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## SEYMOUR GLASS: CONTEXTUAL AND LINGUISTIC IDENTITY

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**Abstract:** In the article, the personality of Seymour Glass, the chief character of the Glass family saga by J.D. Salinger, is analyzed from social and his own philosophical perspectives. Two of Salinger's works – "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" and "Hapworth 16, 1924", which complement each other in terms of character analysis, – are the focus of our attention. They offer answers to the questions (a) how the personality of Seymour predetermines the frame structure of the whole Glass series, (b) why Salinger starts with the end of Seymour's life and ends with its beginning, and (c) what are the author's motives in writing "Hapworth" since one of its central ideas – philosophy of reincarnation – has already been presented in "Teddy".

**Keywords:** Seymour Glass, personality, setting, participants, activity, communication channel, code, message form, subject matter.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Fifty years ago, "Hapworth 16, 1924", the least popular of J.D. Salinger's works, appeared in *The New Yorker*; it was to be published in book form only in 1997, but the author withdrew the manuscript. While "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" (1948) earned the author universal acclaim, "Hapworth 16, 1924" (1965) was sarcastically characterized as a work that "deserves some special award for authorial self-indulgence" [6]. Difficult and unpopular as it is, "Hapworth" must be given credit. Among other things, it explains much about the chief character of Salinger's writings – Seymour Glass. For the purpose of this article, only one aspect of this complex work will be considered – the "first hand" information that deepens our understanding of Seymour – the guru of the Glass family.

According to Michiko Kakutani, "The Glasses' emotional translucence, their febrile charm, their spiritual yearning and nausea (...) initially made them a glamorous mirror of our own youthful confusions. Yet there is a darker side to their estrangement as well: a tendency to condescend to the vulgar masses, a familial self-involvement that borders on the incestuous and an inability to relate to other people that, in Seymour's case at least, will have tragic consequences indeed" [9]. Seymour Glass is undoubtedly the most remarkable figure in J.D. Salinger's character set. It is not for nothing that the first and the last stories of the Glass family saga are built around the personality of Seymour. Seymour's unusual wedding is described in "Raise High the Roofbeam, Carpenters"; his brother Buddy presents his "ruminations on Seymour" [10, p. 65] in "Seymour: An Introduction"; in "Franny" and "Zooey", his youngest siblings draw on Seymour seeking solutions to their own psychological problems. Baskett states that "The eldest, the most significant, most carefully portrayed, and most complex of the Glasses

is Seymour. Salinger suggests his 'Heinzlike' variety of personal characteristics most dramatically through a number of paradoxes" [2, p. 51].

In this article, we will discuss the personality of Seymour Glass as he is presented in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" – the beginning of the saga, which is actually the end of Seymour's earthly life, and in "Hapworth, 16, 1924" – the end of the Glass series, which is the beginning of it all; the beginning not for Seymour (who at the age of seven demonstrates supernatural erudition, intellectual and spiritual abilities); nor for Salinger (who has chosen the last story to let Seymour speak for himself), but for a reader. Paradoxically, the beginning turns out to be the end, and the end is meant to be the beginning; it is a complete circle rather than the dichotomy of the beginning and the end. This paradox fits easily into Zen Buddhist philosophy studied by Salinger, which, according to Baskett, "leads to transcendence of all dichotomies, the dichotomy of self and non-self, even that of life and death" [2, p. 55].

To be more specific, we will discuss (a) how the personality of Seymour Glass predetermines the frame structure of the whole Glass family saga; (b) why Salinger needs to start with the end and to the end with the beginning; (c) what were the author's motives in writing "Hapworth", an odd and boring piece of fiction at first sight.

The framework for our work is D. Crystal's concept of contextual analysis. Crystal defines context as the linguistic environment and non-linguistic situation in which language is used [5, p. 418]. The central factors in the situational context are as follows:

- setting,
- participants,
- activity.

Their interaction determines the features of language we use:

- channel,
- code,
- message form,
- subject matter [5, p. 48-65].

Crystal uses these criteria to analyze conventional kinds of communicative event (e.g. a sermon, a talk with a shop assistant, a guided tour, etc.) and everyday activities (e.g. gossiping, discussing, quarreling, etc.). The language of literature is, of course, a different matter. Nevertheless, two arguments may justify the choice of this particular method: (1) we are going to analyze the examples of only three distinct registers – Seymour's *conversations*, his *tale* about bananafish, and his *letter* to his family; (2) Crystal himself notes that in each particular case, this kind of characterization needs immediate refinement. Now, in order to prove our point about the beginning and the end merging together, we will consider the elements the two stories – "Bananafish" and "Hapworth" – have in common.

## 2. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

**Setting.** According to Crystal, "The particular time and place in which people interact will exercise its influence on the kind of communication that may occur..." [5, p. 48].

The first story, "Banafish", is set in Miami Beach in 1948; the last one, in Camp Simon Hapworth, Hapworth Lake, Maine in 1924; the intervening period of time being 24 years. Remarkably, in both cases it is summertime, holiday season, and both places are directly related to water basins – a smaller one, the lake, at the beginning of Seymour's life; an incomparably greater one, the ocean, at its end. It is worth mentioning that "In Buddhism, water symbolizes purity, clarity, and calmness, and reminds people to cleanse their minds and attain the state of purity" [3, p. 429]; at the same time, pouring water into a special bowl, is a ritual in Buddhist funerals [1].

Another interesting detail is that in neither case Seymour is happy about having a holiday. In "Hapworth", he misses his family, his work as an actor, and the general atmosphere of a big city. In "Bananafish", he is too much absorbed in himself to enjoy his holiday time. Apart from that, both young and thirty-one-year-old Seymour seems to dislike the idea of institutionalized recreation.

**Participants.** Crystal defines participants as the number of people who take part in an interaction, and the relationship between them, e.g. addressee(s), bystander(s); the factor of participants affects the language used by the speaker.

To begin with, “Throughout the Glass stories (...) Salinger presents his abnormal heroes in the context of the normal world’s dislike and fear of them” [11]. Character interpretations of the adult Seymour range from an emotionally unstable person through a non-conformist to a teacher and a saint: “pure mental” [8, p. 248]; “... Seymour, a bananafish himself, has become so glutted with sensation that he cannot swim out into society again” [14, p. 6]; “his own particular vulnerability is patently sex”, “depressed by his own concupiscence and Muriel’s sexual hold upon him” [4, p.227, 229]; “Seymour’s inability to put up with his bourgeois wife” [14, p. 5]; “a poet, Zen mystic, and Christ figure” [4, p. 226].

In “Hapworth”, Seymour is a child (though rather an unusual one); his addressees are his family, who easily and intuitively understand him. He is not shy around them, he is not afraid to be perceived as a freak; he is open and sincere, sometimes his openness is stretched to the point of shocking. In “Bananafish”, Seymour has two conversations – with a four-year-old prophethess and with a lady in the hotel elevator car. Both dialogues are significant in the sense that communicating with a child, Seymour talks to someone, so to speak, of this lot; but the woman in the car belongs to the outside world and cannot be trusted. Child “Sybil earns her name by seeing clearly the situation and by prophesying the doom that will be Seymour’s (...). As in the case with the bloated fish, Seymour gets ‘banana fever’ and dies, but physically as well as spiritually” [7, p. 171]. Around Sybil, Seymour feels at ease. In the presence of a strange adult he is tense, hostile, and rude.

It is generally believed that Salinger’s best hope is children rather than adults. Though not all children characters in “Hapworth” are nice and “heart rendering”:

*The majority of young campers here, you will be glad to know, could not possibly be nicer or more heartrendering from day to day, particularly when they are not thriving with suspicious bliss in cliques that insure popularity or dubious prestige. Few boys, thank God with a bursting heart, that we have run into here are not the very salt of the earth when you can exchange a little conversation with them away from their damn intimates. Unfortunately, here as elsewhere on this touching planet, imitation is the watchword and prestige the highest ambition.*

(Hapworth 16, 1924)

Similarly, not all adult characters are materialistic and insensitive. Seymour displays great affection for his parents – Bessie and Les – and speaks kindly of Miss Overman, her younger sister, and sometimes of Mr. Fraser. More importantly, it is only technically that the seven-year-old Seymour can be called a child; his philosophy, religious experience, attitudes, and judgments are those of a highly organized adult person. “Seymour possesses the mind of a genius adult and the spirit of an enlightened yogi, but he is trapped in the body of a seven-year-old boy and, despite his previous incarnations, is limited to the experiences of a child” [12, p. 410]. The thirty-one-year-old Seymour is an adult, who like Lewis Carrol, strives for the innocence of childhood.

**Activity.** Crystal states that the kind of activity in which we engage will directly influence the way we communicate; linguistically distinct activities related to occupations and social roles of participants are called *genres* or *registers*. Apart from that, people engage in many kinds of verbal activity in everyday situations – gossiping, discussing, quarrelling, petitioning, visiting, telephoning, writing out lists, etc. [5, p. 52].

Talking to Sybil, Seymour sometimes seems to enjoy the very process of locution. At other times, the illocutionary aspect is well pronounced. Consider, for instance, covert mockery and disapproval, and teaching a child to be kind and displaying affection in the following examples:

*“Where is the lady?” Sybil said.*

*“The lady?” the young man brushed some sand out of his hair. “That’s hard to say, Sybil. She may be in any one of a thousand places. At the hairdresser’s. Having her hair dyed mink. Or making dolls for poor children, in her room.”*

(A Perfect Day for Bananafish)

*(...) And Sharon Lipschutz come over and sat down next to me. I couldn't push her off, could I?"*

*"Yes."*

*"Oh, no. No. I couldn't do that," said the young man. "I'll tell you what I did do, though."*

*"What?"*

*"I pretended she was you."*

(A Perfect Day for Bananafish)

Another thing Seymour does is telling his young companion a tale about bananafish, which is generally believed to be the main allegory of "A Perfect Day for Bananafish", a clue to Seymour's philosophy of life and to the mystery of his death. Compare, for instance, the following comments: "... the banana is also symbolic as the gross, material, sensual existence that engorges the bananafish (Seymour) and is epitomised in the moral degradation of Miami Beach society" [7, p. 171]; "Without 'Carpenters' the suicide which closes 'Bananafish' appears motivated chiefly by Seymour's inability to put up with his bourgeois wife. With 'Carpenters', however, we see Seymour as a man not deprived of, but rather surfeited with the joy of life. Salinger's sole excuse for Seymour's desperate social irresponsibility is the same curious surfeit of sensation (...). (...) Seymour does not show up for his wedding because he is too 'happy' (...) to be with people. (...) In other words, Seymour, a bananafish himself, has become so glutted with sensation that he cannot swim out into the society again. It is his own banana fever, not his wife who is at fault (...)" [14, p. 5, 6].

Seymour's second and very short conversation in "Bananafish" is a seemingly unprovoked verbal attack on a lady in the hotel elevator car. It is interesting to compare it with his harsh judgments on some adults in "Hapworth":

*"I see you are looking at my feet," he said to her when car was in motion.*

*"I beg your pardon?" said the woman.*

*"I said I see you're looking at my feet".*

*"I beg your pardon. I happened to be looking at the floor," said the woman, and faced the doors of the car.*

*"If you want to look at my feet, say so," said the young man. "But don't be a God-damned sneak about it."*

*"Let me out here, please," the woman said quickly to the girl operating the car.*

*The car doors opened and the woman got out without looking back.*

*"I have two normal feet and I can't see the slightest God-damned reason why anybody should stare at them," said the young man.*

(A Perfect Day for Bananafish)

*However, for a young, attractive, bitter, lonely mother with all the municipal advantages of swanky, patrician, facial features, great monetary wealth, unlimited entrée, and bejewelled fingers to show this kind of social disappointment in full view of her young son, a callow child already cursed with a nervous and lonely bladder, is fairly inexcusable and hopeless.*

(Hapworth 16, 1924)

In both cases, it is a refusal to accept the middle class materialism; but in "Bananafish" we need the context of the whole story (including Muriel's conversation with her mother, Mrs. Carpenter's conversation with her friend on the beach, her words addressed to little Sybil, "Now run and play, pussy. Mummy's going up to the hotel and have Martini with Mrs. Hubbel", and the fact that Seymour was suffering from a mental illness) to infer Salinger's true meaning.

As to "Hapworth", it is an epistolary story technically speaking. Though, it is much too long for a single letter. Here Seymour does several things – he tells his parents about his life in the camp; expresses his opinion about his fellow campers, some parents and the staff; advises his parents on some important professional issues and his baby siblings on how to work on themselves; describes his emotional state, predicts his untimely death; discusses his previous lives, moments of enlightenment, religious and social matters, and his idea of God; draws up a list of books he would like to read and gives his comment on each of them.

Thus the only type of activity that the two stories have in common is Sybil's prophesy and Seymour's prediction, both concerning his death. It should be said though, that they are quite different in their nature. Sybil hardly knows what she is babbling about; Seymour is quite positive that he will die in his thirties:

*With her hand, when the float was level again, she wiped away a flat, wet band of hair from her eyes, and reported, "I just saw one."*

*"Saw what, my love?"*

*"A bananafish."*

*"My God, no!" said the young man. "Did he have any bananas in his mouth?"*

*"Yes," said Sybil. "Six."*

(A Perfect Day for Bananafish)

*Again speaking for your beloved son Buddy, who should be back any moment, I also give you my word of honor that one of us will be present at the other chap's departure for various reasons; it is quite in the cards, to the best of my knowledge. I am not painting a gloomy picture! This will not be tomorrow by a long shot! I personally will live at least as long as a well-preserved telephone pole, a generous matter of thirty (30) years or more, which is surely nothing to snicker at.*

(Hapworth 16, 1924)

Throughout the letter, the seven-year-old Seymour mentions his early death eight times.

**Channel.** Channel, says Crystal, is a medium selected for communication.

The first thing we have to take into account is the fact that both stories are works of fiction; hence on the macro-level of communication (the author – a reader), the channel is writing; on the micro-level, the characters in "Bananafish" communicate orally; in "Hapworth", the channel of communication is writing.

The choice of the channel is determined by the author's ultimate goal – to *tell us about* Seymour ("Bananafish") and to *explain* Seymour, or rather to let him explain himself ("Hapworth"). The seven-year-old Seymour and the adult Seymour are actually the same. A reader just "watches" Seymour in "Bananafish"; Salinger fills us in on Seymour's personality throughout the rest of the Glass stories, and explains what he is like in "Hapworth", i.e. at the very beginning of Seymour's personal history.

**Code.** Crystal defines code as a system of signals used for communication, which has to be shared by the participants.

The dialogues of the characters are, perhaps, the clearest evidence of Salinger's mastery of the word. "Oral" speech of his characters is perfect; the choice of style is predetermined by their age, social status, roles, occupations and interests, and by situational context. Features of real-life oral speech such as spontaneity, reliance on common knowledge and general knowledge of the world, contextual dependence, certain inconsistency, grammatical imperfections, etc. are skillfully employed in "Bananafish" as well as in other stories. For example,

*"Did you read 'Little Black Sambo'?" she said.*

*"It's very funny you ask me that," he said. "It so happens I just finished reading it last night." He reached down and took back Sybil's hand. "What did you think of it?" he asked her.*

*"Did the tigers run all around that tree?"*

*"I thought they'd never stop. I never saw so many tigers."*

*"There were only six," Sybil said.*

*"Only six!" said the young man. "Do you call that only?"*

*"Do you like wax?" Sybil asked.*

*"Do I like wax?" asked the young man.*

*"Wax."*

*"Very much. Don't you?"*

*Sybil nodded. "Do you like olives?" she asked.*

*"Olives – yes. Olives and wax. I never go anyplace without 'em."*

*"Do you like Sharon Lipschutz?" Sybil asked.*

*"Yes. Yes, I do," said the young man. "What I like particularly about her is that she never does anything mean to little dogs in the lobby of the hotel. That little toy bull that belongs to that lady from Canada, for instance. You probably won't believe this, but some little girls like to poke that little dog with balloon sticks. Sharon doesn't. She's never mean or unkind. That's why I like her so much."*

*Sybil was silent.*

*"I like to chew candles," she said finally.*

*"Who doesn't?" said the young man, getting his feet wet. "Wow! It's cold." He dropped the rubber float on its back. "No, wait just a second, Sybil. Wait'll we get out a little bit."*

*They waded out till the water was up to Sybil's waist. Then the young man picked her up and laid her down on her stomach on the float.*

*"Don't you ever wear a bathing cap or anything?" he asked.*

*"Don't let go," Sybil ordered. "You hold me, now."*

*"Miss Carpenter. Please. I know my business," the young man said. "You just keep your eyes open for any bananafish. This is perfect day for bananafish."*

(A Perfect Day for Bananafish)

In comparison, the code of "Hapworth" is written English, and a very peculiar English at that. On the one hand, it is personalized and communicates deep emotions, for instance:

*... one must painfully remember that a vein of instability runs through me quite like some turbulent river; this cannot be overlooked; I have left this troublesome instability uncorrected in my previous two appearances, to my folly and disgust; it will not be corrected by friendly, cheerful prayer. It can only be corrected by dogged effort on my part, thank God; I cannot honorably or intimately pray to some charming, divine weakling to step in and clean my mess up after me; the very prospect turns my stomach. However, the human tongue could all too easily be the cause of my utter degrading in this appearance, unless I get a move on. I have been trying like hell since our arrival to leave a wide margin for human ill-will, fear, jealousy, and gnawing dislike of the commonplace.*

(Hapworth 16, 1924)

On the other hand, parts of Seymour's letter sound excruciatingly boring, or sensual, or sarcastic; compare, for example,

*Les, if you are on the premises again, I beg you about something, too. Please strive very hard to do what I asked you to do the next time you make a record. Any words or hold notes that freely rhyme with "try" or "my" or "by" are very tricky and dangerous in the circumstance! Rough shoals ahead there! Except when you are singing in public or engaged in heated or angry discussion around the family hearth, your accent, I assure you, is no longer detectable, quite possibly, to anybody but myself or Buddy or Boo Boo or some person with the curse of unsparing ears. Please do not misunderstand these remarks. Personally, I am hopelessly attached to your accent; it is utterly moving. However, this is a question of how your accent sounds to myriad people with ears that have no time or inclination to listen with unprejudice; (...).*

*She unwittingly shares with you, Bessie, a touching heritage of quite perfect legs, ankles, saucy bosoms, very fresh, cute, hind quarters, and remarkable little feet with quite handsome, small toes. (...) It is sometimes impossible to believe that this haunting, peppy beauty is fifteen (15) years my senior!*

*Mr. Nelson, a born neophile and enthusiastic talebearer and gossip, is in utter charge of the mess hall, as already related, along with Mrs. Nelson, a termagant, unhappy woman, and inspired trouble maker.*

(Hapworth 16, 1924)

Apparently, such complexity does not pose any problem for Seymour's addressees, his parents and siblings. As to readers – Salinger expects them to be up to scratch!

**Message form.** Crystal differentiates between two types of message form – small scale (the choice of specific sounds, vocabulary and syntactical structures) and large-scale (the choice of specific genres); both making the structural pattern that identifies communication.

In "Bananafish", Seymour's vocabulary and syntax are unsophisticated and quite comprehensible; he uses mostly simple sentences, his complex and compound sentences are not long enough to bewilder his addressee; he likes repetitions, for example,

*"Well, they swim into a hole where there's a lot of bananas. They're very ordinary-looking fish when they swim in. But once they get in, they behave like pigs. Why, I've known some bananafish to swim into a banana hole and eat as many as seventy-eight bananas." He edged the float and its passenger a foot closer to the horizon. "Naturally, after that they're so fat they can't get out of the hole again. Can't fit through out the door."*

*"Not too far out," Sybil said. "What happens to them?"*

*"What happens to who?"*

*"The bananafish."*

*"Oh, you mean after they eat so many bananas they can't get out of the banana hole?"*

*"Yes," said Sybil.*

*"Well, I hate to tell you, Sybil. They die."*

*"Why?" asked Sybil.*

*"Well, they get banana fever. It's a terrible disease."*

(A Perfect Day for Bananafish)

The message form of "Hapworth" is a polar opposite to that of "Bananafish". The vocabulary of the seven-year-old Seymour, his grammar, the syntactical structure of sentences, stylistic devices (a variety of tense forms of the verb, gerund and participle forms, modal words, complex and compound sentences, insertions, exclamations and exclamatory sentences, rhetorical questions, emphatic constructions, repetitions, enumerations, epithets, metaphors, allusions), and the mere length of his paragraphs may easily defeat even an experienced reader:

*I am hoping, however, that as we continue to improve and refine our characters by leaps and bounds, striving each day to reduce general snottiness, surface conceits, and too damn much emotion, coupled with several other qualities quite rotten to the core, we will antagonize and inspire less murder, on sight or repute alone, in the hearts of fellow human beings. I expect good results from these measures, but not thrilling results; I do not honestly see thrilling results in the general picture. However, don't let this place too large a shadow on your hearts! Joys, consolations, and amusing compensations are manifold! Have you ever personally seen two such maddening, indomitable chaps as your absent sons? In the midst and heat of fury and gathering adversity, do our young lives not remain an unforgettable waltz? Indeed, perhaps, if you perversely use your imagination, perhaps the only waltz Ludwig van Beethoven ever wrote on his deathbed! I will stand without shame on this presumptuous thought. My God, what thunderous, thrilling liberties it is possible to take with the simple, misunderstood waltz if only man dares! In my whole life, I give you my word, I have never risen from bed in the morning without hearing two splendid taps of the baton in the distance! In addition to distant music, adventure and romance press us hard; absorbing interests and diversions kindly prevail; not once have I seen us unprotected, thank God, against half-heartedness.*

(Hapworth 16, 1924)

On a large-scale level, "Bananafish" is a short story and "Hapworth", a novella. While the composition and style of the former was generally accepted and praised, the latter (as well as "Zooney" and "Seymour: An Introduction") was heavily criticized. "The piece was, in the words of Bernice and Sanford Goldstein, 'universally despaired'. (...) Deeming the work 'virtually unreadable' and '[p]ossibly the least structured and most tedious piece of fiction ever published by an important writer', John Wenke lamented that "'Hapworth" seems *designed* to bore (...) (emphasis in original)" [13, p. 138]. Through over time, perception changes. "James Lundquist in his 1979 monograph *J.D. Salinger* recategorized the late novellas, not as turgid and diffused, but as 'complex', 'experimental', and 'increasingly postmodern'. (...) Bernice and Sanford Goldstein (...) asserted that the prose style of 'Hapworth 16, 1924' was 'thoroughly intentional' for the purpose of presenting young Seymour's

struggle to deepen his level of spiritual awareness (...). And Eberhard Alsen, examining the Glass stories together as a single text, found their design coherent and organic" [13, p. 139].

Evidently, Salinger needs a compact short story form to describe the abrupt end of Seymour's life and a more expansive form of novella (which is, strictly speaking, an essay rather than a story proper) to provide an insight into the inner world of his character.

**Subject matter.** According to Crystal, subject matter is explicit and implicit content of communication.

In this particular case, it is an answer to the question why Seymour Glass commits suicide. Now we will use Salinger's texts as arguments in discussion rather than illustrations; we believe that Salinger quite consciously follows the principle of Zen koan composition and his questions already hold answers.

"A Perfect Day for Bananafish" is clearly divided into "Muriel part" and "Seymour part", the first one presenting the outside world, the society into which Seymour refuses to integrate. "Hapworth 16, 1924" shares this motif: for Seymour, the world is divided into those people whom he loves, likes or at least tolerates and those full of "ill-will, fear, jealousy, and growing dislike to the uncommonplace."

The seven-year-old Seymour has visions, he remembers his previous "appearances", relies on God's will, and believes in the possibility of another "use of human bodies":

*I address the nameless hallmark, preferably without shape or ridiculous attributes, who has always been kind and charming enough to guide my destiny both between and during the splendid, touching use of human bodies. Dear hallmark, give me some decent, reasonable instructions for tomorrow, quite while I am sleeping. It is not necessary that I know what these instructions are, pending development of understanding, but I would be delighted and grateful to have them under my belt nevertheless.*

(Hapworth 16, 1924)

He also knows he does not have much time:

*My time is too limited, quite to my sadness and amusement.*

So what are the "instructions" for Seymour in his "present appearance"?

*A capacity to make many wonderful friends in small numbers whom we will love passionately and guard from uninstructional harm until our lives are finished and who, in turn, will love us, too, and never let us down without very great regret ...*

*... we were quite firmly obliged, as well as often dubiously privileged, to bring our creative genius with us from our previous appearance.*

*I see no way to quit experiencing a little pain, here and there, till we have fulfilled our opportunities and obligations in the present, interesting, humorous bodies.*

(Hapworth 16, 1924)

And finally:

*... who can prevent us from doing a little good in this appearance? Who, indeed, I say, provided we draw on all our resources and move as silently as possible. "Silence! Go forth, but tell no man!" said the splendid Tsiang Samdup. Quite right, though very difficult and widely abhorred.*

(Hapworth 16, 1924)

Apparently, Seymour has fulfilled all his opportunities and obligations in this life and exhausted all his resources; he departs in silence:

*He glanced at the girl lying asleep on one of the twin beds. Then he went over to one of the pieces of luggage, opened it, and from under a pile of shorts and undershirts he took out an Ortiges 7.65 automatic. He released the magazine, looked at it, then reinserted it. He cocked the piece. Then he went over and sat down on the unoccupied twin bed, looked at the girl, aimed the pistol, and fired a bullet through his right temple.*

(A Perfect Day for Bananafish)

We cannot agree with Dan Geddes's statement that "... Salinger spends the rest of his career treating the mystery of Seymour's suicide, and yet fails to provide any satisfying answers" [6]. Everyone has their own bananas – things that destroy them. The seven-year-old Seymour strives to



hold his mind “quite still and empty”. Sad as it may sound, his own human feelings, his material, sensual existence are the very things that stop him from achieving this state of equilibrium.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

Thus in the first and the last stories of the Glass family saga, Seymour Glass is presented from social and, more importantly, from his own philosophical perspectives. Salinger needs “Bananafish” and “Hapworth” to draw a complete circle of Seymour’s life. Seymour perceives death as a switch from earthly existence to purely spiritual existence, which in its turn gives him a chance to come back again, and so forth. Technically speaking, the idea is presented in “Teddy”, the closing story of Salinger’s “Nine Stories” collection. Nevertheless, the author writes “Hapworth 16, 1924” using the character of “A Perfect Day for Bananafish”. To give just a general idea of Zen philosophy – reincarnation – does not seem to be enough. In “Hapworth”, Salinger explains important things about people whose philosophy, world view, knowledge, and social behavior are different from those of traditional society. The seven-year-old Seymour knows how much he has to do to make this world a little better and to maintain harmony between his mind and body; he keeps saying, “I am working on it”. The thirty-one-year-old Seymour has done his best to carry out his mission – Buddy, Boo Boo, Franny, Zooey, and, perhaps, “many wonderful friends in small numbers” rely on Seymour in their attitude of mind and judgments. And his time is up.

Seymour’s suicide would have been a very sad end of the straight-line saga narrative. Evidently, Salinger prefers a circle, where the end meets the beginning. Seymour perceives death as returning to familiar state of purely spiritual existence with a promise of a new life.

Interestingly enough, for all his mystical allure, it is not Seymour, but Buddy Glass who is believed to be Salinger’s alter ego. Maybe, because Seymour is too much of a saint and genius even for his creator.

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Кульчицька О.О., Балог Е.А. Сеймор Гласс: контекстуальна та лінгвістична ідентичність. *Журнал Прикарпатського університету імені Василя Стефаника*, 2 (2) (2015), 77–86.

У статті розглядаються питання контекстної ідентифікації особистості Сеймора Гласса, провідного персонажа саги про Глассів Дж.Д. Селінджера, у соціальному аспекті та з точки зору філософії самого героя. Проаналізовано два твори Селінджера – “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” і “Hapworth 16, 1924”, що доповнюють один одного в плані характеристики головного героя і дають відповіді на запитання (а) як особистість Сеймора обумовлює рамкову конструкцію усього циклу про Глассів, (б) чому Селінджер починає сагу зі смерті героя і закінчує цикл початком його життя, (в) що спонукало автора до написання “Hapworth 16, 1924”, головна думка якого – філософія реінкарнації – вже була викладена ним у оповіданні “Teddy”.

**Ключові слова:** Сеймор Гласс, особистість, час і місце дії, учасники комунікації, форми мовленнєвої діяльності, канал передачі повідомлення, мовленнєвий код, форма повідомлення, предмет обговорення.