elements of consensus. Felix Morley, Karl Brandt, economist, the Rev. T. Robert Ingram stress the religious, more specifically the Christian, content of the Western consensus. Robert E. Cooke, physician, urging social assistance for those whose physical or mental endowments hamper their use of freedom, calls for a new philosophy "in which man is a part of a sensed world as much as the theoretic and is automatically involved with other sensed objects and is a *social* being as well as an *individual.*" But isn't that pretty much what St. Paul was saying to the Gentiles?

There is, of course, one reader for whom these papers offer little. He is the man who knows very well what freedom is but prefers other values. A Senator of the United States was attacking the American government the other day as "heavily weighted against any kind of action, especially any that might alter significantly the status quo." Not unknowledgeable in his country's history, the Senator hastened to add that "of course, inaction is what the founding fathers intended—inaction until such time as an overwhelming consensus was prepared for action of some sort, inevitably a compromise. They were right in their day. *But they are wrong in ours.*" (Emphasis mine.)

What the Senator is saying seems to me clear—and troubling. At the very least, he wants to narrow the consensus on which government acts. He does not say how far his narrowing would go, but neither does he show any awareness that the etymology of the word "consensus" is identical with that of "consent." The late Justice Brandeis was more perceptive—or candid—in making pretty much the point made by the Senator: "The doctrine," said Brandeis, "of separation of powers was adopted by the Convention of 1787, not to promote efficiency, but to preclude the exercise of arbitrary power. The purpose was not to avoid friction, but by means of the inevitable friction incident to the distribution of governmental powers among three departments, *to save the people from autocracy.*" (Emphasis mine.)

Those who fear autocracy more than freedom will find comfort in Morley, Vivas, et al. And they will know better how to refute the others.

Reviewed by C. P. IVES

The House of Glass

Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour—an Introduction, by J. D. Salinger. *Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1963. 248 pp. $4.00.*

IF THE CATCHER IN THE RYE indicated in 1951 that J. D. Salinger was a writer with talent, the *Nine Stories*, collected two years later, demonstrated that Salinger was a writer with a unique talent, one which would deeply influence the literary currents of mid-twentieth century America. Limiting his subject matter to the activities of the fictitious Glass family, the precocious and disturbed children of an Irish-Jewish marriage, Salinger next produced *Fanny and Zooey*, two stories which confirmed the author's remarkable abilities. Young writers mimicked Salinger's style, as a few decades earlier hopeful authors imitated Hemingway. But Salinger's style always rested on the solid foundations of carefully and deftly constructed narrations; the imitators were unsuccessful, their stories went awry. Now two stories about Seymour Glass, which were originally published in *The New Yorker,* have been placed in one book. Both stories have gone awry.

Seymour Glass initially appeared in the first of the *Nine Stories,* "A Perfect Day for Bananafish." Vacationing in Florida, Seymour is seen and heard talking to a little girl on the beach, and apparently is thoroughly enjoying the conversation—a discussion between two intelligent, innocent children, one perhaps five years old, the other thirty-one. Then Seymour takes the girl's hand and escorts her into the water, asking that she watch closely for bananafish, who "lead a very tragic life": they swim into a hole, eating as many as eighty-seven bananas at one time, behaving like pigs, and (Seymour admits) stuffing themselves to death. Soon the little girl exclaims that she has just seen a bananafish, after which they head for shore, where the little girl runs off. Semour proceeds to his hotel

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room, gazes at his wife asleep on the bed, and then puts a bullet through his brain.

The most striking stylistic element of "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," as well as the other *Nine Stories* and *Fanny and Zooey,* is its vibrant, movie-like quality. Every movement, every gesture is carefully and vividly described, particularized and individualized, so that it is a precise and unique action; every bit of dialogue that is spoken between Seymour and the little girl is offered to the reader without comment or explanation. Seymour, preparing to enter the water, is not described simply as removing his robe, taking the girl's hand, and walking towards the water. Rather:

> He took off the robe. His shoulders were white and narrow, and his trunks were royal blue. He folded the robe, first lengthwise, then in thirds. He unrolled the towel he had used over his eyes, spread it on the sand, and then laid the folded robe on top of it. He bent over, picked up the float, and secured it under his right arm. Then, with his left hand, he took Sybil's hand.

The reader is not asked to imagine the color of Seymour's trunks, for he is told this; nor is there any doubt as to the exact manner in which the robe is folded, nor with which hand he holds Sybil's hand. The reader is an immediate observer, being much in the same position as the viewer of a play, who, while constantly aware of the settings and the performers' costumes, focuses his attention on the actors' movements and their dialogue, all of which is presented directly to the viewer's eyes and ears without interpretation. The reader of "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" observes a series of scenes, through the perceptive eye and discerning ear of Salinger. But the reader is an eyewitness, a first-hand observer, for Salinger carefully avoids the use of all devices which would in any way cause the reader to be aware of the author as an intermediary between the scene described and the reader; thus Salinger employs almost no metaphors, indirect narration and interpretation. For the same reason, the reader, the observer, does not know what the characters on the beach are thinking, nor can he find any explanation for their behavior other than that which he can infer from what is occurring before him.

Why, then, does the observer not leave? It is because he is witnessing a scene which both excites and confuses him, at which he knows not whether he may laugh or whether he should perhaps cry: Seymour's conversation with the little girl is amusing, even hilarious at points, yet it is clearly the talk of a young man who is sick, and who soon commits suicide. The line between the ridiculous and the tragic tends to be thin, and Salinger, in the *Nine Stories,* balances himself carefully on that line.

The two stories in Salinger's latest book are both about the same Seymour who is the protagonist of "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," but they are both inferior to Salinger's previously published works. It is precisely because "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" and "Seymour—an Introduction" are *about* Seymour that they are poorer works, for Salinger is most effective showing or presenting, not telling about, an occurrence or a series of events.

"Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" is undoubtedly the better of the two works which constitute Salinger's latest volume. It is the story of Seymour's wedding day, narrated by the groom's younger brother, Buddy, who obtains a leave from the army so that he may attend the wedding. On his arrival he discovers that it has been cancelled, for Seymour has suddenly decided to postpone the marriage. Most of the story consists of a conversation between Buddy, the bride's Matron of Honor and her husband, and the bride's aunt, which occurs in an automobile and in Buddy's apartment, en route to the bride's parents' house. The conversation focuses on Seymour, but the story doesn't. Rather, Salinger tells the reader *about* Seymour: that he just couldn't marry because he was ecstatically happy: "too keyed up to be with people." Assuredly the reader now better understands Seymour, who, "keyed up" after his sublime conversation with the little girl, killed himself—much like the bananafish who after merrily glutting himself, so that he becomes satiated and immobile, must die of banana fever.

The reader is thus presented with a partial explanation of Seymour's personality and his suicide, but he is not offered the direct dramatic tension which was inherent in the *Nine Stories* and *Franny and Zooey.* The reader's perspective is focused on the narrator, Buddy Glass, who redirects attention to the wedding day conversation, which in turn concerns Seymour, who is not even present. As the distance of the reader from the dramatic situation increases due to the narrative methods employed, Salinger's vivid style of writing, the merit of which is that it places the reader as proximate to the dramatic

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scene as possible, loses its effectiveness. Many of those stylistic elements, in fact, which contributed to the brilliance of the earlier Salinger stories become nuisances in "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters." In such a story, for example, as "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," the reader was not informed of any of the characters' feelings; this technique, of course, contributed to the dramatic effect. But in the story under consideration, there is a narrator, Buddy Glass, who was involved in the events being related and from whom the reader can reasonably expect to discover some of his feelings. Salinger apparently recognized this problem, for at several points Buddy interrupts the narration to inform the reader that, although he did have definite feelings about various things, he'd rather not mention them—interjections which mar the narration. Another example is provided by the wealth of details which enrich the earlier works, which are, in fact, the basis of their beauty and power—and which are trivial and unnecessary when Buddy Glass introduces them without any context, as when he mentions the author of a book on birds given to him by a teacher in a study hall, whose full name he also gives. The particularization of everything—and every person—provides the essence of the dramatic impact of Salinger's previous works; it constitutes tediousness in his latest book.

In "Seymour—an Introduction," Salinger does not attempt to construct a dramatic framework. Buddy Glass begins by stating that he intends to offer some "undetached prefatory remarks" about his deceased brother. It is, by now, no secret that Salinger terms Buddy Glass his *alter ego*. Buddy Glass, in fact, proudly tells the reader that he has previously published one novel, about a boy who leaves prep school, a short story about the suicide of his brother, Seymour, and another story about a mystically oriented lad who predicts his own gruesome death. These obviously refer, respectively, to Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," and "Teddy." Buddy Glass claims that he is a writer, and doubtlessly many of Buddy's attitudes are in fact Salinger's. And we learn a great deal about Buddy Glass's attitudes, for interspersed among his comments on Seymour—comments which are neither interesting nor enlightening—Buddy airs his views, or more properly his complaints. Primarily he dislikes critics: "a peerage of tin ears" he terms them. Such condemnations appear so frequently in the story, that it is difficult not to infer that Salinger was feebly attempting to protect his work from criticism before the story was published or even written. It is the general reader, too, with whom Buddy is concerned. He is continually informing the reader of his progress on the composition of the "undetached prefatory remarks"; a paragraph may begin with the statement that there has been a lapse of so many days since the preceding sentence was written. At one particularly boring point Buddy Glass addresses the reader: "Am I being garrulous? Yes. Yes." Dostoevsky's Underground Man is constantly asking the reader such questions too; but the Underground Man's primary characteristic is that he is supremely self-conscious, and it is the self-consciousness of the Dostoevsky character that interests us. Buddy Glass, however, is not an especially interesting individual, nor a supremely self-conscious human being; furthermore, as the title indicates, the story should be concerned with Seymour. "Seymour—an Introduction" is not a story; or if it is, it is so diffused and unstructured that it cannot be a good story. Perhaps Salinger would prefer that it be termed a treatise, but Salinger's talent certainly does not lie here.

J. D. Salinger has already established himself as one of the outstanding writers of the twentieth century. It is to be hoped that the author's future work will prove *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour—an Introduction* to be only a temporary aberration in the creative output of a superb writer.

Reviewed by HARVEY PLOTNICK

Gomulka: Myth and Reality

Poland 1944-1962. The Sovietization of a Captive People, by Richard F. Staar. *Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962. xxviii & 300 pp. $7.50.*

THIS STUDY of contemporary Poland should dispel the illusions fostered by those who have persuaded themselves and are seeking to per-

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