CHAPTER II

J.D. SALINGER : THE SEARCH FOR THE SUPERLATIVE HORSE
In one of his later works, *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters*, Salinger shows Seymour reading a Taoist tale to his youngest sister Franny. The tale is about the superlative horse which is defined as, "one that raises no dust and leaves no tracks -- is something evanescent and fleeting, elusive as thin air." In the story quoted by Buddy Glass, Po Lo defends Chiu-fang Kao's choice of the horse by explaining to the Duke Mu of Chin:

> What Kao keeps in view is the spiritual mechanism. 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. He looks at the things he ought to look at, and neglects those that need not be looked at.

The tale seems to describe the kind of search Salinger himself conducts in his works. Salinger's confrontation with the problems of the human self, his description of some of the crises in which it finds itself seem to be oriented towards what Salinger himself would call the "essential!" The superlative horse that Salinger, following the Taoist tale, describes, stands for the image of community in relation to which he deals with the theme of alienation. An attempt is therefore made here to
analyse and evaluate Salinger's major novelistic concerns in terms of this alienation-community pattern. The problems posed by a critical pre-occupation of this kind are:

(1) To what extent is the exploration of theme of alienation genuinely existential? (2) What kind of a relationship between alienation and community is envisaged by Salinger? and (3) What is the nature of Salinger's response to the human condition? Enumerated here for the sake of critical convenience these questions go a long way in highlighting some of the major thematic issues in Salinger's fiction.

II

These issues are indicated in the very first collection of stories that Salinger published in 1953, Nine Stories. The stories broadly fall into two groups. The first group includes stories such as Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut, Just Before the War with the Eskimos, The Laughing Man, Down at the Dingy, For Esme - with Love and Squalor, Pretty Mouth and Green my Eyes. These stories project a landscape of suffering and estrangement. The second group includes three stories: A Perfect Day for Bananafish, De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period and Teddy. The doubts and anxieties of the former group are in sharp contrast with the mysticism and ecstasy of the latter.
To turn to the first group. A story like *Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut* explores the theme of alienation from two related angles of vision. The central figure here is Eloise. She had to leave her college before graduating because of her affair with Walt - one of the Glass brothers - who was killed in an accident. Later on she marries Lew Wengler who is so dull and insensitive to her that she suffers from a sense of incommunicability and insecurity. Restless with an oppressive sense of being an alien in her own home, all that Eloise can do is to live nostalgically in the past represented by the memories of Walt. Walt's rich sense of humour, the casualness with which he used his natural intelligence -- all this makes Eloise suffer silently. Salinger shows how with Eloise, alienation becomes a form of judgement when she tells her friend Mary Jane not to trust husbands because:

> They wanna think you spent your whole life vomiting every time a boy came near you. I'm not kidding, either. Oh, you can tell them stuff. But never honestly. I mean never honestly. If you tell them you once knew a handsome boy, you gotta say in the same breath he was too handsome. And if you tell'em you knew a witty boy, you gotta tell'em he was kind of a smart aleck, though, or a wise guy. If you don't, they hit you over the head with the poor boy everytime they get a chance.

The language and the tone, which anticipate a good deal of *The Catcher in the Rye*, indicate the moral nature of alienation -- moral
because the concomitant insight enables her to distinguish between what she thinks is good and bad, genuine and phony. Lew with his fondness for Jane Austen whom he does not care to read and with his admiration for a trash writer like Manning Vines whom he regularly reads, becomes something of a stupid, loathsome object to Eloise who has firmly anchored herself in the memories of Walt.

Salinger explores this pattern of alienation further and adds to it another important dimension in which the protagonist, seeing that the moral discriminations do not hold good, gets more seriously alienated. This is what happens towards the end of *Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut*. Eloise's daughter Ramona lives in a world of illusion and make-believe. She is always in the company of her imaginary beau, Jimmy Jimmereeno who has green eyes, black hair and carries a sword. In terms of the emotional make-up of the mother and the daughter, then, Jimmy is to Ramona what Walt is to Eloise. The parallelism goes significantly further. Just as Ramona by choosing to inhabit a world of make-believe becomes incapable of relating herself to the world outside, Eloise also, being firmly rooted in the past, is incapable of any engagement with the outside world, however strongly she might judge it in moral terms. Salinger vividly describes the moment when this realisation comes to Eloise with a tremendous force:
"I thought you told me Jimmy Jimmerson no was run over and killed."

"What?"

"You heard me," Eloise said, "Why are you sleeping way over here?"

"Because," said Ramona.

"Because why? Ramona, I don't feel like--"

"Because I don't want to hurt Mickey."

"Who?"

"Mickey," said Ramona, rubbing her nose.

"Mickey Mickeranno."

Eloise raised her voice to a shriek, "You get in the centre of that bed. Go on."

The climactic shrieking shows Eloise being propelled into the realization of her inadequate world which is built on the memories of Walt and which she earlier used as a point of reference for moral judgement. With this, Eloise reaches a level of alienation which goes beyond the moral distinctions between genuine and phony, good and bad. Alienated not only from others, but now also from herself, Eloise reaches a kind of impasse. But alienation being an instrument of perception, she also arrives at an insight which is deeper than any other she earlier had. Hence the following note on which the story ends:

"Mary Jane, Listen. Please," Eloise said, sobbing. "You remember our freshman year, and I had that brown-and-yellow dress I bought in Boise, and Miriam, Ball told me nobody wore those kind of dresses in New York, and I cried all night?" Eloise shook Mary Jane's arm. "I was a nice girl," she pleaded, "Wasn't I?"

The foregoing analysis indicates two important levels on which the theme of alienation is explored by Salinger: 1) By the very fact that he is alienated, the individual makes a number of
moral discriminations between the world he inhabits and the one he refuses to inhabit; 2) The alienated individual goes beyond this level when he discovers the futility of his moral discriminations and thereby gets an insight into the reality of his own self. At this level, the self, estranged from everything else, recoils upon itself. This recoil is richer than the moral insight achieved on the first level. The pattern worked out here is no doubt somewhat schematic, but it has to be taken into account because a tension between these two levels is at the centre of some of Salinger's later works like *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Franny*.

This pattern works, *mutatis mutandis*, even with reference to a story like *The Laughing Man* which describes a child's transition from the world of cozy romance to that of terrifying reality. The central figure in the story is neither the chief—John Gedusdsky—nor the Laughing Man, but the child who is a silent witness to what happens to both and, later, becomes the narrator. The nine-year-old child in the story belongs to an organisation known as the Comanche Club. The chief is in charge of them. Every day on their way to the Central Park, the Chief tells them in instalments the story of the Laughing Man, kidnapped and disfigured by the Chinese bandits, but now reigning supreme with his animal friends across the Chinese-Paris border. As the Chief tells the story bit by bit, the child comes to develop a romantic identification with the Laughing Man:
... I regarded myself not only as the Laughing Man's direct descendant but as his only legitimate living one. I was not even my parent's son in 1928 but a devilishly smooth impostor, awaiting their slightest blunder as an excuse to move in - preferably without violence, but not necessarily -- to assert my true identity.

However, what happens later shatters precisely this "true identity" and hurls the protagonist into a knowledge of what Teddy - a later Salinger Character - calls, "'things as they are, without names and labels.'" This happens when Mary Hudson enters the world of the story-teller and his spelt-bound little listeners. As the love-affair between the Chief and Mary Hudson develops, the two stories -- the Chief's and the Laughing Man's - imperceptibly merge into each other. The child who had so far been only a romantic listener to a Gothic story, witnesses this point of merger and gains in perspective. The Chief's desertion by Mary Hudson comes to be associated by the child with the strange, painful death of the Laughing Man. The romantic innocent listener now enters the complex world of adult experience. The symbol of the poppy-mask that worn by the Laughing Man to conceal his hideous disfigured face is aptly used by Salinger at the end of the story:

A few minutes later, when I stepped out of the Chief's bus, the first thing I chanced to see was a piece of red tissue paper flapping in the wind against the base of a lamppost. It looked like someone's poppy-petal mask. I arrived home with my teeth chattering uncontrollably and was told to go right straight to bed.
The Laughing Man maintains an essential continuity with Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut. In the former, the protagonist is let into the dark void within, into the world of squalor. He charts a journey from the outer circles constituted by the stories of the Laughing Man and the Chief to the inner circle of his own self. In Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut, however the protagonist proceeds not from without but from within a world of moral distinctions to a world which is characterised by void and squalor. Hence the child's vision of the poppy-petal mask and Eloise's question "Wasn't I?" at the end.

For Esmer--with Love and Squalor, described by Gwynn and Blotner as "the high point of Salinger's art" makes a more explicit statement on the themes adumbrated earlier. As the title itself indicates, the story deals with the polar aspects of squalor and love; in fact, it deals with love only through squalor. It unfolds Sergeant X's initiation into the world of squalor and its consequences. Esmer requests him to write about squalor. She also hopes that he will come back from war with all his faculties intact. The irony of the situation lies in the fact that the Sergeant can write about squalor only because his faculties do not remain intact. This raises the problem of the relationship between squalor and love in the context of art. Is a descent into hell--defined in the Dostoevsky quotation as "the suffering of being unable to love," relevant to art and also to a meaningful existential response? The answer seems
the affirmative; since it is only the inner disintegration which enables Sergeant X to provide a meaning to his suffering. Like other stories, For Esmé--with Love and Squalor also shows how the rest of the non-alienated world -- the world of Clay, his friend Loretta with her psycho-analysis--fail to provide this kind of meaning. Alienation in this story then is of a different order because it is projected in relation to the idea of love. In Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut, Eloise's love for Ramona, is a mingled response of self-pity as well as pity for her daughter. The Laughing Man shows love being deserted and destroyed. It is only in For Esmé--with Love and Squalor that love in its positive form seems to figura. Salinger's answer however is not a final 'yea'; it is an ambivalent response described towards the end of the story in terms of a self-directed mockery. This adds to the symbolism of the broken crystal of her father's wrist-watch that Esmé sends him as a "lucky talisman."

You take a really sleepy man, Esmé, and he always stands a chance of again becoming a man with all his fac -- with all his f -- a - c - u - l - t - i - e - s intact. S

The rest of the stories in the first group do concern themselves with these themes, but in a low key. Just Before the War with the Eskimos has a pattern similar to that of The Laughing Man, though of course it does not have the intensity of the latter. The story centres round the transformation of Ginnie Mannox -- who comes to the house of Selena Graff as an obdurate, demanding
lender - into a sympathetic, understanding listener. As she is waiting for Selena who goes inside the house to bring money she owes to her friend -- Ginnie meets her brother Franklin and is exposed to the reality of suffering. Franklin's ill-health - his bad heart, his ambition to fight the Eskimos, his natural naïveté -- all these affect Ginnie deeply. There is a change of heart. She decides to go back without taking the money. The sandwich given by Franklin reminds her of the Easter chick that years before she had found in the dustbin. Some point of contact is thus established between the alienated figure and the outside world. But Salinger is not very successful here in showing the deeper nature of this contact. It is perhaps no more than an expression of sympathy and pity on the part of Selena graff.

Down at the Dingy is interesting because it deals with the theme of alienation in Jewish context. As the conversation, between Sandra and Snell - the maidservants in the house of Lady Booboo - reveals, Lionel, the four year old child has a tendency to run away from the house. Once in the park, somebody called him a 'stinking kid' and that upset him. Even now he isolates himself by refusing to get out of his dingy because Sandra called his father a 'kike'. He fails to understand the exact meaning of the phrase, at which even his mother flinches when she comes to know of it. He takes it to mean kite; and yet in some kind of a semi-intuitive way he knows that there is a good deal in the world which does not fit in with his innocence. Down at the Dingy, like The Laughing Man and For Esmé - with Love and Squalor,
shows what happens when the individual inhabiting an innocent world is suddenly propelled into a hitherto unknown world of squalor, hell, suffering and is brought face to face with reality.

The next group of stories deals with the theme of community. Here Salinger views the human in relation to a static point of reference -- a spiritual community of saints and mystics and visionaries. People like Teddy and Seymour constitute this closed community in which only the like-minded are admitted. In the earlier stories, alienation is viewed as a state, a process which includes suffering, hell and squalor. In these stories, however, Salinger tries to overcome alienation in relation to a spiritual entity. Hence these stories constitute an entire scale of mystic values.

At some mid-point along this scale, we have a story like De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period. The narrator whose domestic background is not a very happy one, assumes a French name and joins an academy in Canada as a staff instructor. One of his students at the academy is a nun, Sister Irma. An epistolary encounter with this nun brings about a change in De Daumier. He has his experience, a blinding vision of reality:

... the sun came up and sped toward the bridge of my nose at the rate of ninety-three million miles a second. Blinded and very frightened, I had to put my hand on the glass to keep my balance. The thing lasted for no more than a few seconds.
Strengthened by this insight, De Daumier-Smith writes in his diary, "I am giving Sister Irma her freedom to follow her own destiny. Everybody is a man."

If De-Daumier exists at the mid-point along the scale, Seymour and Teddy occupy its natural end — indeed, it is difficult to speak even of an end here — because, as Teddy says, "Every body just thinks things keep stopping off ... they don't." The suicide of Seymour and the death of Teddy — assuming that he dies in accordance with his prediction — have a spiritual magnificence about them. Seymour's suicide, if we have in mind the later account provided by Buddy Glass — is the natural end of a fairly long mystic career, while Teddy's death, as he himself would view it, is not a death at all, but just a link in the endless chain of incarnations and reincarnations. Both of them expose the normal, logical, causal world with all its inadequacy — the world of psychiatrists, of people like Muriel's mother and Teddy's parents. Seymour shoots himself with the natural metaphysical poise of a visionary. The same poise is displayed by Teddy too, the only difference is that he is more articulate about his intuitions than Seymour. He criticises psychiatrists and other social institutions because they fail to give insight into 'things as they are.' Hence his rival system of education with its stress on pure intuition and meditation. As he tells Nicholson:
I think I'd first just assemble all the children together and show them how to meditate. I'd try to show them how to find out who they are, not just what their names are and things like that ... I guess, even before that, I'd get them to empty out everything their parents and everybody ever told them. I mean even if their parents just told them an elephant's big, I would make them empty that out ... I'd just make them vomit up every bit of the apple their parents and everybody made them take a bite out of. 11

Here then is the real Catcher; the only difference is that instead of preventing the boys from falling off the cliff, he would destroy the cliff itself so that the boys do not and will not fall off at all!

Since Salinger does not judge either Seymour or Teddy, the community they constitute with their body of visions and ecstasies, seems to be part of Salinger's effort to provide a positive alternative to alienation. The only question is, what happens to the freedom that De Dammier-Smith refers to; the freedom to follow one's own destiny, since "everybody is a nun." There is not a single story in the collection which explores the agonies involved in using one's freedom to exercise one's choice, the Dark Night of the Soul that one has to pass through, in order to be a saint. Nine Stories then does not answer the question, What price saint hood? It simply gives saint'hood meant for overcoming alienation. Whether this is because of the form that Salinger uses here - the short story - or whether it has something to do with his creative sensibility, is a question that is to be
answered when we come to his later works. *Nine Stories* is important in any critical study of Salinger because, it initiates and explores the major themes that figure in Salinger's fiction, and as a result, raises questions that have to be answered even with reference to his later works.

### III

Critics who love Holden Caulfield more than Salinger himself loves him, tend to describe *The Catcher in The Rye* (1951) as portrait of the young man as a saint or a mystic; and in so doing lose a good deal of the meaning of the novel. One way of obviating this usual approach would be to keep in mind the thematic continuity that binds together *Nine Stories*, *The Catcher in The Rye* and even the later works. Eloise with her criticism of Lew, the child's loss of the romantic world the moment he is exposed to the Laughing Man and what he stands for, the acutely felt but partially understood shock of recognition that Lionel receives with the world 'Kike' and finally the zeal with which Teddy wants to make all the boys see things as they are -- all these earlier concerns point in the direction of *The Catcher in The Rye*.

In an article published in *The American Scholar*, entitled "Alienation and Utopia," Kenneth Keniston wrote:

Growing up is always a problem. It entails abandoning those special prerogatives, world-views, insights and pleasures that are defined by the culture as 'childish'; substituting for them the rights, responsibilities, outlooks and satisfactions that are suitable for the culturally defined adult. This change involves a psychic dislocation. 12
The Catcher in The Rye is about this kind of 'growing up' and the psychic dislocation it involves. It views this dislocation not from a sociological angle - which would reduce it to the simplistic plane of the criticism of American society - but from an existential one. Considered this way, the novel yields two important stages of Holden Caulfield's inner state. The first part of the novel, which brings us right up to the moment when Holden decides to leave Penny

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describes the first stage. It must be remembered that up to this point, Holden is, contrary to what Inhab Hassan says, neither a rebel nor a victim. He is on the contrary a young man, who, being sure of his insights, is securely anchored in himself. With the self-confidence of a know-all, he luxuriates in sitting in judgement over others. This is because he knows that he is superior to the world he is placed in. This superiority proceeds from his sure image of community which includes Selma, D.B., Allie, The Secret goldfish, The Egyptian mummies, the ducks in the Central Park and, of course, Phoebe. All these members of Holden's image of community constitute a world of their own. Holden envies the ancient Egyptian art of embalming the dead bodies, but with his image of community, he himself has achieved the art of preserving, arresting a moment out of the flux of time and turning it into a kind of eternity - of which the secret goldfish is an excellent symbol. Nobody can have a look at it, except the like-minded ones. Safe in this sense of community, Holden passes judgements upon what he thinks is the 'phony'
world in contrast with his 'genuine' world. This capacity for moral discriminations only makes him aware of the distance between his self and the world and leads him to further judgements in terms of good and bad, genuine and phony, natural and artificial. The act of judgement covers an entire spectrum of emotions, a range of possible moods. It can even be amusing as when Holden says that "getting ostracized is funny". Even minor details can irritate him to a point of disgust. Thus when Holden goes to meet old Spencer, everything associated with the old man—the Vicks Vaporub smell, his bumpy chest, his bathrobe, the way he handles the examination paper like a "turd"—irritates Holden. For him, Old Spencer is at his worst when he talks about life being a game. He hates the world of movies and advertisements. He finds that Penny is full of crooks and morons. Anything that disturbs his sense of community causes a violent emotional response in Holden's mind. Thus he wants to know from Stradlater if Jean Gallagher still keeps her kings in the back row; and suspecting that she probably does not, works himself into a strong sexual jealousy; calling Stradlater all the time "moron". These judgements ultimately escalate into a total generalisation as Holden, ready to leave Penny, stands outside and shouts at the boys "You, morons." Obviously, at this moment Holden's estrangement from his own self is far less radical than his estrangement from the world which does not fit in with his image of the community.
In an article published in *Partisan Review*, Jeremy Lerner wrote that Salinger's "'technique for handling the individual vs social situation' is simply to divide the world between the Sensitive Few and the Vulgar Many." Apart from the questionable thesis that Salinger handles only the individual vs social situation in his works, Lerner's statement simply does not apply to *The Catcher in the Rye*. In fact, the richness of the novel lies in the fact that it shows the sensitive protagonist as being something of a vulgar many. In other words, Holden Caulfield has a great deal in common with the world which he sits in judgement. The problem at the centre of the novel is: what happens to the self which judges the other on a plane of moral discriminations only to find that it also shares a good deal with the other? As a result, Salinger's strategy in the novel is two-fold. In the first place, he shows how Holden has something in common with the very world which he constantly judges and in the second place, how his sense of community which he uses throughout as a point of reference, turns out to be an inadequate one, leading ultimately to the fall of the Catcher himself.

An analysis of the various incidents in the novel shows that Salinger does look at Holden's image of community rather questioningly. One of them — an important one at that — is Holden's encounter with the nuns. Holden's moral discriminations continue even when he comes to New York. He keeps on horsing
around with Mrs. Ernest Marrow on train, with Faith Cavendish and with girls in the restaurant. However, when confronted with the nuns, Holden cannot bring himself to use his moral discriminations, nor can he horse around with them the way he did with Mrs. Ernest. This is because the nuns represent a world which has no place in Holden's scheme of things, but which, he dimly realizes, seems to be equally valid. Holden's community - with its members like Allie, Phoebe, the mummies, the secret goldfish - has as its *raison d'être*, its capacity not to grow. It enjoys immunity from the laws of growth. This aspect of Holden's community is symbolically expressed in the answer that Holden gives in his examination paper:

> Modern science would still like to know what the secret ingredients were that the Egyptians used when they wrapped up dead people so that their faces would not rot for innumerable centuries. This interesting riddle is still quite a challenge to modern science in the twentieth century. 13

the same desire for a total immunity from the laws of growth is expressed almost in a Keatsian manner, by Holden in his description of the museum..

The best thing, though in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody'd move. You could go there a hundred thousand times, and that Eskimo would still be just finished catching those two fish, the birds would still be on their way south, the deers would still be drinking out of the water hole, with their pretty antlers and their pretty, skinny legs, and that squaw with the naked bosom would still be weaving that same blanket. Nobody'd be different. 14
But the encounter with the nuns questions Holden's image of community which, like everything in the museum, is based on the laws of changelessness and the implied permanence.

Holden wants things to stay as they are. But the nuns represent a world which defies this Holden principle and still is equally valid. Thus when one of the two nuns, - the one who teaches English - asks Holden if he loves Romeo and Juliet, Holden is taken aback. His response is one of baffled wonder.

"She certainly did not sound much like a nun" he says and then continues:

> To tell you the truth, it was sort of embarrassing, in a way, to be talking about Romeo and Juliet with her. I mean that play gets pretty sexy in some parts, and she was a nun and all, but she asked me, so I discussed it with her for a while. 15

What Holden cannot understand, though he feels it, is the way the nuns' world includes sex and yet goes beyond it. In other words, this is the very opposite of kings-in-the-back-row image. The nuns' world is as valid as the world Holden's community inhabits, although things in it do not stay as they are. This is Holden's first confrontation with an order of reality which undermines, with a tremendous power—the image of community he has been carrying with him so far. His power of judgement gets temporarily paralysed. It is not surprising therefore that the nuns keep on haunting his mind all the time. Towards the end, Phoebe accuses Holden of not liking anything, and asks him to name any one thing he likes. The first thing that Holden remembers is the nuns:
''All right,'' I said. But the trouble was, I couldn't concentrate. About all I could think of were those two nuns that went around collecting dough in those beat-up old straw baskets. Especially the one with the glasses with those iron rims. 16

Another equally significant incident in the novel which symbolically hints at the possible inadequacy of Holden's image of community, is his conversation with the cab-driver, Horwitz. Holden repeatedly asks him the question as to what the fish do when the lake gets frozen. Horwitz, explaining that the winter there is tougher for the fish than for the duck, says that the fish stay right where they are, that it is their nature and then finally clinches the issue:

''Listen' he said, ''If you was a fish, Mother Nature'd take care of you, wouldn't she? Right? You don't think them fish just die when it gets to be winter, do you?'' 17

The implications are important because in Holden's image of community, the fact that the fish stay right where they are because it is their nature, has no place. Similarly, the fact that there is a significant relationship between the fish and Mother Nature, has also no place in Holden's community. The encounter with the outspoken cab-driver symbolically hints at a world that goes beyond Holden's image of community and is at the same time as valid as it. Holden's crisis later on deepens simply because he comes to realize the inadequacy of his image of community.
Another important scene which supports this analysis is Holden's meeting with Carl Luce, his one time mate at Whootan. Of course, Salinger does not spare Luce, but he does not spare Holden either. This scene does not bring out the inadequacy of Holden's image of community as vividly as the encounter with the nuns, but it certainly points out insufficient, immature resources of Holden's imagination. Through their conversation, Carl Luce keeps on telling Holden plainly that his mind is immature and asks him, 'When in the hell are you going to grow up?'. In the total perspective of the novel, this question turns out to be a crucial one.

All these implications are gathered and pushed into a point of escalation in Holden's meeting with Antolini. One has only to compare it with the meeting with Old Spencer. When he saw Old Spencer, Holden was sure of his own self. He could make fun of his old teacher's lecture on life being a game. He could find everything associated with Spencer boring or irritating. But when he comes to see Antolini, he is no longer the same Holden. He has no faith in his capacity for moral judgement and discriminations. He unfolds his problems before Antolini who tells him that he is in for a terrible fall and then continues:
This fall I think you are riding for — it's a special kind of fall, a horrible kind. The man falling isn't permitted to feel or hear himself hit bottom. He just keeps falling and falling. The whole arrangement's designed for men who, at some time or other in their lives, were looking for something their own environment couldn't supply them with. Or they thought their own environment couldn't supply them with. So they gave up looking. They gave it up before they ever really even got started. 18

Antolini's advice anticipates the one that Zooey later gives Franny to pull her out of her crisis, and though Antolini's seemingly homosexual advances seem to provide a kind of an anti-climax to it, it must be remembered that Holden himself is not sure of his judgement on this aspect of Antolini:

I mean I wondered if just may be I was wrong about thinking he was making a flitty pass at me ... I even started wondering if may be I should've got my bags and gone back to his house, the way I'd said I would. I mean I started thinking that even if he was a flit, he certainly'd been very nice to me. I thought how he hadn't minded it when I'd called him up so late, and how he'd told me to come right over if I felt like it. And how he went to all that trouble giving me that advice about finding out the size of your mind and all, and how he was the only guy that'd even gone near that boy James Castle I told you about when he was dead. 19

As this sense of uncertainty grows, Holden gets alienated not only from others — but also from his own image of community. He gets confused. Earlier he spoke of playing the Catcher's role, now he thinks of being a recluse and going to the West. Once this happens, Holden's crisis, the fall that Antolini predicted, is inevitably imminent; so much so that, not even Phoebe's love can save him from it. In spite of all the mystic implications of
the carousel and rain symbolism, it is clear that in order to achieve clarity of vision, Holden needs the sanitorium as much as Phoebe's love. This is made clear in the last chapter of the novel:

D.B. asked me what I thought about all this stuff I just finished telling you about. I didn't know what the hell to say. If you want to know the truth, I don't know what I think about it. I'm sorry I told so many people about it. About all I know is, I sort of miss everybody I told about. Even old Stradlater and Ackley, for instance. I think I even miss that goddam Maurice. It's funny. Don't ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody. 20

From his sense of community, Holden now passes on to a genuine though partially achieved, sense of communication. Telling the story of the 'mad man stuff' that happened to him has a kind of Cathartic effect on his sensibility. Hence the statement, 'Don't ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody.'

The Catcher in The Rye is not only about the disillusionment of an idealistically ambitious young man. Had it been so, there is no reason why Salinger should take up a similar problem in Franny and Zooey. What interests Salinger here is not so much the disillusionment as its implications. These implications are explored on a plane of moral discriminations and self-discovery. Secure in his image of community, Holden judges the non-alienated world in moral terms, but once exposed to its inadequacy he is more seriously alienated; from himself, from his image of community.
- This is his horrible fall. It may be pointed out here contrastively that while Salinger judges Holden, he does not judge Teddy. This is because the former wants things to stay as they are, the latter wants them to grow - though of course, only in a certain way. These contrastive implications are brought together in the later fiction of Salinger. *Franny* and *Zooey* begin where *The Catcher in the Rye* leaves off, and *Raise High The Roof Beam, Carpenters* and *Seymour - An Introduction* begin where Teddy leaves off.

IV

*Franny* in *Franny* (1955) is an extension, though infinitely refined, of Holden. Holden's image of community was based on his moral discriminations. Franny's image of community is based on highly metaphysical, spiritual discriminations. If for Holden, the world is either genuine or phony, for Franny, it is either supremely divine or ridiculously human. Holden wants things to stay where they are; Franny would like them to reach transcendental heights. Viewing the world from a metaphysical standpoint she finds it inadequate, incomplete. This results in giving her a terrific sense of isolation, loneliness.

Salinger brings this out at the opening of the novel in Franny's encounter with Lane Coutell. Their disjointed conversation, Lane's indifference to some of her statements, betray a basic lack of warmth between them. What is more, Franny knows, in spite of
the letter she earlier wrote, that somehow she would not be able to feel attuned to Lane Coutell. This feeling overpowers her the moment she gets off the train and greets Lane:

'Oh, it's lovely to see you!' Franny said as the cab moved off. 'I've missed you.' The words were no sonner out than she realized that she didn't mean them at all. Again with guilt, she took Lane's hand and tightly, warmed laced fingers with him. 21

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Later on, this feeling of loneliness grows to an extent that she can only sentence herself 'to listen to Lane's ensuing conversation with a special semblance of absorption."

But perhaps because she has received intensive training at the hands of Seymour and Buddy - the elder brothers in the Glass family - Franny can be very intellectual about her situation. Unlike Holden, she is articulate about her crisis. She can diagnose her own situation. That is what she does as she sits in the restaurant with Lane Coutell. Lane speaks, with some degree of complacent pride, of the paper he has just written on Flaubert. This triggers off from Franny a violent criticism of 'the section man.' She describes her college as 'the most incredible farce,' runs down the professors and the kind of poetry some of them write. She hates, as she tells Zooey later, Professor Tupper who musses his hair before he comes to the class. She finds that the college gives knowledge and not wisdom, because no one there knows how to translate knowledge into wisdom. Hence her feeling of sickness, faint nausea. As she puts it to Lane:
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. It's disgusting -- it is. It is. I don't care what anybody says. 22

The implications of this kind of alienation are different from what they are in Salinger's earlier works. Holden's alienation reaches a climactic point when he realizes that his image of community - however real at a certain level - is not finally an adequate one, and with this realization he breaks down. With Franny, Salinger explores the alienation-community pattern from a different angle of vision. There is nothing wrong with Franny's image of community which is based on the story of a pilgrim who goes out in search of the secret of incessant praying and, having learnt that secret, goes on spreading its message everywhere. Franny is especially impressed by that part of the story which describes the pilgrim meeting all the possible people and passing on the secret of incessant praying to them. As she puts it:

He meets all kinds of people----I mean that's the whole book, really -- and he tells all of them how to pray by this special way. 23

She then proceeds to explain to Lane the nature of such a self active prayer.
... but something happens and the words get synchronized with the person's heartbeats, and then you're actually praying without ceasing. Which has really a 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. 24

'An absolutely new conception of what everything's about' -- this implies a major shift in Salinger's exploration of the alienation-community pattern. And Franny occupies an important, transitional place in this pattern. Franny's crisis has its roots in her desire to reconcile this image of community to the world outside - to society as at large. She knows the prayer to be a perfect one, she knows it gives one a sense of release, but she does not know how to relate this prayer and what it implies to the world which includes people like Lane and Professor Tupper. Franny's malaise lies in her inability to reconcile the claims of community with those of society.

This shift in Salinger's thematic concerns deserves a close analysis. Holden's community is his world and vice versa. But Franny is concerned not so much with her community as with a possible strategy whereby it can be realized in the total context of society itself. Salinger's analysis here assumes a triangular predisposition in terms of alienation, community and society. That this problem should be crucial at this stage is not surprising if we remember the
fact that quite a few of Salinger characters speak of going in for some kind of anchorite renunciation, but find themselves unable to do so. Thus Holden wants to go West and live there as a recluse, but when Phoebe actually comes with the explicit intention of accompanying him, he gives up the idea itself. Franny too wishes that she had not gone to the college; she also deeply admires the pilgrim who went out in search of the secret of incessant praying. But she forgets that the pilgrim could master the secret only after renouncing the world, and that this act of renunciation was central to the pilgrim's spiritual attainments. Left without this capacity, but also committed to the incessant prayer, all that Franny can do is to try to reconcile her image of community with the society around her. Her crisis, then, lies in her awareness of the absence of an effective strategy for reconciliation. Ironically, enough, when this awareness deepens, even her attempts at praying do not help her. So, in the ladies' room in Sickler's restaurant, she collapses totally.

In *Zooey* (1957) which is but a logical extension of the Franny story, Salinger explores the possibility of such a strategy for reconciliation. For this, he makes use of two other members of the Glass family—Buddy and Zooey. The story opens with Zooey in the bath-tub, reading a letter that Buddy wrote to him some years ago. The letter is
important because much of the advice that Zooey gives Franny to help her out of the crisis, is based on it. In this letter, after discussing briefly Upnishadás, Diamond Sutras, Ekhart and other such things, Buddy narrates an incident that took place when he was at the local supermarket. He met a young mother and her little girl waiting around. The four-year-old girl was asked by Buddy to mention the names of her two boyfriends and the girl exclaimed "Bobby and Dorothy". Buddy comments on the implicit mystic significance of these simple words:

But I swear to you that I had a perfectly communicable little vision of truth (lamp-chop division) this afternoon the very instant the child told me her boy friends' names were Bobby and Dorothy. Seymour once said to me -- in a crosstown bus, of all places -- that all legitimate religious study must lead to unlearning the differences, the illusory differences, between boys and girls, animals and stories, day and night, heat and cold. 25

Obviously, the effort is to resolve all the polarities, discriminations into a single moment of undifferentiating vision of things. It is precisely from this advice, this 'communicable little vision of truth' that Zooey gathers his strength to pull Franny out of her crisis. Franny tells him the nature of her malaise:
I don't think it would have all got me quite so down if just once in a while -- just once in a while -- there was at least some polite little perfunctory implication that knowledge should lead to wisdom, and that if it doesn't, it is just a disgusting waste of time! But there never is! You never even hear any hints dropped on a campus that wisdom is supposed to be the goal of knowledge. You hardly ever even heard the word "wisdom" mentioned. 26

Implicit in this insistence upon wisdom is Franny's awareness of the world which includes Professor Tupper and Lane and others of their tribe. With the wisdom she already has, Franny does not know how to reconcile herself with this world. It is here that Zooey steps in and, drawing upon the vision of truth that Buddy had described so vividly in his letter, tells Franny to unlearn the differences. He asks her to develop detachment and desirelessness. He tells her that she would not be able to recognize her guru when she saw him, if she did not know a cup of soup right in front of her nose.

And finally comes his famous statement:

But I'll tell you a terrible secret-- Are you listening to me? There isn't anyone out there who isn't Seymour's Fat Lady. Don't you know that? Don't you know that goddam secret yet? And don't you know, listen to me, now - don't you know what that Fat Lady really is? Ah, Buddy, Ah, Buddy. It's Christ Himself. Christ Himself, Buddy. 27

With this, Franny's aristocratic crisis in the posh Fifth Avenue New York apartment is over. Because "when she had replaced the phone, she seemed to know what to do next."
On the basis of this analysis, it is possible to arrive at some general conclusions and also to indicate the kind of change that Salinger's artistic concerns undergo. The problem all saints face is usually one of achieving wisdom. In their pursuit of wisdom, they undergo an ordeal of spirit, a trial by existence. For Franny, however, the problem is not one of achieving wisdom, but of adjusting it to the world which includes the Tuppergs and the Coutells. The problem, is thus one of reconciling the claims of community with those of society. Salinger finds his way out by asking his protagonist to see Christ everywhere. The strategy of reconciliation that Salinger evolves here is a transcendental one, asking the individual to establish a circular lumpish totality in which community and society are one and the same, and because they are one and the same, alienation is overcome. With this kind of a totality, Salinger is left with nothing but Seymour. It is not therefore surprising that in his last two works, Seymour and Seymour only, should be the central figure.

V

Salinger's natural mystic in Nine Stories, Teddy speaks with a blueprint of Utopian community in his hip-pocket. He wants to establish a rival system of education which would
give children an insight into things as they are, without names and labels. Salinger knows that this ideal is not realizable for two reasons. In the first place, Teddy, the originator himself, does according to his prediction. Second, not all the children would grow that way — unless it is an affair of an absolutely utopian imagination in which Salinger is very little interested. But Salinger does manage to find a way out of this. If all children could not grow the way Teddy wanted them to, certain children could. These are the Glasses; and Seymour happens to be the greatest of them. There is therefore an essential link between Teddy and Raise High the Roof Beam — Carpenters and Seymour — An Introduction in that what is a utopian ideal in the former turns out to be a palpable reality in the latter. This reality — the Glasses with their spiritual attainments turns out to be Salinger's own image of community. Doubts about the mode in which such an image of community can be realized in the social context are already considered in Franny and Zooey; and also resolved into the generalization of everybody being a Christ. All that remains for Salinger is now to move round and round the most gifted of the Glasses — Seymour.

Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters (1955) might almost be described as a defence of Seymour. In the earlier Seymour story in Nine Stories Salinger had already exposed
the inadequacy of the quotidian world with its psychiatrists and psychoanalysis. He now gives us a more comprehensive statement at the centre of which, is Seymour's marriage with Muriel.

Instructed by Boo Boo, Buddy Glass comes to New York to attend this marriage. There he runs into Helen Silsburn, Muriel's aunt, the Matron of Honour, her husband who is a lieutenant and a deaf-mute man who turns out to be Muriel's father's uncle. All of them get into a car to go to the bride's place. A good deal of the conversation in the car is about Seymour, monopolized mostly by Helen Silsburn and the Matron of Honour. Thus they are not sure about Seymour being a normal man. They cite incidents after incidents to prove what they consider to be Seymour's abnormality and perversion. The Matron of Honour accuses Seymour of being a homosexual. She also quotes the incident of Seymour once hitting a girl with a stone. She is all sorry for Muriel, but fails to understand how she could be ready for this marriage. Later, they all came to Buddy's apartment because their car gets stuck up on the Fifth Avenue. And here the Matron of Honour makes her charge more specific. She tells Buddy:

That's probably what's the matter with that brother of yours. I mean you lead an absolutely freakish life like that when you're a kid and so naturally you never learn to grow up. You never learn to relate to normal people or anything ... your brother's never learned to relate to anybody. All he can do, apparently, is go round giving people a bunch of stitches in their faces. He's absolutely unfit for marriage or anything half-way normal, for goodness' sake.
The series of charges that the Matron of Honour has been making leaves Buddy uneasy; so much so that, at one place he says, 'I felt a sense of loneliness and isolation more overwhelming than I'd felt all day.'

One may wonder as to what extent the Matron of Honour should be taken seriously when she says this. But it is clear that in terms of the analysis that has been made so far, she does raise a crucial question - the question of the relationship between the world of the Glasses and the world outside - between a community of born saints and a society of the normal people. Buddy himself, in reply to this charge from the Matron of Honour, bursts into a passionate defence by saying that Seymour is a poet. But the real answer comes from the diary of Seymour himself. Seymour notes Muriel's simplicity and says he loves her for it. He also refers to a letter by Buddy in which he said he did not like Muriel's mother and then records his own response to this:

I don't think he (Buddy) could see her for what she is. A person deprived, for life, of any understanding or taste for the main current of poetry that flows through things, all things. ... I love her. I find her unimaginably brave.

'See her for what she is' - obviously an echo from Teddy -- this is also Seymour's way of relating himself to people. He looks for the current of poetry that flows through all things and in order to do this; he says:
I'll champion indiscrimination till doomsday, on the ground that it leads to health and a kind of very real, enviable happiness. 31

Later on in the same diary, he also speaks of getting "scars on his hands from touching certain people," while certain colours and textures of human hair leave permanent marks on him. Buddy gathers strength from this diary and goes back to speak to the deaf-mute man who has been with them. He asks him, "who looks after you? The pigeons in the park?" and then proceeds to describe how Charlotte got the nine stitches she did. It is a fitting finale that Buddy should establish his final communication in the story with a man who, being deaf and mute, is constitutionally incapable of communication.

Thus fortified in his theory of indiscrimination and the totality of community - society, Salinger offers us in his last work, a fully-drawn portrait of Seymour. There is obviously nothing naturalistic about this portrait - however vividly he may describe the hair, the eyes, the nose, the ears, and the voice of Seymour. At this stage there cannot be anything naturalistic because Salinger is interested only in the 'spiritual mechanism.' Salinger's search for the superlative horse is now complete. All external things are irrelevant, what counts is the inner structure of the spirit - the essence. Salinger gets rid of the inessentials and
celebrates the essential only. In terms of the essential, society - community duality is resolved and alienation is overcome. The metaphysical embodiment of such a resolution is of course Seymour, and a less metaphysical, somewhat mundane one is Buddy Glass, the narrator, who lives in woods, a few miles away from the college where he goes to teach English and religion. Buddy Glass, the modest recluse, concludes the Glass saga.

In *Seymour - An Introduction*, (1959), Salinger describes some incidents, and seminal moments, dealing with visions and ecstasy that go into the making of Seymour's mind. Of course, some of these have already been described in the earlier works. What Salinger does here is present them more elaborately. He points out Seymour's idea of poetry, with special reference to Japanese haiku poetry. He offers a detailed description of Seymour's person. More especially, he wants to show the roots of Seymour's personality in Zen Buddhism, Vedāṇṭa and Upanishada, not to speak of the Bible. He describes Seymour as a *karmayogi*, and *jnānyogi*, rolled into one. He describes at great length the influence on Seymour of the concept of *nīshkāmākarma*. Buddy Glass describes the implications of the method of marble-shooting that Seymour adopted.
... after Seymour himself shot a marble, he would be all smiles, when he heard a responsive click of glass striking glass, but it never appeared to be clear to him whose winning click it was. And it is also a fact that some one almost invariably had to pick up the marble he'd won and hand it to him. 32

Seymour thus keeps on radiating significance all the while.

Salinger's introduction to Seymour turns out to be the conclusion of his art. For, with the theory of indiscrimination and of poetry running through all things, nothing more remains to be explored further. Hence the repetitive, laconic, relaxed, informal style of the last two works. But there is something inconclusive about the conclusion itself. This is said in the sense that Salinger's view of the human condition is not as total as it might seem to be. There is a great deal that Salinger leaves here to be desired. In exploring the alienation-community pattern Salinger finds himself at a stage where in order to overcome alienation in palpable terms, it becomes necessary for him to come to terms with society too. What he does is to adopt a certain kind of evasive transcendentalism, saying everybody is a Christ and that the current of poetry flows through all things. But the process itself, the process of the discovery of his current flowing, of the scars the saint gets from touching certain people, is left out by Salinger. No Salinger saint ever says, 'Turn me over, brothers; I am done enough on this side.' One must be lucky enough to be born in the
Glass family and the rest is taken care of.

It is possible to advance certain reasons for this lacuna. For one thing, Salinger does not operate exclusively in a strongly Christian frame of reference, as for instance, Eliot does in his later poetry or Dostoevsky in all his novels. Second and perhaps more important, he does not operate in any single frame of reference at all, either Eastern or Christian. Herman Hesse's *Siddharta* for instance, has a strong, consistently developed Eastern framework. Salinger does not have this either. What he offers is a kind of intensive course in world religions, - Hinduism with all its diverse aspects like Bhaktimarga, Karmayoga, Dnyanyoga, Advaita Vedanta, Zen Buddhism, Japanese haiku poetry, the Bible, with Kierkegaard and Kafka thrown in occasionally. Not all these elements can be said to be fully assimilated by Salinger. This is true at least of the Indian elements. Thus Salinger's comparison of Seymour playing ping-pong with Mother Kali or his description of *Nishkama karma* as "the fine art of snapping a cigarette end into a small wastebasket from across a room," are a vulgarization of the two complex religious concepts that deal with Good-Evil relationship and an entire way of life respectively. All this perhaps explains why Salinger fails to take into account some of the important aspects of the Saint's journey, of the human situation. Salinger here stands in striking contrast to Bellow and Malamud who offer a more comprehensive statement on alienation and community.