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ENG 481

16 December 2020

More than “Cute”: Home in *Franny and Zooey*

The society that we live in often tells us that it is nonsense to be sentimental. We are taught that to thrive in this world, we have to be tough and emotionless. There are some things in our lives, though, that we simply cannot help but love too deeply. Have you ever loved anything so much you could not help but get a little sentimental? A little wistful? A little obnoxiously poetic? In his *Franny and Zooey*, J. D. Salinger has tapped into truths about home and family – the softest part of my heart, I’m afraid – and exposed them for what they are: something so obnoxiously poetic, so irreplaceable, and so sacred that there is no method to discuss them apart from the softest part of our silly little hearts. In *Franny and Zooey*, Salinger shows that the unique and perhaps sentimental love that stems from the home – including both the physical space of home and the people that are home – plays a role in our lives that nothing else quite can, which justifies his title heroine’s retreat home in the story. Franny’s experience of home in *Franny and Zooey* leads her to discover that the purpose of home is to provide safety and a place to search for purpose with the aid of those that know and love her best, learning that there is divinity in the love of her family through her home.

To begin, I think it will be helpful to give a brief outline of Salinger’s Glass family and *Franny and Zooey* more explicitly. The Glasses are a fictional family that Salinger created and wrote stories about consistently through his career. These stories were gathered into three different volumes: *Nine Stories*, *Raise High the Roofbeam*, *Carpenters and Seymour: an*

Introduction, and *Franny and Zooey*. All of Salinger's stories were published originally in *The New Yorker* in smaller excerpts than they now appear in print. Of the nine stories in *Nine Stories*, not all are explicitly based upon the Glass children, though there are allusions throughout. There is no real strong correlation among these stories; they simply all exist within one volume, and they were all written and first published in *The New Yorker* between 1948 and 1953 (Halford). *Raise High the Roofbeam Carpenters and Seymour: an Introduction*, two stories printed in one volume, details the relationship between the eldest two Glass children, Seymour and Buddy. "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" was published in *The New Yorker* in November of 1955 and "Seymour: an Introduction" in 1959 (Halford). *Franny and Zooey*, the novella, was originally published in *The New Yorker* in two parts separate from each other. "Franny" was first published in January of 1955 and "Zooey" published 1957 (Halford).

The Glass parents, Les and Bessie, were vaudevillian actors and met while performing. Their children are, in order, Seymour, Buddy, Beatrice, twins Walt and Waker, Zooey (short for Zachary), and Franny. All of the Glass children, at one time or another, appeared consistently on a radio show called "It's a Wise Child" that featured extraordinarily gifted children. The eldest Glass, Seymour, plays an important role in the lives of everyone in the family. He was extremely intelligent – beginning college at 15 years old – was a poet, a philosopher, and a beloved brother. It is important to note that in the first story in *Nine Stories*, entitled *A Perfect Day for Bananafish*, Seymour kills himself on a vacation with his wife. *Bananafish* is set seven years before *Franny and Zooey* takes place. Buddy Glass, the second born, is the narrator in all of the Glass stories. Seymour and Buddy, together, were charged with the education of Zooey and Franny, the youngest of the bunch. From an extremely early age, the brothers introduced the small children to complex philosophical and spiritual ideas.

BooBoo Glass is married and has a child. The story “Down at the Dinghy,” one of *Nine Stories*, stars BooBoo and her son. Walt was killed in the war; he is most directly alluded to in the story “Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut” of *Nine Stories*. Waker, Walt’s twin brother, is a Catholic priest and monk. Zachary Glass – known as Zooey – is a 25 year old successful actor. Franny, the youngest, when we encounter her in *Franny and Zooey*, is a 20 year old college student in crisis. The youngest two, who we will get to know better than any of the others throughout the course of this essay, are profoundly influenced by their older siblings, as all younger siblings are. Because they were educated by Seymour and Buddy, they are both extremely intelligent and spiritually informed, though both struggle with what to do with all of the philosophical instruction that has been imparted on them. *Franny and Zooey* stars these, the youngest of the Glasses, with a supporting role played by their mother and a guest appearance or two by their father, Les. The influence of Seymour and Buddy is clear enough that they may as well be players in the story as well.

Considering her upbringing, it is unsurprising that in the first part of the novella, entitled simply “Franny,” we find our title heroine experiencing a crisis of faith. Franny meets her boyfriend, Lane, for lunch, and she begins to explain to him a newfound appreciation for – and perhaps obsession with – the book *The Way of the Pilgrim* and the Jesus Prayer. She describes that *The Way of the Pilgrim* is about a man who wants to learn to pray without ceasing, so he learns the Jesus Prayer from a wise spiritual man. The Jesus Prayer, she tells him, is prayed simply: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.” This man, the pilgrim, wanders around the country, teaching people “how to pray by this special way” (*Franny and Zooey* 30). She tells him about how she is fascinated with the idea of praying without ceasing.

She seems to be most enthralled by the notion that “nobody asks you to believe a thing when you first start out” (*Franny and Zooey* 32). The pure act of imploring Jesus’s mercy over and over again can be effective as prayer, she explains, whether or not the person even truly believes it. Lane does not seem to listen to her, paying more attention to the frog legs on his plate than to Franny. She continues, though, to tell him that, if a person continuously repeats the Jesus prayer, “You get to see God” (*Franny and Zooey* 34). Lane dismisses this again, complaining about how late they will be for the football game, recognizing only that the “psychology” of it all is “interesting, anyway” (*Franny and Zooey* 34). This whole sequence of events leads Franny to have a sort of nervous breakdown in the back of the restaurant. Eventually, she faints. By the end of her story, we find Franny lying on the floor in the back of the restaurant chanting the Jesus Prayer to herself over and over again (37). The next we see of her, around the middle of *Zooey*, Franny is at home, curled into a ball on her couch with her cat (105). Finding herself in crisis, Franny retreats home. Critics of the novella disagree over whether this is a good or healthy decision for Franny.

However good or healthy, this retreat home is a familiar response for many of us. Why is it that we long for home when everything seems uncertain? In the introduction to his book, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*, Gaston Bachelard mentions that one necessary purpose of the home is simply and practically protection from adverse forces (xxxv). Home is a safe space. In an even utilitarian sense, we use it to shut out dangers – like cold and bears and bad guys. In some sense, this can help us to understand Franny’s retreat home. At home, she can separate herself from the outside world – from the people, like Lane, in the world who are ignorant and even harsh to her in her search for meaning. She can separate herself from the things that would seek to veer her away from this search. She

can also physically rest her body, which is something that is often necessary when having mental breakdowns. In this practical sense, we begin to understand what Franny is doing at home in her situation. It follows fairly naturally that part of the purpose of home for Franny is protection from adverse forces.

Zooey, in true older brother fashion, mercilessly critiques Franny's retreat home, perhaps because of this understanding of what home is. He tells her, "If you're going to go on with this breakdown business, I wish to hell you'd go back to college to have it. Where you're not the baby of the family" (*Franny and Zooey* 135). He hints that it was childish of her to "pick and choose the place" where she had her mental breakdown (140). He argues that if she was having a *real* nervous breakdown, she would not care where she was – she would not have the luxury of retreating to a "safe place." She would simply break down, regardless of the risk.

Incidentally, as I alluded before, there are critics that agree with Zooey on this front, though they take the argument a bit further. John Updike, for example, considers it a flaw in the story, arguing that the "real world" of "Franny" is superior to the "dream world" of "Zooey." Knowing that "Zooey" takes place in the Glass home, while "Franny" takes place outside of it means that he is critiquing the Glass home as inferior because it is unrealistic or fantasy-like. Updike, I think, would agree with Zooey that Franny's return home is childish and self-seeking, and further the argument to say that the sanctuary that Franny seeks – and in many ways, finds – in her home makes the story too "cute" to be believable.

Alfred Kazin is another of Salinger's most important critics. He moves from critiquing the atmosphere of the Glass home to the integrity of the Glass family, including its particular characters and their relationships to each other. His article "Everybody's Favorite" is constantly referenced within the critical conversation of Salinger's Glass stories. Kazin says, about the

Glasses, that “what is ultimate in their love is the love of their own moral and intellectual excellence... the love that they have for themselves as an idea” (Kazin 55). He accuses Salinger of sentimentality towards his Glass family, which, he believes, is what makes the Glasses appear to love themselves singularly. He argues that this self love makes the characters unlikeable, entirely unrealistic, and difficult to understand. He, like Updike, demeaningly uses the term “cute” to describe Salinger’s writing and the Glass characters.

This use of the word “cute” to degrade the Glass family is an interesting choice from Kazin and Updike. It stems from the same section in “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters” in which Seymour defines sentimentality, which the critics also turn against Salinger in their criticism of the Glasses. In the novella, Buddy reads a bit of Seymour’s diary, in which Seymour writes melancholically of a moment he shared with his wife-to-be. The pair see a movie together, and Seymour muses about his love and need for “her indiscriminating heart” (*Raise High* 77). She wants to discuss a specific part of the movie with him, and this is what follows:

She doesn’t use the word ‘cute’ any more. When did I ever frighten her out of her normal vocabulary? Bore that I am, I mentioned R. H. Blyth’s definition of sentimentality: that we are being sentimental when we give to a thing more tenderness than God gives to it. I said (sententiously?) that God undoubtedly loves kittens, but not, in all probability, with Technicolor booties on their paws. He leaves that creative tough to script writers. M. thought this over, seemed to agree with me, but the ‘knowledge’ wasn’t too very welcome. She sat stirring her drink and feeling unclosed to me. She worries over the way her love for me comes and goes, appears and disappears. She doubts its reality simply because it isn’t as steadily pleasurable as a kitten. God knows it *is* sad. The human voice conspires to desecrate everything on earth. (*Raise High* 78)

It is interesting that Updike would choose this passage and this word – “cute” – to discuss the Glasses, because it seems as though Seymour is beating himself up here for not being able to appreciate the “cute”-ness that exists in the world. He envies Muriel (his future wife, above simply referred to as M.) because she can view the world without the discriminating eye that he views the world with. She can see things as “cute” without considering Blythe’s definition of sentimentality, for example. Seymour cannot. He wishes that he could. It is, perhaps, why he loves her so much. It seems odd to me, then, that this passage would be alluded to in an effort to describe the Glasses as too sentimental, because it is an example of Seymour perhaps not being sentimental enough, at least in his own opinion. Kazin and Updike make themselves out to be, then, like Seymour is here: too full of pride and “intellectuality” that he cannot appreciate something in the way that he should, or at least how he wants to. The critics use Blythe’s definition of sentimentality – “that we are being sentimental when we give to a thing more tenderness than God gives it” (*Raise High* 78) – against Salinger, as well. Kazin argues that Salinger is sentimental towards his characters, which is what makes them appear so “cute” and improbable.

Henry Anatole Grunwald in his chapter, “Sonny: An Introduction,” answers this argument in an interesting way. He paints the Glass home as “wondrous and weird, trivial and homey” (9). This does not disqualify Updike’s and Kazin’s arguments that there is something perhaps “cute” that exists in the Glass home, but it takes a different form in combating the argument. Grunwald does not claim that home lacks a certain “cute”-ness or sentimentality; his argument simply implies the question: but what is wrong with that? A question which, at least as Grunwald believes, Updike and Kazin fail to answer satisfactorily. Grunwald points to something really helpful here: that the kind of sentimentality that exists inherently inside a home

does not necessarily make it less real than the outside world. Home is just a particular part of the real world that does not necessarily follow the same rules as the world outside of it.

Gaston Bachelard devotes his *Poetics of Space* to this idea: that the intimate space that is a person's home performs functions exclusive to itself. This argument can be the key to not only answering the question of whether Franny's retreat home was healthy or good, but it also could be a key to understanding the purpose that her home plays in her life.

One function of the home, as I briefly mentioned before, is to protect a subject from the outside world; however, Bachelard only passingly mentions this function. What he is primarily interested in throughout his book is the unique role that the imagination plays upon the home and the home upon the imagination. He argues: "space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measurements and estimates of the surveyor. It has been lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination" (Bachelard xxxvi). Home is a space so often "seized upon by the imagination" that we are simply unable to view it objectively in the way that we could, perhaps, view a space that we are in for the first time or that we simply use for a single purpose. This is illustrated in the image that the reader is given of the Glass living room. A description of the furniture of the room paints them as "old, intrinsically unlovely, and clotted with memory and sentiment" (*Franny and Zooey* 104). It would be impossible for Franny, or any of the Glasses, to see this room and not see something deeper within it. This is not a bad thing, though, at least according to Bachelard. It is simply true. This further answers Updike's argument that this "dream world" that is the Glass home makes the story seem unrealistic; Bachelard proves that it is, in fact, *only* realistic and natural that a person views his or her own home with different eyes and with deeper feelings than a person experiences the rest of the world. If this is true of the space that is home to us, would it not be

even more true of the people that are home to us: our family? Would it not be true that we view our family in a similar way?

David Seed's argument becomes helpful here. He claims that "family is by definition a collective structure of relations, one which can be revealed in fiction by one member talking about another" (Seed 79). Because *Franny and Zooey* is narrated by the brother of the title characters, Buddy, the story reads like a home movie, an analogy our narrator makes himself. These people are as much home to Buddy as the space of his home, so if we are to return to Bachelard's logic in the *Poetics of Space*, then, perhaps, it is not only natural and unavoidable that he be partial and somewhat sentimental towards his characters, but even better than had he been impartial, because his partial view of his family carries with it the kind of truth that only he could bear. A kind of truth that only a person can offer of his or her own home. A certain viewpoint, a certain imagination, that one can only have of his or her own family. We see each member of the Glass family from *inside* the family.

If this view is somewhat sentimental, should it be any other way? Considering that Buddy is the narrator of all of the Glass stories, the characters would be less believable if they weren't seen through the eyes of love that Buddy has for them. Buddy refers to the novella as a "love story, pure and complicated" (*Franny and Zooey* 43). The story is the love story of a family. The sentimentality that is inherently present within the love story of a family does not make the story or the characters less believable for the same reason that it does not make their home less believable: there is something unique within the relationships that demands more than what a usual relationship would demand. It is perfectly understandable, then, that when faced with a crisis, Franny runs to the place that she knows better than any other and to the people who will love her with all the love that their relationship demands.

These arguments answer Salinger's critics, but they do not necessarily satisfy Zooey's concern – that Franny's retreat home is childish or selfish. To be honest, I am not sure that it can be answered satisfactorily. It may have to be conceded that Franny, in her retreat home, is being somewhat childish and even selfish. Zooey critiques her for the way that she continuously turns away the well-meaning care-taking her parents are trying to offer her. Their father Les, in – forgive my hyperbole – perhaps the most wholesome gesture in the history of literature, “was all for bringing a tangerine in to [Franny] last night before he went to bed” (*Franny and Zooey* 135). The reader sees very little of Les, so this small action means more than it could from another character. It catches the reader's attention to see Franny turn down such a sweet gesture, especially considering the amount of thought he had to put into it. Zooey brings this up because he is irritated that Franny has turned the house upside down and she will not accept the love that her family is trying to give her. In another image – one that becomes increasingly significant – Bessie continually offers Franny chicken broth. “Mother,” is Franny's response, “now, please. I've asked you twenty times. Will you *please* stop mentioning chicken broth to me?” (*Franny and Zooey* 156). In her vehement refusal of these offers, Franny *is* being childish and selfish in the way that Zooey suggests. She is not only refusing to let them help her, but she is being inconsiderate in the effect that her suffering has on those around her, which is, I think, what Zooey critiques the most in Franny's retreat home to have her mental breakdown.

An understanding of the general background of the Glass parent's faith becomes helpful here. Les was raised Jewish, and Bessie is Irish Catholic. Though neither seem to explicitly observe all practices of either religion, it is apparent the ways that this groundwork has affected the environment of the home – it would be impossible for it not to. In the introduction to his book *The Jewish Home: A Guide for Jewish Living*, Daniel B. Syme explains that home is the

center and beginning of faith for a Jewish family. The family, in the Jewish tradition, is the primary teacher of the faith. This was true in the Glass family. Franny and Zooey were given their spiritual guidance from their brothers in their home from the very beginning of their lives. As just one example, "Raise High the Roofbeam, Carpenters" begins with a story in which Seymour reads Franny a Taoist tale to soothe her while she is restless in her crib (3-5). Because spirituality has been linked to home for her for her whole life, it makes sense that for Franny to come home when she is in a state of spiritual crisis would only be natural. She is coming back, physically, to the place that it all began for her. She is also coming back to the people that began it all for her to try and find answers from those who have historically always had them for her.

Bessie's Catholicism is something that also deeply influences the workings of the Glass family. In his exhortation "Familiaris Consortio," Saint Pope John Paul II considers the purpose and the right ordering of Catholic families and Catholic homes. His section on "The Rights of Children," is especially relevant here, because in it, he says that special care should be given to a child when "it is in need of everything, when it is sick, suffering or handicapped" (John Paul II). Franny, a twenty year old, though she is not a small child, has just arrived home in a crisis. According to this idea, this Catholic ideal of how families ought to work, it is normal and good for a family to rally around a member who is in need of some special care of any kind. It is clear that this is what the Glasses do – from Les's tangerine, to Bessie's chicken soup, to Zooey's attempts at counsel, and even to the fact that Buddy has been told this story enough times that he can tell it; they rally around their member that is sick and is in need of special attention. Franny knows, even if it is simply subconscious or instinctual, that she will receive this care when she retreats to the people that are her home. Just as when a body is sick and it spends all the

resources it has to heal the part that is sick, the whole Glass household now turns to the member that is sick, Franny, and gives her every resource it can to return her back to health.

Enter Zooey.

In order to understand how Zooey eventually helps his sister back to health and back to peace, I think it would be helpful to clarify exactly what Franny's crisis stems from. Franny's frustration, at its surface level, is that she is fed up with her education, her professors, and all of the students at school. She feels as though everyone around her is a fake and she is simply sick of it. At a deeper level, we see that Franny is doubting whether *anyone* can be truly authentic – even herself. In her conversation with Lane at the very beginning of the novella, she tells him that she quit acting, even though she loved it, because of the egos. She said that while she was acting, she sensed in herself this drive to competition and to please other people. She felt her ego in the same way she loathed it in others, and her response was: “I’m sick of it. I’m sick of not having the courage to be an absolute nobody” (*Franny and Zooey* 26). She is also irritated by the audience – by their mindless laughter and senseless applause. She is tired of artificiality and ego. It seems as though it is in this state that she is introduced to *The Way of the Pilgrim* and the Jesus Prayer in one of her classes, by Professor Tupper, apparently a professor who she also feels to be a phony and uses as an exemplar for the kind of person she is most frustrated with in her college experience. As we know, she tries to escape this world that she loathes by praying the Jesus prayer without ceasing to try to transcend this world.

Then, as we know, she comes home. Zooey's first attempt at consolation is going to sound a bit familiar. He accuses her of sentimentality. He tells her that in order to really pray the Jesus prayer authentically, she needs to understand who Jesus is and she needs to be praying to Jesus. He proposes that she is praying to an idea that she has of Jesus instead of really praying to

the *real* Jesus. He knows her history: that when she was young, she became frustrated with Jesus, because he flipped tables and cared more about people than about animals. Zooey knows that Franny has – or, at least, used to have – this idea of Jesus is a warm, fuzzy *idea* of a thing. He admonishes her sentimentality, pressing her by asking “who in the Bible besides Jesus knew – *knew* – that we’re carrying the Kingdom of Heaven around with us, inside, where we’re all too goddam stupid and sentimental and unimaginative to look?” (*Franny and Zooey* 144). He presses her too far, and she bursts into tears. He recognizes here that this is not the way to help his sister, because this is the same thing that she keeps telling herself. What she is trying to avoid in becoming an actor or a member of the world is sentimentality. She is trying to avoid giving things more affection than God would give them. In the same way it affects Seymour’s love, Muriel, though, it affects Franny. It breaks her heart and she clings to the idea of the Jesus Prayer as her escape from the desires that she has in the world. She thinks that if she throws herself into this prayer, she will no longer want the things of this world. Zooey, in telling her that even in her prayer there is sentimentality, shatters what seems to be her last hope at ever getting over this habit.

Her brother, affected as one would be when he has just thrown his small favorite sister into uncontrollable sobs, is unsure of what to do next. Zooey finds himself in Buddy and Seymour’s old room. Around the room there are small quotes written in Seymour’s handwriting. They come from such diverse voices as Kafka, St. Francis de Sales, “The Gospel of Ramakrishna,” and Leo Tolstoy, each introducing a new aspect that reinforces the idea that God lives inside us. This is the sort of idea that Zooey was trying to convey to Franny, but which got lost in his perhaps aggressive and sanctimonious delivery. After reading through these quotes,

Zooey puts his head down, it seems in deep thought. He then finds a diary entry from Seymour's diary. It reads:

My twenty-first birthday. Presents, presents, presents. Zooey and the baby, as usual, shopped lower Broadway. They gave me a fine supply of itching powder and a box of three stink bombs. I'm to drop the bombs in the elevator at Columbia or "someplace very crowded" as soon as I get a good chance.

Several acts of vaudeville tonight for my entertainment. Les and Bessie did a lovely soft-shoe on sand swiped by Boo Boo from the urn in the lobby. When they were finished, B. and Boo Boo did a pretty funny imitation of them. Les nearly in tears. The baby sang "Abdul Abulbul Amir." Z. did the Will Mahoney exit Les taught him, ran smack into the bookcase, and was *furious*. The twins did B's and my old Buck & Bubbles imitation. But to perfection. Marvellous. In the middle of it, the doorman called up on the housephone and asked if anybody was dancing up there. A Mr. Seligman, on the fourth –
(*Franny and Zooey* 154)

Zooey stops reading there. Again, he puts his head down for a long time. It is clear that he is deeply moved by both of these experiences: the quotes and the diary entry. It is almost as if his brothers are teaching him how to love Franny at this moment.

I think that this latter scene is so moving to Zooey in part because he simply misses his oldest brother. Seymour was such an influence on each of them, and it is completely expected and understandable for Zooey to be affected by his late beloved brother's writing of his love for him. It is clear here that Zooey is moved by the journal because it shows how deeply Seymour loved each of them. Something about this journal entry is kind of sentimental, but only, I argue, because Seymour sees the truly deep and transcendent beauty that exists within his family while

they give him ridiculous gifts and perform for him. He sees God in them. In this moment, he is able to see the beauty in them without second-guessing himself the way that he eventually will with Muriel. He simply loves them deeply in the silliness of all they are. Maybe this is sentimental. Maybe it is not.

Going back to Blyth's definition – that sentimentality is giving something more tenderness than God does – it's hard to think that someone would be able to give more tenderness to his family than God could. Maybe seeing God in the world around us and in our home is somewhat sentimental, but if it is, that is only because we are human beings who are small and cannot see as God does. It is only because this is the only way we can express how it feels when we experience intimately the love of God in another person. My oldest nephew, Carter – who is 12 now and would perhaps be mortified that I share this – explained this with more eloquence than I can when he was in the second grade. He was going home after his first communion to celebrate with his family, and he asked his dad, “have you ever been so happy that it just feels like there's two warm hands pressing on your tummy?” There is no doubt that this is cute. No doubt a little sentimental. But also profound. Also oh so very real and true. Maybe this is just how we experience God in our hearts and in the hearts of those around us. I think this is the same realization that Zooey makes in his time in his brothers' old room. He has been critiquing Franny's sentimentality in the same way that Seymour critiqued Muriel's in “Raise High the Roofbeam, Carpenters.” Zooey makes a different decision about it than Seymour did, though.

Zooey, after reading Seymour's journal, makes a decision. He calls Franny from the phone in their room, pretending to be Buddy. This seems like an odd choice at first, but the reader slowly catches onto Zooey's plan. Zooey and Franny grew up together. He knows her

better than anybody, because they have been together through everything. Zooey knows that what *he* needed to learn the lessons he needed to learn was the aid of Buddy and Seymour. Because they grew up together and were taught and formed together, Zooey knows that this is what Franny will need as well. Zooey, in his very best Buddy impression, asks Franny to tell him what is going on with her. Zooey, as Buddy, is as gentle with Franny as a very older brother would be towards his very younger sister. He calls her “sweetheart” and “flopsy,” where Zooey, as himself, would call her “buddy” (159-162). These particular nicknames are “cute,” sticky-sweet, sentimental terms of endearment for his little sister. Zooey realizes that, in order to love his sister, there needs to be a level of sweetness, of “cute”-ness, and, perhaps, of sentimentality to really get to her heart. This is where he begins to differ from Seymour, and where, I think, Seymour would be proud of him. Seymour, I argue, would appreciate Zooey’s ability to love his sister in a way that is not degrading to her level of spiritual education and intellect, but that is still nonetheless somewhat sentimental. Zooey moved past his sententious impulse in order to really connect with his sister in a way that Seymour could not with Muriel, and that, it seems, he wishes he could.

Franny spends most of the beginning part of the conversation, in which Zooey is pretending to be Buddy, ranting about how mad she is at Zooey and relaying all of the things that he has done to make her angry. Eventually a response of Zooey’s gives him away and Franny sees through his ploy. Zooey pretends not to know anyone named Zooey, which amuses Franny enough not to hang up on him. Zooey approaches her much differently now. He, first, tells her that he doesn’t want to stop her from praying the prayer; “It’s a goddam nice prayer,” he says (164). He apologizes to her for acting like a “*seer*,” and is sure to tell her, that although he doesn’t want to be as self-righteous as he was before, that he is the best option she has for help:

When you first felt the urge, the *call*, to say the prayer, you didn't immediately start searching the four corners of the world for a master. *You came home ...* So if you look at it a certain way, by rights you're only entitled to the low-grade spiritual counsel we're able to give you around here, and no more. At least you know there won't be any goddam ulterior motives in this madhouse. Whatever we are, we're not *fishy*, buddy. (*Franny and Zooey* 165)

He does not discount the fact that it was perhaps childish of Franny to come home, as he argued before, but he now recognizes that there is a certain goodness and a certain rightness in her coming home in her state. He recognizes that at least at home, she knows she is surrounded by people that know her, love her, and truly want the best for her. He also recognizes that he is not the preacher that he was putting himself in the shoes of in their first conversation. He sees that he is only human, as well, and that everything he has to offer her is his "low-grade spiritual counsel." As it turns out, though, this "low-grade spiritual counsel" is everything she needs. He begins to tell her everything he remembered and learned in the past hour that he spent in Buddy and Seymour's room.

The first thing he does is scold her, though in a way considerate of her feelings and with more merit and forethought than before:

I'll tell you one thing, Franny. One thing I *know*. And don't get upset. It isn't anything bad. But if it's the religious life you want, you ought to know right now that you're missing out on every single goddam religious action that's going on around this house. You don't even have sense enough to *drink* when somebody brings you a cup of consecrated chicken soup – which is the only kind of chicken soup Bessie ever brings anybody around this madhouse. So just *tell* me, just tell me, buddy. Even if you went out

and searched the whole world for a master – some guru, some holy man – to tell you how to say your Jesus prayer properly, what good would it do you? How in *hell* are you going to recognize a legitimate holy man when you see one if you don't even know a cup of consecrated chicken soup when it's right in front of your nose? (*Franny and Zooey* 166)

The thing that Zooey learned while he was in Seymour and Buddy's room is that there is holiness in every human person and in every act of love, even in the seemingly small and even irritating acts of love that come in the ordinariness of the everyday. This is what Zooey means to convey to Franny here. There is sacredness in the love of the family. This is clear in both the Jewish tradition and the Catholic tradition, and has been made clear through the instruction and love that all of the Glass children have been given throughout their lives. Zooey is critiquing the same thing now as he was before: that Franny is not accepting the love that her family is trying to give her. This time, though, he puts it in terms she can understand. He puts it in terms of divinity. He opens her eyes in the way his eyes have just been opened.

There is even a hint of sacramental language here. This sacramental illusion suggests that there is something inherently divine in the love of the family and in the home, which is, it seems, what Zooey is trying to convey, and what really deeply defines the purpose of home and family for Franny. In her article "Beatific Signals," Josephine Jacobsen offers that "one of the ... most urgent preoccupations underlying the Glass family... is that of incarnation," which she defines as "the revelation, through matter, of spirit" (184). This is clear in Zooey's suggestion that there is spiritual benefit from this physical soup that Bessie offers. This argument can be made for the Glass home as a whole, as well. There is a certain spiritual truth that is conveyed through the space and the people that are home to Franny – the self-sacrificial love of her mother's offering of soup, though a humble example, mirrors something of the love of God. Just as Zooey realized

through reading Seymour's diary, recognizing Jesus in the love given to Franny by the people that are home to her is what begins to bring her out of her inward-turned thinking of spirituality and is what begins to open the reader's eyes to the deepest reason she *has* to come home in this time.

Though this lesson is a beautiful place to start, Zooey chooses not to stop simply at the level of the home and of the family. Though he needed to begin here, because it is a compelling image that can lead her out of herself even more, he does need to address the thing that led her home in the first place: that she is frustrated with ego and desire to be great at something. He uses this to move her towards seeing Jesus in all people, not simply just her family. This he also does, of course, with the aid of Seymour. He begins to rant to her about the importance of detachment from desires in the religious life. The problem, he tells her, is that she has already had a desire to be an actress and a good one. She can't change that fact now – "cause and effect, buddy, cause and effect" (*Franny and Zooey* 167). He tells her to "act for God, if you want to – be God's actress, if you want to. What could be prettier?" (167). As an actor himself, Zooey knows what the love for acting looks like and he sees it in Franny. He sees her love for it and he, in true older brother fashion, refuses to let her give up what she loves.

As an answer to her concern about the "stupidity of audiences" (*Franny and Zooey* 168), he first tells her that the audience's reception of her is really none of her business. That her perfection as an artist is for herself and not necessarily for them. An important thing for her to recognize, but not the punch he wants to leave her with. For this, he resorts again, of course, to Seymour. Zooey explains that before one of his first appearances on "It's a Wise Child," Seymour reminded him to shine his shoes. Zooey responded that to shine his shoes was no use,

because all of the members of the audience were “morons” and could not see his shoes anyway. Seymour’s response was odd, but effective:

He said to shine them anyway. He said to shine them for the Fat Lady. I didn’t know what the hell he was talking about, but he had a very Seymour look on his face, and so I did it. He never did tell me who the Fat Lady was, but I shined by shoes for the Fat Lady every time I ever went on the air again. (*Franny and Zooey* 169)

Franny had apparently received the same advice from Seymour, saying that, “He told me to be funny for the Fat Lady once” (169). This shows, firstly, how deeply they trusted and believed in the advice of their eldest brother, but also that there was something compelling about imagining a specific woman sitting in a chair enjoying their show – something that moved them to perform well and to be their best.

Zooey uses this image as the final push to bring Franny – and himself, in a certain sense – to the understanding that will change them both for the better.

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.* That includes your Professor Tupper, buddy. And all his goddam cousins by the dozens. There isn’t anyone *anywhere* that 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 who that Fat Lady Really is?* ...Ah, buddy. Ah, buddy. It’s Christ Himself. Christ Himself, buddy. (*Franny and Zooey* 170)

Zooey began by showing her God within the walls of their home – in Bessie’s offer of chicken soup and in the love that exists within the Glass family. He moves, here, to showing her that God lives in *every single* person in the whole world. God even lives within the people that drive her the most crazy: in audiences’ mindless laughter, in Professor Tupper and all of his students, in

Lane – in the same way that he lives within Jesus and in the same way that he lives within the Glasses.

Considering this reading of the text, how could it be argued that Salinger loves the Glasses more than he ought? He shows here, through Zooey, that every person has Christ within him. Every person is “carrying the Kingdom of Heaven around with us, *inside*” (*Franny and Zooey* 144). The family is perhaps a clearer and more powerful example of this, because of the intimacy that exists within a home, but it is an example that can be used – and that Salinger, through Buddy’s narration of Zooey, *does* use – to show that the same thing is going on in every single person and in every act of love in existence. There is, perhaps, a level of sentimentality that takes place within the home, but if that sentimentality moves to direct to the divinity of the entire world around us, can that be seen as a defect?

By the end of their conversation, “For joy, apparently, it was all Franny could do to hold the phone, even with both hands” (*Franny and Zooey* 170). She could not have received this message, at least in this specific way, from anyone that was not Zooey or in any place that was not her home. The reason that she was able to be moved so much was because she was home; she was home, in the physical space of her home, but also she was home with the people that are home to her. It is for this reason, first and foremost, that it is good for Franny to come home in her time of distress. This kind of understanding that brings Franny back to life again could only come through experiencing acts of love – acts of God – in the ordinariness of the everyday and with the unique sentimentality of the home.

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