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From Spiritual Wandering to Spiritual Epiphany: On the Transition of Characters in J. D. Salinger's Fiction

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Abstract

J. D. Salinger has portrayed a series of tramps in his fictions, who are wandering in the spiritual wasteland. Through the analysis of the characters in Salinger's works from different periods, this paper finds a commonality: they all reach a state of inner spiritual introspection and epiphany through external events amidst despair and adversity, thereby completing the process of self-redemption. The transformation of the characters from spiritual confusion and despair to epiphany also reflects the writer's own spiritual journey.

Key words: J. D. Salinger; Spiritual tramp; Epiphany; Transition

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INTRODUCTION

In "A Perfect Day for Bananafish", Seymour gives his fiancee Muriel a nickname, calling her the "Miss Spiritual Tramp of 1948," (Salinger, 1989, p.5) which is quite fitting. In Salinger's fiction, the spiritual vagrant is not limited to Miss Muriel; it is a collective image of modern people, encompassing every modern individual, including Seymour himself. Salinger's entire body of work delicately portrays a series of "spiritual tramps" who are troubled and desperate on the brink of a spiritual breakdown in a world devoid of meaning and purpose, seeking spiritual solutions and redemption, and achieving spiritual enlightenment.

SPIRITUAL WANDERING AND THE DEATH OF THE POET

Salinger's works feature many artistic figures with a poet's temperament, such as Joe in "The Varioni Brothers," Ford in "The Inverted Forest" who gradually loses his creative inspiration, Louise, a blues singer rejected by the hospital due to racial reasons in "Blue Melody," and of course, the suicidal Seymour Glass. As Ruth Prigozy comments on the "Nine Stories", "The overriding subject of each story, directly or indirectly, is death--physical, emotional, or spiritual" (Bloom, 2008, p.92). These artistic youths with talent ultimately meet tragic fates, either dying physically or spiritually.

Firstly, the spiritual dilemma and death of Seymour. Seymour first appears in "Bananafish" and meets the readers, and by the end of the story, he commits suicide, a conclusion that shocks readers. Seymour is always shrouded in a mysterious and gloomy veil. Readers are eager to find answers, but Salinger remains tight-lipped. It took Salinger seven years after the publication of "Bananafish" to write again about the Glass family and Seymour. It was not until "Seymour: An Introduction" in 1959 that the fog gradually cleared. In fact, "Seymour: An Introduction" is the key to unlocking the mysteries of all of Salinger's works; it is like undergoing a religious meditation that only reaches epiphany at the last moment. Seymour's death brought endless harm to the Glass family and his wife. However, Seymour's suicide is not a selfish act but rather a form of martyrdom. His death is only a

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physical demise, a spiritual resurrection and rebirth. "His (Seymour) value was held not by his longevity but in the simple fact that he existed and touched the lives of those around him" (Slawenski, 2010, p. 307). The significance of his suicide is that the Glass family emerges from the spiritual predicament, bringing the confidence to live and finding the meaning and hope for existence.

Seymour's death led the Glass family through an epiphany. Unfortunately, readers were not able to fully participate in this spiritual meditation, as Salinger's self-forgetful, non-verbal yet word-dependent spiritual journey caused many readers to leave midway. Seymour's death revealed the vulgarity and indifference of the world he lived in.

Regarding the spiritual existence of poets or artists, Salinger had already published relevant works to pay attention to. In "The Varioni Brothers," both brothers have artistic talents. The elder brother, Sonny, pursues musical success, while the younger brother, Joe, pursues high-quality writing. However, Sonny's greed and thirst for success make Joe the sacrificial lamb. Sonny, in order to stand out, forces Joe to give up writing novels and instead write lyrics for him. Sonny, as an artist, is not concerned with the spiritual world but with the fame and wealth that bring honor and fortune. Art is just a means for him to profit, and he himself cannot bear to listen to the music he creates. Sonny's greed ultimately destroys Joe's career and life. At a party, a thug collecting gambling debts shoots Joe, mistaking him for Sonny. Here, Salinger discusses the moral and responsible issues of artists. In a sense, Sonny had already died spiritually, and his brother was just a sacrifice for his personal greed. This story may seem simple and ordinary, but it is actually a self-examination of Salinger's spirit.

In his early years, Salinger engaged in two types of writing: one for serious art and the other for commercial benefits. In this story, Salinger divides himself into two, and uses his young nickname, Sonny, for the greedy and selfish elder brother. Through this, Salinger reminds himself not to destroy his artistic talent for worldly fame and fortune. This story also reveals why Salinger, after becoming famous, tried his best to avoid the public: the tragedy of the elder brother Sonny in the story serves as a warning, and Salinger does not want material desires to destroy himself. Although Seymour and Joe both died prematurely, their deaths were not meaningless. They exchanged their flesh and blood for the enlightenment of the living, providing a place for the displaced spirit to settle.

Spiritually homeless wanderers roam aimlessly in this world without order and meaning, eventually falling into mental illness or collapse. Those who live by compromise become normal, while those with spiritual pursuits cannot bear this filthy world and are regarded as madmen.

After returning from the battlefield, Seymour became sensitive and suspicious due to the impact of post-war syndrome. However, his relatives, including his wife Muriel, ignored this. Muriel's mother repeatedly discussed Seymour's various strange behaviors. For those who have not participated in the war, the permanent psychological trauma of the survivors on the battlefield is invisible and inexpressible. The war brought endless shadows to the Glass family. Walt, one of the Glass twins, died in a bizarre explosion at the end of the war. The trauma brought by this accident is hard to heal for the Glass family, and Seymour's suicide once made this family fall into a spiritual predicament.

Seymour's suicide signifies the collapse of the spiritual support and the beginning of a spiritual crisis for the family. "By taking his own life Seymour achieves the status of an absent presence, a haunting specter. He is either lost man or holy man, a zero or a circle, a fractured man or a sainted man. His absence focuses the mystery that haunts their lives". (Wenke, 1991, p.38) In Buddy's eyes, Seymour is a god-like existence, the spiritual guide of the Glass family. Buddy feels extremely sad and helpless about Seymour's suicide, feeling shame and helplessness. He gradually finds himself through the fragments left by Seymour and feels the continued existence of Seymour. From then on, Buddy took up the banner of spiritual redemption and completed the transcendence and self-redemption of the soul.

Salinger's another story, "The Inverted Forest," also reveals the importance of spiritual life. What Salinger wants to illustrate through this story is how the secular world and the spiritual world (that is, the imaginative inverted forest) should coexist, and the pursuit of material will inevitably lead to the depletion of art and spirit. This theme has been explored in "The Varioni Brothers." Art, as a way of redemption, can bring the troubled modern people out of the secular life and into the inverted forest, thus achieving spiritual rebirth.

PSYCHOANALYSIS: AN INEFFECTIVE CURE

Influenced by Sherwood Anderson's "Winesburg, Ohio," Salinger has a strong interest in the alienation of people in modern society. However, unlike Anderson, who focused on small-town characters, Salinger centered his attention on individuals in urban settings, represented by New York. Influenced by the philosophical thoughts of Kierkegaard, Salinger was concerned with the existential state of individuals, and his works are filled with a rejection of the Western material world and rationalism, as well as an interest in non-rationalism represented by Zen Buddhism.

A series of characters on the verge of mental collapse appear in Salinger's novels; they are misunderstood by the outside world and can only silently bear the burden of their souls. The mentally unstable serve as significant evidence of "otherness" in the novels. After Seymour

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began showing signs of mental illness, Muriel's mother and daughter discussed psychoanalytic therapy. Muriel also met a psychoanalyst at the resort hotel, hoping he could provide effective treatment for Seymour. Behavioral psychology, psychoanalytic schools, and humanistic psychology have gradually grown and had a significant impact on human life, known as the "three major forces of Western psychology." Among them, psychoanalytic psychology is the "second force" of psychology. The theories of this school were widely circulated and influential in the 1920s, founded by Austrian psychiatrist Freud, whose theories mainly stem from clinical practice in treating mental illnesses. Psychoanalysis was once highly touted, as if it were a panacea for all mental symptoms. At the beginning of "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction," the author launches a sharp critique of psychoanalysis. He believes that psychoanalysis has destroyed the inspiration and hope of talented painters, poets, and writers like Seymour. People are eager to label various celebrities as potential neurotics to justify their mediocrity. Seymour, unfortunately, became a test subject and target of attack for psychoanalysis due to his early wisdom and talent, with even his family considering him a "notorious mystic" and"the mentally unstable one." Seymour, who should have been seen as a heroic soldier, was regarded as a madman after his discharge, which is itself a great irony of war. Salinger's attitude towards war is very clear in "The Soft-Boiled Sergeant": war is a lie, unrelated to honor.

In Salinger's representative work,"The Catcher in the Rye," the protagonist Holden's journey from rebellion to escape, from despair to enlightenment, is also a true portrayal of Salinger's adolescent life. Holden yearns for freedom, nonconformity, and individuality, but the rules and systems of Pencey Prep do not align with Holden's thoughts and expectations, making him feel out of place with reality, so he ultimately chose to escape reality and everything familiar.

In Holden's eyes, the world around him is filled with materialism, commercialization, and monetization. He cannot stand everything around him, so he chooses to resist and leave. He uses this rebellious way to find and liberate himself, while expressing his dissatisfaction with the surrounding things in this unconventional way. In his experiences at Pencey and social interactions, Holden sees evil, deception, alienation, and relationships based on interests.The alienation of society has permeated everyone's life experiences and personal growth.

Holden is enamored with the innocence and beauty of childhood and is fearful of growing up and entering the adult world. However, when he encounters a kind nun, he completes a leap in understanding and a spiritual enlightenment. Growth and inner goodness and beauty can coexist. There is filth in life, but love can smooth it out. Therefore, to acknowledge the beauty of life, one must accept its vileness; this is the philosophy of life. Holden realizes this and that degeneration is an inevitability of life. In the end, he accepts reality with compassionate love and enlightenment, reconciling with the "phony" society.

Holden sympathizes with the misfortune and suffering of modern people, and his love for humanity leads the traumatized Holden towards spiritual recovery, but complete self-redemption requires an enlightenment of life. After wandering in New York for three days, Holden's emotions hit rock bottom, but suddenly he has a mysterious religious experience and gains an enlightenment of life. After returning home, Holden is admitted to a mental sanatorium. Although Holden has not achieved complete mental recovery, he has the inner wisdom and strength to heal. Holden's contradictions and pain shake the hearts of every reader; he is a lonely explorer of the spiritual "wasteland," defending innocence, longing for friendship, and seeking understanding, but these pursuits ultimately end in failure.

"To be the catcher in the rye" is the world and life that Holden longs for. He is like a child running wildly in the rye field, struggling, searching, perhaps disappointed but never giving up. However, society, this rye field, is more ruthless and indifferent. If one does not reconcile with oneself, perhaps they will never find the direction of life.

FRANNY AND ZOOEY: CRISIS AND WAY OUT

The youngest members of the Glass family, Franny and Zooey, both encounter varying degrees of spiritual crisis. They are representatives and microcosms of the countless people in the vast world. Salinger's spiritual way out for them is to experience life wholeheartedly, to seek transcendence through love and connection, and to achieve enlightenment. Buddhist Zen believes that as long as one understands the principle of becoming a Buddha by seeing one's nature and practices the method of "no thought as the main point", without focusing on all external religious forms, one can achieve enlightenment. In Western discourse, "epiphany" was originally a term in Christianity, referring to the manifestation of Jesus Christ. Novelist James Joyce first introduced this concept into literary creation and criticism, referring to a "sudden spiritual awakening," that is, "a sudden spiritual manifestation that appears in the mundane state of speech or in an unforgettable moment of the soul." The epiphany in Western Christian experience is an extraordinary feeling, similar to enlightenment in Zen. It is "not a change in one's general viewpoint, but a fundamental transformation of one's outlook on life and the world. After experiencing this transformation, one gains a completely new perspective that can see through the illusions of the world and people themselves to 'see their true nature.'" (Wang, 1997, p. 177).

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The epiphany in Zen and in Christianity is essentially the same. The subject gains a moment of inspiration and revelation through spiritual experience, transcending the limitations of their own understanding, directly reaching the other shore of truth, and communicating directly with God or the divine. As long as one understands the principle of seeing one's nature to become a Buddha, and practices the method of "no thought as the main point," without focusing on all external religious forms, one can achieve enlightenment. Enlightenment is the sudden acquisition of a new concept accompanied by an inner experience of "being enlightened," "suddenly seeing the light," or "dispelling the clouds to see the sun." It quickly comprehends the essence of the Dharma through the correct practice method, "clarifying the mind and seeing one's nature," thereby guiding the correct practice to achieve success. Of course, this is not the only way, and enlightenment is mainly completed through inspiration, which could be instantaneous in time.

The introduction of Zen to the United States was by no means accidental; it fits with the spiritual needs of America. After World War II, McCarthyism at home led to oppression, the shadow of war still lingered, and the Cold War had begun. Pessimism, mental collapse, and a crisis of faith became common phenomena in American society. Against the backdrop of the collapse of traditional values, many young people, under the banner of "liberalism," regarded rebellion, indulgence, and promiscuity as anti-traditional activities and beliefs, impacting the spiritual atmosphere of America. In this situation, some Americans felt that they could not find a way out in the Western philosophical world, so they began to turn to the study of Eastern culture and thought, seeking a spiritual home and direction and meaning for life. At the same time, a large number of Eastern ancient literary and religious works were brought to the United States, receiving attention and dissemination. Salinger began studying Buddhist Zen thought at the end of 1946, having left the battlefield and just ended a marriage that lasted less than a year. After experiencing the heavy blow of war and the failure of marriage, Salinger was briefly confused. However, after being exposed to Zen thought, especially after meeting the Japanese Buddhist scholar D.T. Suzuki, the knots in his heart were untied, and he clarified his writing and life direction. In order to better comprehend Zen thought, he moved away from the noisy and prosperous metropolis to a quieter town, with daily life centered around meditation, yoga, contemplation, and writing. Studying Zen thought gave Salinger a sense of responsibility to enlighten spiritually through his fictions. Thus, Salinger successively created works rich in Zen flavor, such as "Franny and Zooey," and "Seymour: An Introduction." In these works, the dominant theme is no longer the accusation and criticism of war but the redemption and enlightenment of the soul. These works also reflect the positive role of Eastern philosophy in the reconstruction of Salinger's beliefs.

Salinger's later works increasingly leaned towards Eastern philosophy and Zen, which is also evident in the work "Franny and Zooey." From the beginning of the fiction, Franny has been influenced by a religious book, which she carries with her constantly. After Franny returns home, under the influence of that religious book, she talks with Zooey in the living room and on the phone, and these various experiences lead Franny to an epiphany. The book Franny reads, "The Way of the Pilgrim," is about religion, and under its influence, she learns that through continuous prayer, her worldview is subject to a great mystical influence that forms a new concept of things. However, Franny is still confused at this point, not knowing how to achieve enlightenment.

Zooey, in the role of an older brother and even more so as someone who has been through it, guides Franny, saying that "detachment" is the only important thing in religious life. "Only through detachment and desire lessness." Zooey then persuades Franny through his memories of Seymour, "Seymour's fat lady," meaning that every ordinary spectator is Jesus. What Salinger conveys here is the Zen concept that everyone has Buddha-nature, and the key is how to achieve detachment and enlightenment through one's own spiritual experience.

Salinger's personal experiences are closely intertwined with the historical era. Between 1937 and 1938, he traveled to Europe and spent several months in Vienna, living with a Jewish family in a Jewish neighborhood and falling in love with the daughter of the family. However, after the war, a shaken Salinger returned to Vienna to inquire about the family, only to find that they had all perished in concentration camps. For Salinger, who had already been hospitalized due to the trauma of war, this psychological blow was fatal. The only way for him was to use writing to remember and forget, so he wrote this unforgettable experience into his work, "A Girl I Knew." The story was published in 1948, right after the war, when the memory of the Holocaust was still vivid. In the story, the narrator shares many similarities with Salinger. Like Salinger, the narrator is a college student who came to Europe for the family business and learned two languages. This is Salinger's recollection of his past life. The girl that the protagonist John falls in love with is exactly the same as the girl Salinger fell in love with in reality. In other words, Salinger has brought reality into the story.

Three years after the end of the war, he strives to free himself from the pain and find a meaning to live for himself and for countless individuals like him.The summer vacation by the lake in 1948 brought about significant changes deep in Salinger's soul. The memories of the war weighed increasingly heavy on him, and he was unwilling to continue on this topic, or else he would forever be mired in pain. He was rethinking the direction of his future writing, attempting to free himself from the war and darkness. As Salinger once declared in his works, after the war, he would never mention it again. Thus,

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Salinger began to shift the themes of his works, trying to stay away from describing dark subjects, even though the memories of war and the Holocaust can never be erased deep in his soul. Salinger's mood gradually became peaceful, and he integrated this tranquility of the soul into his works, reducing the elements of pessimism and darkness, and the torrent of thoughts gradually became gentle.

Salinger is also a victim of this indifferent and alienated world. A large part of the themes of his works come from personal experiences, and among them, World War II and love experiences have the deepest influence. Salinger talks about war in his works, but he has a skeptical attitude towards love and marriage. In several works, he wrote about the estrangement between men and women, infidelity, and extramarital affairs, depicting the process of spiritual emptiness of wanderers drowning in loveless marriages.

The infidelity in relationships stems from the lack of innocence and love in the adult world. In another story, "Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes," Salinger discusses marriage, emotions, trust, and human vanity once again. This novel is a moral drama, although the author never makes any comments from beginning to end. He continues Holden's dissatisfaction and criticism: this is a hypocritical world, full of hypocrites and people with low morals. Behind this seemingly relaxed novel lies a serious and heavy theme: love and faith. In a world without love, faith cannot be found. Similarly, in a world without faith, there will be no true love. The filth of the adult world originates from the loss of the innocent world.

Failed marriages are a common theme in Salinger's works, reflecting his own marital experiences. The pain of war and the wounds of marriage are both results stemming from a lack of love and communication. In "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut," a stagnant marriage once again takes center stage, and this time, it is accompanied by an indifferent mother-daughter relationship. Eloise undergoes changes throughout the story. By the end, Salinger perhaps felt the narrative was too somber, with no trace of hope to be found, so he added a detail as the conclusion, which can also be seen as Eloise's epiphany. In this novella, Salinger, as usual, employs his customary technique—crafting characters through external details. There is not a single psychological description throughout; instead, it is filled with dialogues, actions, and expressions like a camera. In pursuit of authenticity, he does not shy away from intricate details. Before delving into the interactions between Eloise and Ramona and the memories of Walter, there is a great deal of preparatory dialogue. This is reality. Eloise gradually relaxes in front of Mary Jane, slowly entering the depths of her memories, revealing the deepest, most unspeakable pain in her heart, until her emotional defenses completely crumble, and she bursts into a flood of tears: "I was a good girl back then, I was, wasn't I?" (Salinger, 1989, p.38). What Salinger aims to illustrate in this story is the struggle between the illusory middle-class dream and the flawed reality. In other words, he is discussing the survival and spiritual path of the individual.

THE SONG OF INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE: THE PATH TO REDEMPTION AND EPIPHANY

Salinger makes no secret of the influence British poet William Blake had on him, frequently referring to the tiger and the lamb, representing the adult world and the innocent world of children. Salinger's life experiences have always revolved around the issue of whether a person's growth and spiritual world can remain pure. He not only depicts the pain of growing up but also the contradictions and confrontations between minors and adults. In "De Daumier -Smith's Blue Period," it appears particularly direct and everyday, and the cause of their conflict is the love for the same woman, Smith's mother, and Bobby's wife.

A significant question is raised here: In this hypocritical world, what can truly save us? Salinger's answer is love and art, and this kind of spiritual love and art can only be obtained through personal spiritual experience. The external world can never rescue an individual's spiritual crisis.

Salinger's works not only reveal the beauty of art but also shine with a moral sense that cares about the fate of humanity. This moral sense is the manifestation of all his beliefs—to seek a way of survival for people on the ruins—in art. Faith becomes the coordinate of Salinger's artistic composition, dividing the novel's world into two realms that affirm and deny faith, namely, the "child's world" and the "adult world." The adult world is characterized by loneliness, emptiness, and meaninglessness, composed of Holden, Seymour, Arthur, Muriel, Franny, and "I." It is a world of isolation, boredom, longing to talk, running away from home, mental breakdown, and ultimately suicide. There is no warmth or friendship here, no holy and great love, no future to grasp or even to long for in fantasy, and even the present life is just a dark abyss. This is the terrible reality brought by the adult world.

Salinger is not an advocate of suffering and meaninglessness because that would be meaningless for him and his novels and life. As a serious writer, Salinger's ultimate goal is to propose a constructive view of our existence. What he truly wants to accomplish is to reveal a basis for "hope" and "expectation" in this place that has lost meaning, and to make himself and his novels the "hopeful driving force" of life. This driving force lies in the "child's world" composed of true children

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like Esmé, Charles, Lionel, Teddy, Boo Boo, Sibyl, and Zooey. When reading Salinger's fiction, we are often moved by the child's world because it is filled with understanding, care, friendship, true love, and the beauty and meaning that come with life. Although the "child's world" is just a small world surrounded and monitored by the "adult world," it is this small flame flickering in the vast darkness that brings us hope, and it is this poetic nature that leads Salinger onto the path of saving reality. We can no longer accept the temptation of the human habitat unconditionally; Salinger emphasizes in all his words. Because he finally believes that for us, the naked pain, terror, unsettled troubles, and the inability to find the meaning of life are the true background of the world. This is an abyss in human existence that cannot be ignored, revealed to him by the war he experienced.

War made Salinger recognize the crisis of modern people and put him on the path to saving our "crisis-ridden" habitat. This is the opposition to the highly rationalized culture and life represented by war in our habitat. It is the rational popular culture that shattered the traditional culture characterized by the Christian spirit—pushing the Christian spirit out of culture and life. This shattering is the root cause of the habitat crisis. It has made "a society that is essentially Christian and culturally secular" popular in a society that was originally Christian. So the journey to seek the pure spirit of God led Salinger on his own path. "Phony" is the most commonly used phrase in the novel "The Catcher in the Rye." It is both a true portrayal of our habitat and culture and the author's direct words of mockery and irony for everything. "Phony" is the inevitable result of truly rational things; it is a synonym for the culture of the rational popular culture of the "adult world."

Nihilism is the result of Western thought rationalizing the Christian spirit. Salinger's eyes are perceptive; he confesses the two major characteristics of our twentieth-century culture—philosophy and science, the two peaks of rationality—and warns those who believe in rationality: "Philosophy and science promote the lies of life, not the truth of life; they cover up the reality of existence in the name of judging the truth." Their direct effect is only spiritual wandering and suicide under nihilism. So he resists in this way, looking for the divine in ordinary things, looking for meaning and order in a simple world, and finally completes the key step of "striving towards the purification of the soul."

Salinger's "mysticism" is an important theme in his works. In fact, in the last story of "Nine Stories," "Teddy," Salinger has already revealed his intellectual interests to readers. Subsequently, "Franny and Zooey" is more artistically mature and concise than "Nine Stories," and ideologically, it is almost an extension and expansion of "Teddy."

Salinger is not the reclusive writer simply identified as all his words and actions are participating in the dialogue between the "child's world" and the "adult world," including his "seclusion," which is also using the rest of his life to continue the search and resistance. Salinger firmly believes that an artist is only concerned with one thing, seeking some kind of perfection, but each according to his own standards, not according to anyone else's standards, because he has always been the best at persisting in the identity of a watcher.

The "child's world," as a form of grace where God connects with our habitat, not only exists as an objective reality but more so as the transcendental significance of the object. Because only this transcendental significance can declare our survival crisis with absolute power and authority, and it is also this transcendental significance that retains and flickers in this world that gives us a glimmer of hope to continue living amidst the ruins. This transcendental significance appears in the form of a challenge, pointing to the re-emergence of the Christian spirit in the habitat after the rationality of the "adult world" is removed. Salinger sees the "child's world" as his own path to salvation and devotes all his passion, hoping it can shoulder the great responsibility.

Salinger's path of salvation is one of poetic living, which is of the same essence as Heidegger's pursuit of "dwelling poetically on earth." To live poetically means to use poetry to confront rigid rationality, to resist technology and philosophy devoid of poetry, to reveal what is concealed by existence and to illuminate it with the light of being, allowing the meaning of life to approach people in the clarity of existence, because the language of poetry is the path of existence pointing towards God. Esmé offers divine love and care to "me" in the ruthless war, and Sybil offers understanding to Seymour in a world where closed hearts and the spread of schizophrenia are rampant; when "phony" becomes the most painful experience of existence, Holden's only true desire is to be the catcher in the rye. Salinger's writing is a spiritual journey of his own self, "...Salinger presents the reader with a paradox that throughout the book, grows insistent: The stories delineate the path from spiritual death to spiritual enlightenment (*satori*) at the same time that they exemplify the uselessness of imposing any pattern, through logical analysis, on this random collection of a fiction". (Bloom, 2008, p. 91). These are the essence of a poetic life, Christ-like acts of bearing the abyss of suffering for all beings. Poetic living also means approaching things and the world in their essence and conveying life experiences truthfully, no matter what language you use. Thus, Charles uses the parable "What did this wall say to that wall?" to express admiration for interest and friendship in life and others, and writes letters full of love like poetry, truly dedicated to all those he loves and waits for on this earth.

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CONCLUSION

Salinger created a series of spiritual wanderers, from restless, empty young men and women, to servicemen and their families hurt by war, and teenagers like Holden who feel lost and displaced in a highly materialistic society. As the war ended, Salinger's writing gradually touched upon family life and marriage. Following the series of Holden's stories, he built a spiritual fortress, where another group of wanderers on the spiritual wasteland reside: the Glass family. Without exception, these wanderers, in their unsettled spiritual world, go through suffering and ultimately achieve enlightenment or liberation. This also reflects Salinger, as an author, trying to find salvation through religious writing.

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