, in newspapers, in taxicabs with crooked meters, literally everywhere."

From an early age he was drawn to Chinese and Japanese poetry as to no other poetry in the world. Buddy notes that "Chinese and Japanese classical verses are intelligible utterances that please or enlighten or enlarge the invited eavesdropper to within an inch of his life" and that these poets' real forte is recognizing a good persimmon, a good crab, a good mosquito bite on a good arm. In short, they can apprehend the universal in the concrete particular. Buddy refers in passing to Issa, Buson, Shiki, Basho, and Lao Ti-kao, Tang-li, Ko huang, P'ang. "The miracle of Chinese and Japanese verse is that one pure poet's voice is absolutely the same as another's and at once absolutely distinctive and different," again a perfect combination of universal and particular.

Seymour himself became such a poet, states Buddy. He recalls the night when Seymour, only eight years old, was able to choose out for departing guests the coat and hat belonging to each merely by observing them for some three hours with love, a feat that any good Chinese or Japanese poet would be up to accomplishing. Seymour wrote and talked Chinese and Japanese poetry all his life, having already begun to compose when he was eleven. He recognized that his poems were "un-Western" and "lotusy", that they "read as though they'd been written by an ingrate—who was turning his back—on his own environment and the people in it who were close to him." Nothing of his actual life appears
in them. Still, he thought enough of old librarians like Miss Overman, whose favorite poets were Browning and Wordsworth, to wish to write a form of poetry that would be acceptable to them. He was particularly fond of Japanese haiku and wrote them in English, Japanese, German, and Italian. A favorite form of his was a kind of double haiku. After his suicide there was found on the desk blotter in his hotel room the following haiku:

The little girl on the plane
Who turned her doll's head around
To look at me

Both Seymour and Buddy seem to believe in karma. In a note to Buddy, Seymour states that he, Buddy, and Zooey "have been brothers for no fewer than four incarnations, maybe more."

Seymour liked everyone, particularly, of course, the members of his own family. He was greatly attracted to children and was in turn attractive to them. He liked sports and games, and shot marbles like a Zen archer, without aiming at the target.

Buddy admits that he was an "unbalanced type" and suggests that he was "dazzled to death by his own scruples, the blinding shapes and colors of his own scared human conscience," but does not explain what he means by this.

Buddy gives more information about his brother in *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters*, which tells of Seymour's wedding day. In an opening account of a Taoist tale that Seymour had once read to Franny, it is implied that Seymour is the kind of man who "intend on the inward qualities — loses sight of the external. He sees what he wants to see, and not what he does not want to see. He looks at things he ought to look at, and neglects those that need not be looked at."

All the guests are assembled for the wedding, but the bridegroom doesn't show up because "he's too happy to get married." (They later elope.)

We learn that as children Seymour and Buddy, and then all the other children in their turn, had been regular guests on a radio quiz show, "It's a Wise Child" and that "from the time Seymour was ten years old, every summa-cum-laude Thinker and intellectual men's room attendant in the country had been having a go at him."

When the wedding reception is called off, Buddy takes a group of
the guests to the apartment which he had shared with Seymour for a
drink. There he discovers and reads Seymour’s diary for late 1941 and
early 1942, several months before the action of the story. Seymour
quotes a poem by Saigyo (What it is I know not/ But with gratitude/
My tears fall) to express his gratitude to Muriel for an excellent dessert.
He makes reference to scars on his wrists, which the reader is left to
conclude come from an unsuccessful attempt at suicide. He also has
scars on his hands “from touching certain people... Certain heads, certain
colors and textures of human hair leave permanent marks on me.” He writes that he still has a lemonyellow mark on the palm of his
right hand from touching the yellow dress of a friend, Charlotte. Later
Buddy explains that Seymour once threw a stone at Charlotte “because
she looked so beautiful sitting there in the middle of the driveway” and
that Charlotte had had to have nine stitches sewn.

In *Zooey*, Buddy recalls that Seymour once told him ”that all
legitimate religious study must lead to unlearning the differences,
between boys and girls, animals and stones, day and night, heat and
cold.” In Seymour’s room, which the family has left undisturbed since
his death, are tucked up quotations from *Bhagavad Gita*, Marcus
Aurelius, Issa, Epictetus, Ring Lardner, Father de Caussade, Anna
Karenina, Sri Ramakrishna, Kafka, St. Francis de Sales, and Mu-Mon-
Kwan.

It is difficult to know what to make of Salinger’s latest portrait of
Seymour in *Hapworth 16, 1924* (published in the New Yorker in 1956 and
not yet in book form) which consists of an extremely long letter written
by Seymour to his family from summer camp in his seventh year. If
Seymour even in the other stories seems somewhat fantastic, in this letter
he is totally incredible. What are we to make of a seven-year old boy
who tells his father that a married lady “roused all my unlimited
sensuality” and asks him to tell him “what imaginary sensual acts gave
lively, unmentionable entertainment” to him when he was the same age;
who judges everyone at camp, adults as well as children, with extreme
harshness and a patronizing air, and admits that he and Buddy
“antagonize and inspire murder, on sight or repute alone, in the hearts
of fellow human beings”; who professes belief in the doctrine of karma
and announces with complete assurance what happened to himself and
others in previous incarnations; who has the powers of prophecy and
foresees — without concern — his own early death in his thirties and other events thereafter? The tone and contents of the letter are so exasperating as to arouse the suspicion even that Salinger is playing a hoax upon his reader, perhaps in retaliation for the harsh criticism his beloved Glasses have received.

From the above it can be seen that Seymour is deeply rooted in what he — or, more accurately, what Salinger conceives to be Eastern mysticism. Buddy, who is two years Seymour's junior, was the first to be initiated by him into this mystery of the East. When he writes his introduction to Seymour, he is forty-years old, unmarried, a 'writer-in-residence at a girls' junior college in upper New York State.' Seymour is still as alive to him as when they were children together. He says that though he is not a Zen Buddhist, much less a Zen adept, both his roots and Seymour’s in Eastern philosophy “were planted in the New and Old Testaments, Advaita Vedanta, and classical Taoism. I tend to regard myself — as a fourth-class Karma Yogan, with perhaps a little Jnana Yoga thrown in to spice up the pot.” He is attracted to classical Zen literature and lecture-on Mahayana Buddhism one night a week at the college.

Next to Buddy are Boo Boo, a sister, and Walt and Waker, twin brothers. Boo Boo is married and the mother of three children. Walt was killed in an accident while stationed with the Army of Occupation in Japan, and Waker has become a Roman Catholic priest. These too, undoubtedly, received some indoctrination in the mysticism of the East, but little is said of them in the stories and so we too skip over them.

The last two children, Franny and Zooey, from their earliest years received a very special kind of education from Seymour and Buddy, who wished to start them off not with a quest for knowledge but “with a quest, as Zen would put it, for no-knowledge.” The brothers thought it might be a good thing to hold back from them the light of knowledge — “the arts, sciences, classics, languages — till you were both able at least to conceive of a state of being where the mind knows the source of all light.” They taught them as much as they knew about the men “who knew something or everything about this state of being” — Jesus, Gautama, Lao-tse, Sankaracharya, Huineng, Sri Ramakrishna — before they learned about Homer, Shakespeare, Blake, Whitman, “let alone George Washington and his cherry tree or the definition of a peninsula
or how to parse a sentence.” To accomplish this they conducted home-
seminars and metaphysical sittings. The education took so well that
while in college Zooey had a reputation for going off and sitting in
meditation for ten hours at a time. Zooey admits that even to this day
he is not able to sit down to a meal “without first saying the Four Great
Vows under my breath”: “However innumerable beings are, I vow to
save them; however inexhaustible the passions are, I vow to extinguish
them; however immeasurable the Dharmas are, I vow to master them;
however incomparable the Buddha-truth is, I vow to attain it.”5 He has
been mumbling this under his breath three meals a day every day of his
life since he was ten.

Neither Franny nor Zooey is altogether pleased with the education
they have received. “We’re freaks,” Zooey exclaims, “and both of those
bastards are responsible...(They) got us nice and early and made us
into freaks with freakish standards—We’re the Tattooed Lady, and
we’re never going to have a minute’s peace, the rest of our lives, till
everybody else is tattooed, too.” Having come to experience “the state
of being where the mind knows the source of all light,” they both have
the problem of re-entry into the ordinary everyday world. To Franny,
“everything everyone does is so—I don’t know—not wrong or even
mean, or even stupid necessarily. But just so tiny and meaningless and
—sad-maling” and she is disgusted even with herself. “I’m just sick
of ego, ego, ego. My own and everybody else’s. I’m sick of everybody
that wants to get somewhere, do something distinguished and all, be
somebody interesting.” She feels that she is “too conditioned to accept
everybody else’s values” and laments that she does not have the courage
“to be an absolute nobody.” “I’m sick of myself and everybody else
that wants to make some kind of splash.” She has given up her part in
a school play, which she had wanted very badly, and is even determined
to leave school and abandon her plans for a career in the theatre. Thus
her education at the hands of Seymour and Buddy has made her
extremely sensitive to the “phoniness” of the world about her, to the
point that daily living has become a torture.

Zooey has the same problem. “There’s something I do to people’s
morale,” he confesses, “that I can’t stand to watch much longer.” He
makes everyone feel “that he doesn’t really want to do any good work
but that he just wants to get work done that will be thought good by
everyone he knows — the critics, the sponsors, the public, even his
children’s schoolteacher.” Zooey cannot even sit down to lunch with
a man and hold up his end of a decent conversation. “I either get so
bored or so goddam preachy that if the son of a bitch had any sense, he’d
break a chair over my head.” He either turns into a seer or a human
hatpin. He’s sick of “being the heavy in everybody’s life.”

So far we have looked only at the elements of the East that Salinger
employs in these stories. But references to Christianity are only a
little less prominent. The resolution of Franny’s and Zooey’s problem
of return to everyday living, for example, is presented in terms of
orthodox Christianity.

Franny in her depression has taken to saying the Jesus Prayer —
“Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me” — which she discovered in an
early Christian work, The Way of a Pilgrim. In the book a Russian
peasant is taught the prayer as a means of fulfilling the Biblical in-
junction to “pray without ceasing.” Franny explains to Lane, her
boyfriend:

If you keep saying the prayer over and over again, then eventually
what happens, the prayer becomes self-active. Something happens
after a while. I don’t know what, but something happens, and the
worlds get synchronized with the person’s heartbeats, and then
you’re actually praying without ceasing. Which has a tremendously
mystical effect on your whole outlook... (you) get an absolutely new
conception of what everything’s about.

Zooey adds, when explaining the prayer to his mother, that when it
becomes automatic in the heart, “the person is supposed to enter into
the so-called reality of things.” Though the same kind of prayer can be
found in the East — as both Franny and Zooey point out (meditation
on the “Om” in India, the Buddhist “Nam Amida Butsu”), it is also a
means of entering Christian contemplation. Franny says that the same
thing happens with the word “God” in The Cloud of Unknowing, a
medieval treatise on Christian contemplation.

In the climactic passage of the story that carries his name, Zooey
berates Franny for not going about the prayer in a sufficiently Christian
way, for confusing it with other non-Christian forms of prayer. He
doesn’t see how she can go ahead with it until she knows “who’s who and
what’s what.” He has her recall “a little apostasy from the New
Testament,” she experienced when she was ten years old and says that he
doesn’t think she understood Jesus then or understands him now,
either. “I think you’ve got him confused in your mind with about five
or ten other religious personages.” She had read in Matthew’s gospel
of Jesus’s driving the money changers from the temple and couldn’t
approve of his rudeness. She approved still less of his words in the same
gospel, “Behold the fowls of the air — Are ye not better than they?”
Reading this, Franny “quits the Bible cold and goes straight to Buddha,
who doesn’t discriminate against all those nice fowls of the air.” Zooey
tells her:

You’re constitutionally unable to love or understand any son of God
who throws tables around. And you’re constitutionally unable to
understand any son of God who says a human being, any human
being, — is more valuable to God than any soft, helpless Easter
chick.

Clearly a very important distinction is being made here between
Christianity and Eastern religions, and the former is being presented as
the norm. Jesus Christ is ultimately irreducible, Zooey well knows, to
a mere avatar of Buddha.

It is interesting to note that R.H. Blyth in the first volume of his
Haiku, from which Salinger quotes elsewhere, presents the similar
passage from Matthew “Are ye not of greater value than many spar-
rows?” with the comment: “The belief that everything will one day
attain Buddhahood gives value (gives equal value) to the most trivial
objects, and lays the foundation for a spiritual and practical democracy
that Christianity as such could never afford — The answer (to Christ’s
question) is ‘No’.”

Zooey accuses Franny of trying to change Jesus into another
Francis of Assisi and thinks that this is one of the reasons for her break-
down, and especially why she is having it at home.

This place is made to order for you. The service is good and there’s
plenty of hot and cold running ghosts. What could be more
convenient? You can say your prayer here and roll St. Francis
and Seymour and Heidi’s grandfather all in one … Can’t you see
how unclearly, how sloppily, you’re looking at things? … You’re
up to your neck in tenth-rate thinking. Not only is the way you’re
going at your prayer tenth-rate religion but … you’re having a
tenth-rate nervous breakdown.
He reminds her that this is God's universe, not hers; that it would take Christ himself to decide what is ego and what isn't. He assures her that he is not against her making use of the prayer but only "against why and how and where you're using it." Then he strikes a note that is of central thematic significance in the story: "I'd like to be convinced — I'd love to be convinced—that you're not using it as substitute for doing whatever the hell your duty is in life, or just your daily duty." Doing one's duty in life — that is the principle that is co-relative to and balances the principle of entering deeply through contemplation into the heart of reality.

If Franny is going to say the Jesus Prayer, she must say it to Jesus, "and not to St. Francis and Seymour and Heidi's grandfather all wrapped up in one" — or, by implication, to Gautama or Amida. She must "keep him in mind — and him only, and him as he was and not as you'd like him to have been."

Zooey goes on to eulogize Jesus at great length, placing him above all the pundits, prophets, disciples of both Old Testament and New. (Here we see most clearly that Salinger takes the Christian point of view rather than the Jewish, since no orthodox Jew would exalt Christ as greater than any of the Old Testament prophets.) He was the most intelligent man in the Bible, "a nice man — (who) kept in beautiful touch with his God" because there was no separation between them, a supreme adept on a terribly important mission, "the best, the smartest, the most loving, the least sentimental, the most unimitative" of masters. He concludes:

The Jesus Prayer has one aim, and one aim only. To endow the person who says it with Christ-Consciousness. Not to set up some little cozy, holier-than-thou trysting place with some stricky, adorable divine personage who'll take you in his arms and relieve you of all your duties and make all your nasty Weltschmerzen — go away and never come back.

This is orthodox Christian teaching. The aim of all Christian prayer and asceticism is, in the words of St. Paul, "to put on Christ."

The basically Christian orientation of Zooey is made still clearer in the final passage of the story where Zooey offers Franny the key that makes possible the fulfillment of duty in the shallow, prosaic, everyday
world. Zooey recalls that one day before their radio performance when, in a particularly angry mood, the studio audience, the announcer, and the sponsors seemed like a pack of morons, and he refused to shine his shoes for them, Seymour urged him to shine them for the Fat Lady. Franny too remembers Seymour speaking of the Fat Lady. Then Zooey explains to her who the Fat Lady really is:

I'll tell you a terrible secret — There isn't anyone anywhere who isn't Seymour's Fat Lady. Don't you know that? — And don't you know — listen to me, now — don't you know who that Fat Lady really is? — Ah, buddy. Ah, buddy. It's Christ Himself. Christ Himself, buddy.

(It may be significant that only in this last revelatory passage is the pronoun capitalized, as if Zooey is revealing at one stroke the identity of the Fat Lady as Christ and of Christ as God.) Franny receives the revelation with great joy, and it seemed "as if all of what little or much wisdom there is in the world were suddenly hers." We know from other stories that Franny does go on to become a professional actress.

It is clear that Hisashi Shigeo in his chapter on Franny and Zooey in the generally excellent study of Salinger, Salinger no bungaku (written in collaboration with Katsuhiko Takeda) is wrong in interpreting Zooey's (and Seymour's) statement about the Fat Lady as expressive of a pantheistic, panbuddhistic view of life. Nothing could be more orthodoxyly Christian than this. Christ himself concludes his powerful Last Judgment parable in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew with the words, "As you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me." Christ teaches that every man is called to receive his God-life and become so closely one with him that he can in all truth be called "another Christ." Buddhism and the other Eastern religions, on the other hand, are at a loss to explain why man's treatment of man should differ from his treatment of beings lower on the metaphysical scale, e.g. the pigs which he eats and even the mosquitoes which he swats.

Buddy, too, has learned about the Fat Man from Seymour. At the end of Seymour: An Introduction he writes:

I can't be my brother's brother for nothing, and I know — not always, but I know — there is no single thing I do that is more important than going into that awful Room 307. There isn't one girl in there, including the terrible Miss Zabel who is not as much
my sister as Boo Boo or Franny — 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?

As further indication that the formative element in Salinger’s use of symbols in Christian rather than Buddhist, there are several passages in *Hapworth 16, 1924* in which Seymour speaks of God in such a way that he can be none other than the personal God of the Old and New Testaments whose Providence directs all men. At one point Seymour urges his father to place his trust in “God or Providence,” saying that one cannot even light a cigarette without the Divine permission, and adds that he would be “powerless to walk away from Him, of all people, even if my life depended on it.” He takes his “hat off to God, quite mentally, for the magnificent complications of the human body.”

He continues:

Should it be so difficult to offer a brief, affectionate salute to this unfathomable artist? Is it not highly tempting to take off one’s hat to someone who is both free to move in mysterious ways as well as in perfectly unmysterious ways? Oh, my God, this is some God we have! — We are all merely human beings, damnably remiss about this kind of reliance (on God) at all desperate hours and situations of the day. To make up for this neglect, — to rely on God utterly, we must fall back on embarassing, sensible devices of our own.

Seymour urges “utter and complete reliance upon God with regard to breathing, seeing, hearing, and the other maddening functions.”

In a later passage he tells Boo Boo to pray to God as follows:

Give me decent, reasonable instructions for tomorrow, quite while I am sleeping. It is not necessary that I know what these instructions are — but I would be delighted and greatful to have them under my belt nevertheless. I will assume temporarily that these instructions will prove potent, effective, encouraging, and quite intensive, provided I hold my mind quite still and empty.

This too is orthodox Christian prayer, quite unlike anything one meets in Buddhist sacred writings.

In still another passage he muses upon how difficult it is to know exactly every single day where one’s everlasting duty lies, and after speculation about the ways of God with man concludes, “My God, you
are a hard one to figure out."

From the above analysis it can be seen that there is a basic tension in the Glass stories between the centripetal impulse to penetrate deeply into the heart of things and the centrifugal, to reach out widely to other men and to perform one's duty in the everyday world. The first is presented in terms of both Christian and Oriental mysticism; the second, predominantly of Christian (though not exclusively so, as in the passage at the end of *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters*, where Seymour writes that he has been reading in the Vedanta that

Marriage partners are to serve each other. Elevate, help, teach, strengthen each other, but above all, serve. Raise their children honorably, lovingly, and with detachment. A child is a guest in the house, to be loved and respected—never possessed, since he belongs to God. How wonderful, how sane, how beautifully difficult, and therefore true. The joy of responsibility for the first time in my life.

It is this tension between the centripetal and the centrifugal forces at work in the characters that forms the thematic center of these stories. There is, on the one hand, the urge to withdraw to a point out of time, to what Suzuki has referred to above as the "realm of nondichotomy," and the impulse to return to involvement with others in the human, differentiated situation and to take up one's duties in daily life. We have shown how this is true of *Franny and Zooey*. It is also true of *Seymour: An Introduction*. Miller points out that this reconstruction of Seymour's story is excellent self-administered therapy for Buddy's spirit, "and he comes through, if not healed, at least reconciled to — even happy in — his fate." We see both forces at work also in Seymour's diary and letters. In the end, however, Seymour is unable to maintain the precarious balance between the two and he makes the ultimate withdrawal. Whatever subjective reasons can be urged in his defence, objectively he has, by his suicide, rejected his duty to his family and left them — in Buddy's words — "high and dry." So strong is his influence on the others that they have to struggle fiercely to keep from going over with him, but at the end they seem to be succeeding — ironically, with the help of the advice he had given them when he was still alive. It is because of this tension that the stories, for all their looseness of form, do take on a dramatic character. (*Hapworth 16, 1924*  

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is something else again.)

Miller finds the same dramatic tension at the heart of _The Catcher in the Rye_. Holden, he says, is on "a quest for an ideal but unhuman love that will meet all demands but make none" and he discovers at the end a "human self and an involved self that cannot, finally, break what Hawthorne once called 'the magnetic chain of humanity'; he cannot deny the love within him when he begins to miss all the people, 'bastards' included, he has told about."9

Miller further points out that despite his wide range of references, Salinger is not a Zen Buddhist or a philosopher or a poet. Professors Takeda and Shigeo agree with this. They find that Salinger's knowledge of Oriental thought is superficial and based on secondary sources. They are wrong, however, in saying, as they do in their preface, that unable to find peace of soul in the Sacred Writings of the West, he sought to lull himself to peaceful sleep with the poetry of the East.10 No. We must agree with Professors Miller that Salinger is an American novelist writing in the American tradition and exploring themes that have occupied the American novelist from Hawthorne and Melville to Wright Morris and Jonn Updike." (He might have added Saul Bellow.)

If it is not in rejection of the religion of the West that Salinger turns to the East, what then is his motive? To return to the original question: what is, finally, the role of the East in his work? Symbols that have been repeatedly used tend to lose their freshness, and the writer is always at great pains to give them new life in his work. Moreover, in the case of Christian symbolism, we are living in the post-Christian age when these symbols are no longer effective for many readers. A Christian writer has to find new ways of incarnating his vision. Another Christian novelist of America, Flannery O'Connor, in her posthumous collection of essays, _Mystery and Manners_, describes the situation as follows:

The problem of the novelist who wishes to write about a man's encounter with this God (the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and not of the philosophers and scholars) is how he shall make the experience— which is both natural and supernatural— understandable, and credible, to his reader. In any age this would be a problem, but in our own, it is a well-nigh insurmountable one. Today's audience is one in which religious feeling has become, if not
atrophied, at least vaporous and sentimental.
To this end, she continues, it is necessary to bend the whole novel — its language, its structure, its action —

... to make the reader feel in his bones, if nowhere else, that something is going on that counts. Distortion in this case in an instrument; exaggeration has a purpose, and the whole structure of the story or novel has been made what it is because of belief. This is not the kind of distortion that destroys; it is the kind that reveals or should reveal.12

This is the reason why she made such great use of violence and the grotesque, what some have called Southern Gothic.

Salinger often shows embarrassment in using the word "God." Buddy in a passage of Seymour: An Introduction in which he is obviously a persona for Solinger himself says that a good many of his characters are "pursued by an Entity that I'd much prefer to identify, very roughly, as the Old Man of the Mountain." In Hapworth 16, 1924 Seymour speaks of "God or Providence, or which ever word you find less maddening or embarassing"; and in the section of the letter addressed to Boo Boo he tells her to call God "hallmark", since the word "God" is currently a thorn in her side, since two of her girlfriends whom she considers to be "mean and liars from the word go" use it habitually.

In the mysticism of the East, Salinger discovered an alternate set of fresh symbols, symbols which are particularly apt in expressing an element that is central to Salinger's vision: that under the strain and stress of modern life and beyond the grasp of mere logic or rational explanations there still exists a mystery that is ever new and ever a source of joy to those who will attune themselves to it.

The myth of the East, however, was less able to provide a metaphor for the co-relative element: the necessity of becoming involved with others, of returning to the world and performing one's day to day duties therein. To express this second element he used the old Christian symbolism.

Mr. Sammler, referred to at the beginning of this paper, in the very last passage of the novel finally discovers the condensation he was searching for. At the death of his nephew and benefactor, he commends his soul to God as a man who was eager to do what was required of him.

He was aware that he must meet, and he did meet — through all
the confusion and degraded clowning of this life through which we are speeding — he did meet the terms of his contract. The terms which, in his inmost heart, each man knows. As I know mine. As all know. For that is the truth of it — that we all know, God, that we know, that we know, we know, we know.13

Compare these words with Seymour's prayer for Boo Boo, already quoted above, in Salinger's last published work.

Dear hallmark, give me some decent, reasonable instructions for tomorrow — It is not necessary that I know what these instructions are — but I would be delighted and grateful to have them under my belt nevertheless. I will assume temporarily that these instructions will prove potent, effective, provided I hold my mind quite still and empty.

The living Glasses also know the terms of their contract. By holding their minds still and empty (i.e. through contemplation) they understand what they are to do from day to day (i.e. involvement with others and the performance of duties). The two principles come together and balance each other. As for Seymour, we shall have to wait for further revelation from the author to be able to grasp adequately the motives for his suicide. Perhaps he was the victim of what Mr. Sammler refers to as 'the gravitational pull of madness drawing the saint crashwards.'

NOTES

2. Ibid., p. 93.
10. Shigeo and Takeda, pp. 1–2.