
CHAPTER II - FRANNY AND ZOOEY

I

A brief discussion of the theme and style of Salinger's very first novel The Catcher in the Rye will greatly help us in our understanding of the theme and style of the later stories. The Catcher in the Rye is a novel which deals with the problems of innocence trapped in the world of adolescents. The hero of the novel Holden finds the world around him quite 'phony'. Stylistically speaking the entire contrast between innocence and experience is conveyed through the repetitive use of 'phony' and 'genuine'. Holden makes a series of moral discriminations on this basis and increasingly realises the distance between himself and the world. Holden's innocent morality would prefer a world which enjoys immunity from the laws of change and growth. That is why it is the images of stasis which appeal to him. Witness for instance, Holden's almost Keatsian 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 that the naked bosom would still be weaking that same blanket. Nobody'd be different.¹

In Holden's life these images, however they might be, do not ultimately sustain him. The role that he wants to play is — the role of The Catcher in the Rye — to save and to preserve innocence in this phoney-artificial world which is ultimately impossible for him. He suffers a nervous breakdown and it is from the sanatorium that he tells his story of 'the mad man's stuff' that happened to him.

The Catcher in the Rye is thus a comment on the tragic problematic of growing-up in American society and culture. It is also an expose of the hypocrisy and fakeness so ramped in the adult social world. To project this theme and vision Salinger employs a series of stylistic strategies in this novel. The main strength of the novel is its humour which is as much a product of Holden's language as of his perception. Salinger effectively uses in this novel slang, colloquial terms of speech, the kind of restricted code that only members of an age group share with one another. The novel also achieves its linguistic pointedness by offering a series of structures parodying the language of the adult world; such as the language of the parents, the language of the teachers etc. Except towards the end where Salinger uses the cereousal and rain, the novel is closed to the metonymic order. It presses the metonymic principle in a comic perspective. This is another way of saying that The Catcher in the Rye compared to the later stories with which we are concerned is still



to the mimetic principle. But of course this is mimesis achieved through a perspective of humour and comedy.

II

The foregoing discussion of The Catcher in the Rye is offered so as to provide a point of transition to the later stories which constitutes the main focus of our studies. One reason why these stories demand a special kind of stylistic study is their form which is greatly different from the form that Salinger achieves either in his Nine Stories or The Catcher in the Rye. Ihab Hassan's comments on the later stories of Salinger are extremely relevant here. Offering general comments on the highly original language and form of these stories Hassan says :

Salinger's concern is with certain peculiarities of form in these stories, a form that is so asymmetrical, so tolerant of chance and digression as to warrant the name of anti-form.... There is in Salinger's later stories derangement of connections.... language and reality are reflected in a thousand mirrors so that language and reality may appear for what they are in Salinger's estimate: something whole, holy and perhaps as ineffable as silence. ²

Ihab Hassan has thus rightly pointed out in broad terms the nature of language and form in the later stories of Salinger. What we have to note here however is that Franny to Zooey and then to Raise High the Roof Beam Carpenters and Seymour : An Introduction, there is a gradual stylistic transition from the metonymic to the metaphoric, from syntagm to paradigm.

Let us look at the opening passage of Franny. The passage runs as follows:

Though brilliantly sunny, Saturday morning was overcoat weather again, not just topcoat weather, as it had been all week and as everyone had hoped it would stay for the big weekend - the weekend of the Yale game. Of the twenty-some young men who were waiting at the station for their dates to arrive on the ten-fifty-two, not more than six or seven were out on the cold, open platform. The rest were standing around in hatless, smoky little groups of twos and threes and fours inside the heated waiting room, talking in voice that, almost without exception, sounded collegiately dogmatic, as though each young man, in his strident, conversational turn, was clearing up, once and for all, some highly controversial issue, one that the outside, non-matriculating world have been bungling, provocatively or not, for centuries.

A stylistic study of this passage reveals certain significant features. The narrative technique is a third

person point of view almost in a fashion of a traditional realistic novel. Sartorial references, such as 'overcoat', 'topcoat', 'hatless' offer metonymic clues to the general realistic context describing a cold Saturday morning and a group of young people waiting for their dates. The passage offers a whole items interconnected on the basis of contiguity and not similarity. Overcoat and weather, weekend and young people waiting for their dates on the platform are all woven into a structure of contiguity. There are no overtly metonymic devices in the passage. However because it uses the principle of contiguity it remains metonymic in structure.

As Ihab Hassan has made it clear, style in Salinger does not refer to a set of linguistic strategies and devices. Only it indicates other dimensions of the fiction such as character, theme and form. The kind of metonymic structure of prose which we have examined in the above passage seems to represent by association, the routine quotidian world of which Lane Caulfield is an integral part, which he cannot overcome. In Salinger's specific terminology he represents the phoney world of establishment of career and success. That is why Franney represents him by telling him that he is talking like a section man using stale phrases and literary cliches.

In contrast to this establishment of sectionman qualities the phony world associated with Lane Coutell and refracted through a metonymic use of prose, Salinger uses in the case of Franny a different kind of style. The first example of this is seen at a very early stage of the story in the letter that Franny has written to her date Lane Coutell. The letter goes as follows:

Tuesday I think

Dearest Lane,

I have no idea if you will be able to decipher this as the noise in the dorm is absolutely incredible tonight and I can hardly hear myself think. So if I spell anything wrong kindly have the kindness to overlook it. Incidentally I've taken your advice and resorted to the dictionary a lot lately, so if it cramps my style your to blame. Anyway I just got your beautiful letter and I love you to pieces, distraction, etc., and can hardly wait for the weekend. It's too bad about not being able to get me in Croft House, but I don't actually care where I stay as long as its warm and no bugs and I see you occasionally, i.e. every single minute. I've been going i.e. crazy lately. I absolutely adore your letter, especially the part about Eliot. I think I'm beginning to look down on all poets except Sappho. I've been reading her like mad, and no vulgar remarks, please. I may even do my term thing on her if I decide to go our for honors and if I can get the moron they assigned me as an advisor to let me. 'Delicate Adonis is dying, Cytherea,

what shall we do? Beat your breasts. maidens, and rend your tunics.' Isn't that 'marvellous'? She keeps 'doing' that, too. Do you love me? You didn't say once in your horrible letter. I hate you when your being hopelessly super-male and retiscent (sp.?). Not really 'hate' you but am constitutionally against strong, silent men. Not that you aren't strong but you know what I mean. It's getting so noisy in here I can hardly here myself think. Anyway I love you and want to get this off special delivery so you can get it in plenty of time if I can find a stamp in this madhouse. I love you I love you I love you. ⁴

Style as used here acts out the highly individual qualities of Franny in contrast to Lane Coutell. Right from the beginning language of this letter is characterised by a kind of spontaneity, impulsiveness and a healthy kind of repetitions talktiveness. While the letter mysticably seems to express Franny's love for Lane Coutell. A close study of Salinger's stylistic procedures in relation to Franny and Lane Cautell only establishes the incompetability. The colloquiality and ephisiveness of Franny's letter are contrasted with the opinioneted nature of Lane Cautell. Franny has a certain kind of self abundan ir her literary appreciations. As seen in the sentence, 'I am beginning to look down except'sappho, I have been reading her like mad.' Whereas Lane Cautell's responses to literature are measured, calculated and wittily academic. Hence Salinger

says ironically, 'depleted by the demands made on him by a world greedy for the fruit of his intellect ____ he began to massage the side of his face with the flat of his hand...'⁵

Thus, Salinger is using a series of contrastive stylistic procedures to point out the essential difference between the characters and the worlds of Lane Cautell and Franny Glass. These differences are ultimately related to the basic theme of the story which is the spiritual crisis that Franny undergoes. The differences which separates these two young people escalate into a point of confrontation. Salinger brings this out in the encounter between Franny and Lane Cautell in the restaurant ____ their disjointed conversation, Lane's indifference to some of her comments, betray a basic lack of warmth between the two. What is more Franny knows that inspite of the letter she wrote earlier she would not some how feel attuned to Lane Cautell. This feeling overpowers her the moments she gets off the train and greets Lane Cautell.

'Oh, it's lovely to see you!' Franny said as the cab moved off. 'I've 'missed' you'. The words were no sooner out than she realized that she didn't mean them at all. Again with guilt, she took Lane's hand and tightly, warmly laced fingers with him.⁶

Later-on this feeling of incommunicability grows to

such an extent that she can only sentence herself 'to listen to Lane's ensuing conversation with a special semblance of obsorbtion'.

Franny is however unlike Holden of The Catcher in the Rye can be very intellectual about her problems, articulate about her crisis; she tries to diagnose her own situation. This is what she does as she sits with Lane Cautell in the restaurant. Lane speaks _____ his speech as we have already seen reflecting in stylistic terms the complacent pride of the establishment man _____ of the paper he has just written on Flaubert. This elicits from Franny a violent criticism of the 'sectionman' of her college and professors and the kind of the poetry some of them write. She finds that the college gives knowledge and not wisdom because no one there knows how to translate knowledge into wisdom. As she puts it to Lane trying to define her spiritual problems.

'All I know is I'm losing my mind,' Franny said. 'I'am 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.' ⁷

A turning point in the theme and style of the book is provided when Franny talks about a book entitled The Way of

Pilgrim written by some Russian peasant. The book tells the story of a pilgrim who goes out in search of the secret of incessant praying. She gives a rapture description of this book to Lane Cautell who is busy eating frog's legs. She continues to talk about the pilgrim who having learnt the 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. She then proceeds to explain Lane Cautell the nature of such an active prayer.

Something 'happens' after a while. I don't know what, but something happens, and the words get synchronized with the person's heartbeats, and then you're actually praying without ceasing. Which has a really tremendous, mystical effect on your whole outlook. I mean that's the whole 'point' of it, more or less. I mean you do it to purify your whole outlook and get an absolutely conception of what everything's about.'⁸

Lane Cautell as a pragmatic career oriented man of materialist culture fails to understand the significance of the problem Franny is facing and the prayer she is describing in so many details. From our point of view there is no any important shift in the stylistic orientation of the story. As we have already seen the story begins with a mimetic

description in the tradition of formal realism, using the metonymic principle of contiguity. This as we have already said is the world of Lane Coutell, the world of Franny however seems to defy the metonymic order and moves into symbolism, prayer, mantra and jappam (a world used by Salinger himself in Seymour : An Introduction). The contiguity of metonymic prose now gives way in the form of prayer, to metrical patterning and phonological repetition based on similarity. In the self-active prayer that happens is that the words of the prayer and heart-beats of the person reach a point of perfect synchrony. To use Jakobson's terminology the words of the prayer and heart-beats of the person uttering them are telescoped into a lyrical metaphoric utterance of mystic significance. It is significant to note in this context that what example of the prayer Franny gives to Lane Coutell is the Indian meditations on 'Om'. Om here is on its microlevel a structure of syllables but as a mediating act of prayer it achieves on its macrolevel an invocation to the mystic powers.

It is thus possible to look upon the first story belonging to Salinger's later phase as a stylistic acting out of the two worlds of metonymy and metaphor, realism and symbolism, successful career in material culture and the significance of prayer in spiritual life. The contrast it must be remembered is established neither suddenly nor mechanically

On the contrary it slowly unfolds two incompetent people (Lane Cautell and Franny Glass), two incompetent worlds. When Franny realises this basic incompetability she has a nervous breakdown which Salinger uses as a point of departure for his next story Zooey.

III

Zooey begins where Franny leaves off but this is in thematic terms. In stylistic terms Zooey begins with a self reflexive kind of metonymic structure. The metonymic structure of the prose in the beginning of Franny served as one kind of perception. Both of language and reality which came to be gradually replaced by another kind of perception — metaphoric in the form of prayer.

At the beginning of Zooey we have a self reflexive parody of the authorial introduction so characteristic of the traditional realistic genre. The parody is fairly comprehensive in the sense that it puts into a topsy-turvy comic structure all things such as narrative mode, authorial presence, character and plot — characteristic features of metonymy and realistic narrative:

The facts at hand presumably speak for themselves, but a trifle more vulgarly, I suspect, than facts even usually do. As a counterbalance, then, we begin with that everfresh and exciting odium: the author's formal introduction. The one I have in mind not only is wordy and earnest beyond my wildest dreams but is, too boot, rather excruciatingly personal. If, with the right kind of luck, it comes off, it should be comparable in effect to a compulsory guided tour through the engine room with myself as guide, leading the way in an old one-piece Jantzen bathing suit.

To get straight to the worst, what I'm about to offer isn't really a short story at all but a sort of prose home movie, and those who have seen the footage have strongly advised me against nurturing any elaborate distribution plans for it. The dissenting group, it's my privilege and headache to divulge, consists of the three featured players themselves, two female, one male. We'll take the leading lady first, who, I believe, would prefer to be briefly described as a languid, sophisticated type. She feels the things might have gone along well enough if I'd just done something about a fifteen- or twenty-minute scene in which she blows her nose several times - snipped it out, I gather. She says it's disgusting to watch somebody keep blowing her nose. The other lady of the ensemble, a svelte twilight soubrette, objects to my having, so to speak, photographed her in her old

housecoat. Neither of these two lovelies (as they've hinted they'd like to be called) takes any very shrill exception to my over-all exploitive purposes. For a terribly simple reason, really. If, to me, a somewhat reddening one. They know from experience that I burst into tears as the first harsh or remonstrative word. It's the leading man, however, who has made the most eloquent appeal to me to call off the production. He feels that the plot hinges on mysticism, or religious mystification - in any case, he makes it very clear, a too vividly apparent transcendent element of sorts, which he says he's worried can only expedite, move up, the day and hour of my professional undoing. People are already shaking their heads over me, and any immediate further professional use on my part of the word 'God', except as a familiar, healthy American expletive, will be taken - or, rather, confirmed - as the very worst kind of name-dropping and a sure sign that I'm going straight to the dogs. Which is, of course, something to give any normal fainthearted man, and particularly writing man, pause.

Style in these introductory passages of Zooey poles apart from the opening paragraph of Franny. Style here is laconic, informal and colloquial. It has the disjointedness of normal connected speech. More importantly it has a kind of circularity which seems to engulf all opposites and contrasts. Thus for instance, the narrator fo the

story. Buddy Glass is also the author of the story and is at the same time the writer of the letter also which Zooey is reading sitting in the bath-tub. Such a strange circularity takes the reader miles away from the metonymic pole of realism into the metaphoric montage holding into a single focus, various times of contrasts and oppositions. One of the finest expressions of this strange metaphoric montage is seen in the concluding sentence ~~that~~ Salinger writes to the third paragraph of the opening section describing members of the Glass family:

We are, all four of us, blood relatives, and we speak a kind of esoteric, family language, a sort of semantic geometry in which the shortest distance between any two points is a fullish circle. ¹⁰

Zooey basically is an extension of the Franny's story into a new domain. For this Salinger 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 significant because a great deal of the advice that Zooey gives to Franny to help her out of the crisis is based on it. In this letter after briefly discussing the 'upanishadas', the 'diamond sutras', 'ekhart' and

other such things; Buddy narrates an incident that took place when he was at local super-market. He ran into a young mother and her little daughter waiting around. Buddy asked the four year old girl to mention the names of her two boyfriends and the girl quickly says 'Bobby' and 'Dorothy'. Buddy comments upon the deep structure and mystic significance of these simple words:

But I swear to you that I had a perfectly communicable little vision of truth (lamb-chop division) this afternoon the very instant that 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 stones, day and night, heat and cold. ¹¹

Obviously the attempt here is to resolve all the polarities and discriminations into a single moment of undifferentiating vision of things. It is precisely from this advice, this communicable vision of truth 'that Zooey gathers his strength' to pull Franny out of her crisis. Franny tells him the nature of her sickness:

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's just a disgusting waste of time! But there never is! You never even here any 'hints' dropped on a capus that wisdom is supposed to be the goal of knowledge. You hardly ever even hear the word "wisdom" mentioned! ¹²

Quite obviously Franny is out of tune with a world which includes values like fame and prestige, people like Prof. Tupper and Lane Cautell, and sets more premium on knowledge than on wisdom.

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. 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. ¹³

With this piece of advice Franny's crisis is over because when she had replaced the phone she seemed to know what to do next.

An interesting ofeature of Salinger's style in Zooey is the way in which he modulates style through several keys such as parody or contrast. The first passage that we examined from this point of view was an attempt to undermine the metonymic form both on the level of language and reality by parodying it. Another technique of stylistic strategy that Salinger uses is to plant. In the verbanl space of the story a series of contrasts which ultimately serve to deemphasize the metonymic order. These contrasts are not necessarily placediin succession but in a kind of a speatial unfold- ing of style. They do achieve their purpose. Witness for instance the following passage describing contents of the medicine cabinet in the bathroom. As Zooey is sitting in the bathturb, Mrs. Glass his mother comes in to take something from the cabinet. Salinger then proceeds to described the contents:

The shelves bore iodine, Mercurochrome, vitamin capsules, dental floss, aspirin, Anacin, Bufferin, Argyrol, Musterole, Ex-Lax, Milk of Magnesia, Sal Hepatica, Aspergum, two Gillette razors, one Schick Injector razor, two tubes of shaving cream, a bent and somewhat torn snapshot of a fat black-and-white cat asleep on a porch railing, three combs, two hairbrushes, a bottle of Wildroot hair ointment, a bottle of Fitch Dantruff Remover, a small, unlabelled box of glycerine suppositories. Vicks Nose Drops, Vicks VapoRub, six bars of castile soap, the stubs of three tickets to a 1946 musical comedy ('Call Me Mister'), a tube of depilatory cream, a box of Kleenex, two seashells, an assortment of used-looking emery boards, two jars of cleansing cream, three pairs of scissors, a nail file, an unclouded blue marble (known to marble shooters, at least in the twenties, as a 'purey'), a cream for contracting enlarged pores, a pair of tweezers, the strapless chassis of a girl's or woman's gold wristwatch, a box of bicarbonate of soda, a girl's boarding-school class ring with a chipped onyx stone, a bottle of Stoptete - and, inconceivably or no, quite a good deal more. ¹⁴

What is the stylistic purpose of this whitmansque catalogue of details. Why is this world of objects with all its prethora described here with such degree of formal

realism. One possible answer is that it takes the Flaubertian technique to its possible limits which merge into a paradic contrast with a passage such as the following:

The idea, really, is that sooner or later, completely on its own, the prayer moves from the lips and the head down to a centre in the heart and becomes an automatic function in the person, right along with the heart-beat. And then, after a time, once the prayer is automatic in the heart, the person is supposed to enter into the so-called reality of things. The subject doesn't really come up in either of the books, but, in Eastern terms, there are seven subtle centers in the body, called 'chakras', and the one most closely connected with the heart is called 'anahata', which is supposed to be sensitive and powerful as hell, and when it's activated, it, in turn, activates another of these centers, between the eye-brows, called 'ajna'- it's the pineal gland, really, or, rather, an aura around the pineal gland-and then, bingo, there's an opening of what mystics call the "third eye". It's nothing new, for God's sake. It didn't just start with the little pilgrim's crowd, I mean. In India, for God knows how many centuries, it's been known as 'japam'. Japam is just the repetition of any of the human names of God. Or the names of his incarnations - his avatars, if you want to

get technical. The idea being that if you call out the name long enough and regularly enough and literally from the heart, sooner or later you'll get an ⁿ answer. Not exactly an answer. A response. ¹⁵

If the first passage moves along the syntagmatic order of metonymy piling up objective details almost in a mock-epic fashion. The style of the second passage takes us into an interior zone of eloquent silence where words and heart-beats, repetition and 'japam' merge into the unheard melody of prayer, a kind of 'Annahat Naad'. In contrast to the linear access of the first passage style here emphasizes in its structure as well as texture, a cyclic movement where the subject and object, sound and silence, language and being move into a metaphoric lyricism of mystic significance. What is more important in term of the total stylistic vitality of the story one can say that the second passage achieves by way of contrast and parody a deconstruction of the first.

IV

The foregoing discussion thus emphasizes the stylistic challenge that Shalinger has to take in Zooey. Equally important is the fact that this challenge exists

in the last two stories Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction. also. The nature of the challenge is like this. Language is basically a differentiated structure of science how to exploit this language in such a way as to forged a style which expresses the mystic world of pure undifferentiating consciousness. In other words the challenge is to maintain a seeming metonymy (seeming because it is parodied) and to push it on to the metaphoric frontiers of symbolism. To state the same problem in Ihab Hassan's words, the challenge is how to use the language to express silence. One answer is the stylistic frequency shifts from prayer in Franny and in the initial part of Zooey to the image at the end, from the act of prayer to the image of Christ. In the last two stories it is around this image of Christ, of poet, of saint that the stylistic problems centre.