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The Promise:

A Mythic-Archetypal and Gender-Oriented Analysis of J.D. Salinger's "A Perfect Day for
Bananafish"

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Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of J.D. Salinger's "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" from both mythic-archetypal and gender-oriented perspectives. It looks specifically at the way a gender-oriented reading allows one to interpret "Bananafish" as a radical reassessment of Carl Jung's ideas about the process of individuation, as well as Joseph Campbell's conception of what he describes as the monomyth in his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. The reader is asked to look at how patriarchal values have greatly limited the development of these characters' identities over time, and the complex archetypal and mythic implications of this limitation.

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1. Introduction

Many of the stories within Salinger's *Nine Stories* revolve around relationships between children and adults. Such relationships represent the author's overarching concern with the often difficult ways a person makes the transition from a state of innocence to a state of experience and with the knowledge that might be acquired by this kind of change. Frequently, as is the case with Seymour Glass and Sybil Carpenter in Salinger's well known short story "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," the adult attempts to pass an aspect of that knowledge on to the child in hopes of providing him or her with an ethical or philosophical perspective through which better to view the world. But as often happens in Salinger's work, the society in which his characters live interferes significantly with both their growth as individuals and with their abilities to communicate meaningfully to others. Ihab Hassan writes that the "urban, suburban and exurban society which circumscribes Salinger's ... characters exhibits a sad decay of genuine sensibility and even of simple truth" (139). But though Hassan perceptively outlines the effects of this culture on Salinger's individuals, he fails to fully apprehend the scope of Salinger's critique. For Salinger is not simply interested in the particular milieu of his characters but in the "total prevailing capitalist society of the patriarchal West" (Guerin et al. 271) and its negative impact on the development of human identity. As Salinger sees it, the practices and traditions of our Western culture persistently repress the inherently complex, multiplicitous, and often ambivalent natures of our individual characters (277) by portraying strict binary oppositions like masculine and feminine as natural categories (275), and limiting what each component

represents while ultimately privileging its constructed idea of maleness. And our culture enforces these patriarchal structures so that the dominant class remains in control. As such, *Nine Stories* contains many adults--Seymour Glass, Muriel Glass, Eloise Wengler, John Gedsudski, Sergeant X and others--whose identities have been warped by imposed patriarchal constructs, so that their transitions from innocence to experience did not bring understanding, but rather perpetuated ignorance, uncertainty, and an inability to properly convey ideas and emotions to those around them. In addition, the narratives which include these already distorted adults also involve children whose characters more directly reveal the process of patriarchal identity-formation. This range of representation allows Salinger to assess more precisely both the methods and the consequences of our culture's constructs and to, as noted, address how these generations relate to and communicate with one another. But the scope of Salinger's concern is not limited to these sociological problems and their effects on human development; Salinger is also investigating the mythic and archetypal implications of generational experience, identity development, and the cultural constructs that shape them.

The movement from innocence to experience can, in the context of archetypal theory, be easily equated with Carl Jung's idea of individuation, or the becoming of the self. This concept is seen as the psychological conclusion to one's encounter with the unconscious, specifically the collective unconscious, the vessel for unconscious archetypes which are often made conscious through an analogical relationship to the outside world and which, historically, materialize in the form of myths, dogmatic symbols, and other cultural traditions. These conscious structures, especially those which are religious, keep us removed and thus safeguard us from the original experience of the archetypes (Jung, "Archetypes" 292). "Mankind," as Jung says, "has never lacked powerful images to lend magical aid against all the uncanny things that live in the depths

of the psyche” (296). But the processes of modernity have, over time, greatly diminished the power of many of our culture’s symbols, and this has led to a kind of “spiritual poverty” (299) in the West, a contemporary symbollessness which Jung believes is necessary in order to fully reconcile ourselves to the contents of our unconscious. One such symbolic representation which remains is the “mythological adventure of the hero” (Campbell 23) or what Joseph Campbell calls the monomyth or the hero’s journey. During this journey, “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder” where “fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won” (23). The hero then “comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow men” (23). As Campbell does when he alludes to the Grimms’ “The Frog Prince,” one can associate the hero journey with adolescence, a fundamental transition from innocence to experience and thus an essential instance of individuation. Once one observes the recurrent pattern of distressed adults (characters of experience) seeking to communicate to *and with* children (characters of innocence) in *Nine Stories*, one sees how well these stories lend themselves to a mythic analysis based upon individual areas of Campbell’s monomyth, notably the hero’s return and the bestowing of the boon. Here are individuals who have each made a transformation, and they are attempting to transfer the knowledge acquired by that transformation onto others, to “bestow boons” (23). But these stories take issue with Jung’s belief that, through our spiritual barrenness, we are more equipped to plummet into the waters of our unconscious and enable ourselves “to rediscover the gods as psychic factors, that is, as archetypes” (“Archetypes” 307), and to achieve individuation. For Salinger, there are other, equally powerful images and institutions forestalling our maturation. Jung understands that addressing one’s psyche means first looking “into the mirror of the water” and seeing one’s own face, “the face we never show to the world because we cover

it with the *persona*, the mask of the actor” (304). *Nine Stories* consistently presents characters subsumed by “politicosocial delusional systems” (307), characters whose personal consciousnesses and personal unconsciousnesses, constituting “the personal and private side of psychic life” (287), are inordinately tied to patriarchal constructs. Salinger sees that the movement from innocence to experience, during which one is forced to attend to the forces of the personal and collective unconsciousnesses in order to awaken the self, is compromised at its earliest stages. His characters are incapable of properly facing up to their personal unconsciousnesses and are consequently unable to reconcile themselves with the content of the collective unconscious and obtain “the keys of paradise” (319), the boon to pass onto fellow men. They become individuals of experience, yes, but what, if anything, do they gain from it? And how, if at all, do they communicate this to others? These are the questions regularly addressed in *Nine Stories*. And in no other story are they more perfectly represented than in “A Perfect Day for Bananafish.”

A general assessment of the established criticism on “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” indicates that little if any work has been done on “Bananafish” as an isolated story outside the context of the other Glass narratives, which is quite reasonable considering that Salinger spent the remainder of his career expatiating upon Seymour, his siblings, and their thorny relationships to one another. From a psychological critical perspective, these more recent works are valuable as they elucidate some of the more opaque aspects of “Bananafish” as a narrative, such as its characters’ dispositions as they have developed up until the day the story takes place.

Concerning Seymour’s suicide, for example, Ihab Hassan writes that “the story needs the background of the later Glass family narratives” to give it its “full reference” (145). But by reading and studying “Bananafish” only in relation to Salinger’s subsequent Glass stories, one is inevitably deprived of its intrinsic ambiguities, its narrative and psychosomatic mysteries which,

themselves, are as valuable for cultural, gender-oriented, and mythic critics as Salinger's succeeding elaborations of these characters' psychologies and milieu. Through Salinger's strict adherence to the present, and through his economy of words and narrative form throughout *Nine Stories*, the content of "Bananafish" as an individual work takes on considerable symbolic weight, representing more abstract societal and archetypal concerns, and consequently creating a complex relationship between general modern patriarchal conditions and recurring mythic patterns. It is thereby essential for critics to examine "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" both in and outside the context of the other Glass stories.

Studying "Bananafish" as its own separate entity also compels the reader to recognize Muriel Glass's section as being as essential as Seymour's to the overall meaning of the story. Most critics who have written about "Bananafish" see Salinger's depiction of Muriel and her mother as a marginal note to Seymour's narrative, a perspective indubitably encouraged by Seymour's overwhelming significance in Salinger's later works. But is this undeserving marginalization of Muriel's character by critics not also an indication of a problematic patriarchal point of view? Many, as Warren French notes, seem to take "the disturbed Seymour's description of his wife as 'Miss Spiritual Tramp of 1948' at face value" (80). Let us consider the manner in which some of these critics have assessed Muriel in relation to Seymour. In his essay, "Six, Sex, Sick: Seymour, Some Comments," Charles V. Genthe describes Muriel as "jaded," uncritically adopts Seymour's nickname for her, and implicitly sneers at her for neglecting Rilke (170-171). Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner dismiss Muriel for being "Oblivious to poetry but responsive to expensive clothes and tabloid-magazine sex" (19). And all Anthony Fassano has to say about Muriel is that she is greedy, shallow, and someone who takes more than she needs (Fassano 149-150), while David Leitch sees her simply as "a middle-class American

girl” who represents “ordinary, everyday people” (Leitch 72). Muriel is trivial at best; she who, unaided, compels the sublime Seymour to suicide at worst. And the overall critical attitude is supremely androcentric. Muriel is rarely perceived as an individual character worthy of close analysis. Instead, she is someone to consider only as a means to anatomize Seymour. One would be hard-pressed to discover a line-by-line dissection of Muriel’s section of “Bananafish,” let alone one from a mythic or a feminist viewpoint. But these are the critical lenses through which scholars should begin to assess Muriel’s half of the narrative. We must acknowledge that Muriel is a worthy hero¹ of “Bananafish” as well; that she, like Seymour, also experienced a transformation; and that she, like Seymour, is the product of the same patriarchal system that delimits human individuality.

That being said, one must, if she is to be involved in the unfinished academic discourse on “Bananafish,” acknowledge Seymour’s central position in most Salinger criticism and successively contribute a new way of approaching this immensely complicated individual. Unsurprisingly, most scholars focus their attention on two issues: Seymour’s exceptionality in relation to the world around him, and Seymour’s suicide. Concerning Seymour’s uniqueness, the common view is that he is “a poet, Zen mystic, and Christ figure, ... a sort of Holy Spirit” (Bryan 226) with “the intellect of a genius and the moral sensitivity and compassion of a Buddhist monk” (Genthe 170). And the causes of his suicide are generally attributed to “his war experiences” or to “his realization that he is mismatched with either Muriel or the materialistic bananafish world or both” (Mills 51). Ihab Hassan’s outlook is a case in point: “In ‘A Perfect Day for Bananafish,’ the taste of life’s corruption is so strong in the mouth of Seymour Glass, and the burden of self-alienation, even from his wife, Muriel, is so heavy, that suicide seems to

¹ Though this thesis uses established androcentric terminology when describing Muriel's mythic status, such language is admittedly inadequate because it perpetuates a strongly patriarchal method of discourse.

him the only cleansing act possible” (145). While it would be misguided to emphatically take issue with anyone regarding Seymour as an artist or spiritual figure, especially when one recognizes how he develops in Salinger’s later works, it is important to bear in mind that no critic has come to grips with Seymour, or for that matter, Muriel, as a hero in the mythic tradition, or with his suicide as the ultimate outcome of his failure in the hero adventure, that is, his transition from innocence to experience. Similarly, when interpreting Seymour’s exchange with Sybil Carpenter, critics have incessantly read Seymour’s bananafish story as a fable against the “gross, material, sensual” (Genthe 171) characteristics of modern existence. Again, these commonplace readings are impossible to discredit to the hilt, but a mythic analysis would undoubtedly yield a new way of understanding Seymour and Sybil’s exchange, one which relates Seymour’s allegory with the legendary hero’s attempt to accord a boon of knowledge onto his fellow men. And by then coupling this kind of mythic analysis with a gender-oriented point of view, scholars will come to realize that Salinger’s anxieties are not limited to the psychological effects of war, materialism, and spiritual infertility but to the overall effects of Western patriarchalism on the process of individuation, as delineated by Muriel and Seymour, as well.

The primary purpose of this thesis is to analyze “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” through mythic, archetypal, and gender-oriented lenses in order to illustrate how one may interpret Salinger’s story as an investigation into the ways in which patriarchalism compromises the fundamental human transition from innocence to experience, a transition which corresponds directly with Joseph Campbell’s definition of the hero’s journey and with Jung’s idea of individuation. There has been significant scholarly work done on “Bananafish” up to the present time, but no one has endeavored to understand it in the context of a specific mythic tradition or in the context of Jungian psychology. Moreover, no criticism has brought into focus Salinger’s

evaluation of the androcentric nature of Western culture and how such an evaluation relates to mythic or psychological readings of the author's text. This thesis is an attempt to redress these glaring omissions in Salinger criticism and thus lay the foundations for new ways of looking at Salinger and his work.

2. Muriel

The primary function of the opening paragraph of "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" is to symbolize the deleterious qualities of modern American culture as exemplified by a Florida hotel, qualities which the reader must keep in mind once Seymour is introduced later on in the story as they define the societal conditions which, in part, determine Seymour's failure as a hero. The narrator notes the "ninety-seven New York advertising men ... monopolizing the long distance lines" (3) of the hotel. This line effectively outlines the story's reevaluation of what Campbell calls the "world of the common day" (Campbell 23) from which a hero ventures forth, a world seen here as a collection of social systems overcome with patriarchal influence. He goes on to write that the hero transfers "his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown" (48), but as Salinger sees it, modern American society greatly hinders one's ability to establish any kind of foundational spiritual dynamic in the first place. Vast anonymity, consumerism, the unfamiliarity of all places, the sense of societal and individual disconnection associated with patriarchy and the gender constructs perpetuated by that kind of society, and the overall widening distances which separate people are all essential characteristics of the world into which Seymour and Muriel Glass are born; each of these are implied in this first sentence of "A Perfect Day of Bananafish." Muriel's character is then persistently described in relation to concrete material items: a "pocket-size magazine" she's read, a "comb and a brush," the "skirt of her beige suit," the "button on her Saks blouse," the "lacquer on the nails"

(3), the “congested ashtray” (4). Warren French and a number of other critics have over the years been intensely skeptical of reading “Bananafish” as simply an “allegory of the fate of a hypersensitive man in a materialistic and meretricious world--Salinger’s ‘phony’ world” (French 80), but while these scholars certainly make their points, the sensitive reader should not overlook the thematic weight which the author places on these articles and the way they are defined in connection with Muriel and the world she so comfortably occupies and thus, by implication, represents. These partial, fragmentary items have no archetypal or overall symbolic meaning outside their materiality, thus reflecting an incomplete and scattered basis for Muriel’s character altogether, as well as calling attention to the world accountable for that condition. This is a distorted, hostile, and wholly patriarchal world, one whose “system of ideals, virtues, goals, and advantages” (Campbell 49) is defined by attributes which diminish the health of the human psyche and spirit. As Salinger sees it, the modern world is entirely at odds with the world as defined by mythic tradition, crippling the modern man at his most foundational moment and thus hampering his ability to successfully make a transition from innocence to experience and, by extension, successfully obtain and relay a boon of knowledge once such a transformation must take place whether “of his own volition” or “by some benign or malignant agent” (Campbell 48).

The difficulty of transformation, regeneration, and rebirth in the modern world is also artfully implied by the title of the article Muriel is reading in her hotel room: “Sex Is Fun--or Hell.” The way sex is defined here as an either/or disregards its singular importance in perpetuating the human race and, consequently, its archetypal significance as an act which precipitates spiritual formation and transformation. In contemporary society, the act of copulation has lost much of its traditional and biological meaning; it is now, in the present

climate, either a lighthearted pleasure or a source of great suffering. In addition, the article's title greatly undermines one period of human life greatly associated with the transition from innocence to experience and, by implication, the hero adventure: puberty. The oncoming of adolescence, a length of time during which a young person reaches sexual maturity, becomes capable of reproduction, and altogether develops from a child into an adult, is conventionally seen, as Campbell writes, as a herald of the hero adventure or that which brings about the "call to adventure" (42). The appearance of this herald "rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration--a rite, or moment, of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth. The familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand" (Campbell 42-43). But how does one come to terms with adolescence and his or her sexual maturity in a world which, as Salinger sees it, both distorts the traditional and mythic meanings of sex and subverts its overall importance? The author seems to believe that such a world, at the very outset of one's existence, advocates "concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns" (43) which are deleterious rather than beneficial, and which cannot be organically outgrown in order for rebirth to become possible. This world fails to prepare one for the transitions and changes associated with adolescence which consequently leads one to misunderstand the signification of that period of time.

The title of the article also serves as a way for Salinger to more directly state his concern with gender and how it directly defines American, and by extension, Western culture altogether. As has already been implied by the opening sentence, which describes how an anonymous group of New York men prevents a woman from communicating with others, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" is, in part, an investigation into American patriarchy and how this kind of social

organization, where “men hold a disproportionate amount of power” (Bressler 316), affects identity and communication. Salinger, as can be seen here and elsewhere in “Bananafish,” is writing partially as a social constructivist or one who supports “the idea that human identity is formed by the culture into which one is born” (Dobie 125). Patriarchy does not recognize that gender “is a constantly changing concept” (112), and instead creates a very rigid and “traditional binary of masculine/feminine” which makes “it more difficult for individuals to choose their authentic identities” (112). Salinger shows here and throughout “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” that American patriarchy’s perpetuation of this traditional binary directly hinders these characters’ abilities to understand themselves and those around them and thus limits how and what they communicate to one another. Thus by reading “Bananafish” partially through different lenses associated with feminist and gender criticism, one may better understand how the perpetuation of “old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns” (Campbell 43) associated with the patriarchal ideals of the modern world will hinder Seymour and Muriel’s abilities to both conceptualize and communicate a boon of knowledge to this world in which they have both been born.

The opening paragraph alone clearly discloses J.D. Salinger’s understanding of the world in which he and his characters live. The misapprehension of gender and sexuality within a patriarchal system, the shortfalls of communication within that system, social and locational disconnect, vagueness of identity altogether, materialism, and, as will soon become apparent, war, are all characteristics of the culture Seymour and Muriel have been born into, and it is because of these properties that Seymour’s specific transition into experience was a troubled one, one which left him unclear and uncertain concerning what he has gained from it. The remainder of the first half of “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” focuses exclusively on the phone conversation

between Muriel Glass and her mother, a conversation which enables a more detailed observation on female identities and the problems of communication within a modern patriarchal world, and which prepares the reader to better understand the second half of the story, when Seymour attempts and fails to communicate something meaningful and ethical to Sybil Carpenter through language or, more specifically, the act of storytelling. The first half also further expands upon a stylistic tendency already well established in the opening paragraph: focusing on material objects and details which do not directly serve any narrative or obvious thematic purpose. This inclination allows the reader to better understand these items as failed archetypes which, in turn, guides the reader to interpret Seymour's character as well as American society through the lens of mythic criticism, particularly that facet of it associated with the monomyth.

For the first four paragraphs of "Bananafish," the reader is not given Muriel's name. This anonymity, like the anonymity of the advertising men, is important if one wishes to understand Salinger's assessment of gender in American society and how it affects individual identity. The first paragraph defines this character solely by how she takes care of her attire and keeps up her physical appearance, and from this, the reader recognizes Muriel's subordinated position in the way her material items, her consumerism, and her concern for her physicality overwhelm Salinger's initial description of her character. Though she does prove to be a full three-dimensional character as the story proceeds, Salinger emphasizes her material and physical concerns at the forefront in order to show how they might undermine and overshadow human identity, specifically the female identity. Patriarchal society compels women to magnify the importance of physicality and material commodities in "the interest of the capital and the ruling class" (Guerin et al. 271). Within this kind of society, the self, as implied by the namelessness of

the opening paragraphs, is constantly on the verge of ceasing to exist, of dematerializing under the pressures of the patriarchal capitalist ideology.

Patriarchy also compels men to look at women, even as children, as sexual beings first and foremost. Note how Salinger writes that Muriel “looked as if her phone had been ringing continually ever since she had reached puberty” (3). He again underlines his concern with the oversexualization of the female sex once he introduces the young Sybil Carpenter and her “canary-yellow two-piece bathing suit, one piece of which she would not actually be needing for another nine or ten years” (10). Patriarchy’s manipulation of human sexuality, which begins during adolescence, is an important facet to Salinger’s reassessment of the hero adventure. Such manipulation corrupts childhood innocence, impairing the development of identity and making the passing into experience a time not of rebirth but of stagnation and disillusionment. It is therefore appropriate that the narrator refers to Muriel as a girl throughout “Bananafish”; patriarchy’s shaping of the human identity from infancy through adolescence has, whether they are aware of it or not, wholly determined many, if not all, of Salinger’s characters in *Nine Stories*. The problem of identity for women as well as men, as will be seen when Seymour is directly introduced in the second of half of “Bananafish,” also determines how his characters often fail to communicate meaningfully with one another once the transition into adulthood has taken place.

The conversation between Muriel and her mother begins with her mother asking “‘Muriel? Is that you?’” (4) By opening a telephone conversation in this way, Salinger immediately aligns concerns about communication with issues of identity, specifically Muriel’s identity. Note how even after Muriel’s real name is given, the narrator continues to refer to her as ‘girl.’ Modern society’s shaping of the female experience through gender constructs, signified by

the referral, is obfuscating the distinctiveness of Muriel's personality. Muriel then responds by turning "the receiver slightly away from her ear" (4). Though this gesture is in response to the loudness of her mother's voice, it also symbolizes how the problems of identity make it increasingly difficult to be in harmony with and thus communicate with another person in a meaningful way. This helps to explain why the two are constantly cutting each other off throughout the conversation. Neither woman is able to fully recognize the meaning behind what the other is saying.

As noted, Salinger uses the first four paragraphs of "Bananafish" to suggest how patriarchy both shapes and defines the female identity by oversexualizing women and by directing their concerns toward materialism and physical appearances. But though Muriel has undoubtedly been influenced by these pressures, Salinger does not use her conversation with her mother to simply reiterate these superficial and material concerns but to reveal other more significant issues to which she is equally attuned. Through this, Salinger is asking the reader, particularly the male reader, to be aware of how and why they interpret Muriel the way that they do. Many male scholars see Muriel as a shallow, unintelligent, and altogether negative character defined solely by those concerns previously mentioned. Anthony Fassano writes of her "greed and shallowness" (149), while David Seed notes that in Muriel, her "nonchalance is taken to the point of indifference" (77). Theodore Gross goes so far as to assert that Seymour's suicide "stems from a conflict with his vapid wife" (264). But upon a closer reading, one will discover that Muriel is a "a tower of coolly self-controlled strength" (French 81), admirable in her unsuccessful attempt to understand herself, her husband, and the world around her though it is her failure to understand her mother which proves just as essential. Such matters are evident on

the first page of dialogue between Muriel and her mother after Muriel has turned the receiver away from her ear:

“Yes, Mother. How are you?” she said.

“I’ve been worried to death about you. Why haven’t you phoned? Are you alright?”

“I tried to get you last night and the night before. The phone here’s been—”

“Are you alright, Muriel?”

The girl increased the angle between the receiver and her ear. “I’m fine. I’m hot. This is the hottest day they’ve had in Florida in—”

“Why haven’t you called me? I’ve been worried to—”

“Mother, darling, don’t yell at me. I can hear you beautifully,” said the girl. “I called you twice last night. Once just after—”

“I *told* your father you’d probably call last night. But, no, he had to—Are you all right, Muriel? Tell me the truth.”

“I’m fine. Stop asking me that, please.”(4)

Within these first few lines of dialogue alone, Salinger exposes, through dialogic repetition, essential aspects of each of these character’s natures, and what those natures mean in relation to one another and to specific feminist and mythic concepts. It is very important that one remain aware that this is a conversation between two women, a daughter and her mother. The complete absence of a direct male voice within the first half of “Bananafish”—neither Seymour nor Muriel’s father are present during this conversation--suggests Salinger’s concern with ideas associated with separatist feminism, which “advocates separation from men, either total or partial” (Bressler 158). This form of feminism assumes “that women must first see themselves in a different context--separating themselves from men, at least for a while--before they can

discover who they are as individuals. Such separation ... is the necessary first step to achieving personal growth and individuality" (158). By removing Muriel and her mother from any immediate patriarchal presence, Salinger can fully and correctly explore Muriel and her mother as individuals. Thus through the lens of separatist feminist criticism, the conversation between Muriel and her mother serves as Salinger's attempt to explore and answer this question: how does the expression and growth of the female individual through segregated communication occur between two women greatly defined by patriarchal constructs? And it is this recontextualized exchange between mother and daughter that most fully represents Salinger's societal and mythic concerns thus far.

It is clear from these first few lines of dialogue that Muriel is weary of her mother and with perhaps good reason; her mother's obvious concern for her betrays a lack of faith in the strength and intelligence of Muriel's character which, in turn, reveals how much her perception of the female identity is defined by patriarchal constructs. Women are expected to be weak, deferential, submissive, and easily manipulated and Muriel's mother, who, on one level, wishes for her daughter to better understand the harm of patriarchal dominance, cannot help but encourage these qualities in Muriel. It is unsurprising then that many of Muriel's mother's remarks are extensions of her husband's beliefs; he may not be directly present but his patriarchal influence is nonetheless felt. But though Muriel surely does not consciously accept any of these qualities, the reader should already be aware from the preceding paragraphs that she is, like her mother, still in many ways a product of patriarchal expectations. Therefore, it would be in bad judgment for the reader to immediately adopt Muriel's implied feelings and condemn the mother. Salinger is more concerned with how Muriel and her mother might relate to and, by implication, understand one another than with supporting one character over the other. Elaine

Showalter writes that for a woman, “Hating’s one’s mother ... is only a metaphor for hating oneself” (135) and that feminism must go “beyond matrophobia to a courageously sustained quest for the mother” (135). Muriel’s rejection of her mother is thus a rejection of herself as both women’s identities are at least partially the products of the same patriarchal framework; each woman’s goals, responses, and points of view have been shaped by the very same male-dominated society. There is no gynocritical lens, which would examine “the distinctiveness of the female experience in contrast to earlier methods that explained the female by using male models” (Dobie 125), through which these two women might communicate with and understand themselves and each other. This is one of the central problems for women within a patriarchal society and it is a central component of Salinger’s reassessment of the hero adventure.

Salinger’s interest in the relationship between Muriel and her mother brings to light the author’s concern with the way the patriarchal structure affects the phase of hero adventure Joseph Campbell labels “The Meeting with the Goddess,” which Campbell sees as the “ultimate adventure” (91). It is this union with the “Queen Goddess of the World” which stands as the “the crisis ... at the uttermost edge of the world” (91), and as “the final test of the talent of the hero to win the boon of love ... which is life itself enjoyed as the encasement of eternity” (99). Such implied interest in this particular facet of Campbell’s monomyth reflects Salinger’s interest in de-privileging the “hegemonic Greco-Roman mythologies” which downplay “the role of the feminine” in favor of “dominant male deities” (Guerin et al. 263). Salinger uses the first half of “Bananafish” to explore what the meeting with the goddess means for a woman born into a society where the nature of womanhood has little meaning outside the patriarchal constructs which define it. Campbell writes that the goddess, who is “mother, sister, mistress, bride” (92), represents “the totality of what can be known” (97). But what does this mean in relation to

Muriel's exchange with her mother and all that exchange implies about how the female identity is manipulated throughout a woman's life? Muriel's adolescence and the life leading up to that adolescence, which should be "preliminary" to her "ultimate experience . . . of enduring the full possession of the mother-destroyer" (101) have, in contrast and within the patriarchy into which she has been born, taught her to unconsciously accept the female identity as the Other or that which is "the 'not male' and thus unimportant" (Bressler 316), and to associate a large part of her character with materialistic and oversexualized qualities created by male-dominated expectations. Like many other women, Muriel's transition from innocence to experience was not a passage toward a beneficial revelation about her selfhood and its relation to the world around her but rather a perpetuation of attributes long established by the male sex. Hence, Muriel cannot recognize her mother nor can she recognize that those conditions which compel her mother to partially define Muriel in connection with the predetermined idea of womanhood within an androcentric society are the very same ones which have determined many of her own attributes. She cannot understand her mother because she does not fully understand herself. She cannot help but reject the goddess who "By deficient eyes . . . is reduced to inferior states; by the evil eye of ignorance . . . is spellbound to banality and ugliness" (Campbell 97). As Salinger sees it, Muriel can only succeed in gaining anything from this meeting, to wit a boon of knowledge about herself in relation to the world around her, by identifying an aspect of herself in her mother and thus recognizing from a more objective viewpoint that parts of both her and her mother's identities are gender constructs, that they both since early childhood have been "socialized into accepting the language (and law) of the father and are thereby made inferior" (Dobie 108). Muriel's mother must not be rejected but rather "redeemed by the eyes of understanding" (Campbell 97). But though Salinger emphasizes how patriarchy keeps Muriel from both

establishing a concrete female identity entirely independent of androcentric determinations and from identifying and thus relating to how her mother's personality has been similarly impacted, he also, as has already been mentioned, provides Muriel and her mother with an enormous amount of strength and distinctiveness. Both women and men, as one will soon observe with Seymour, are in many ways crippled by the restrictions associated with patriarchal gender constructs but that is not to say that all individuals end up as paralyzed as Seymour. Salinger uses Muriel and her mother to symbolize a great majority of individuals within the modern world who are single-minded and decent but whose identities have nonetheless been limited by societal forces they cannot control and whose transitions from innocence to experience have therefore left them in a state of inadequacy, unable to fully understand themselves in connection with their milieu and unable to fully communicate such feelings to others. Through the lens of separatist feminism, it is then appropriate that Salinger focuses so directly on a moment of dialogue between Muriel and her mother; it serves as an ideal form of contact for Muriel to make sense of her character and the world of which she is a part. For if she would only recognize and accept her mother's predicament as her own and be more open and responsive to her mother's concerns, which prove to be entirely justified by the story's end, Muriel would have a fuller understanding of how capitalist patriarchy has delimited the growth of her own individual identity and the identities of virtually every other inhabitant of the West, her husband included. Ergo, by analyzing a number of other passages from Muriel's section of "Bananafish" through a feminist lens, one may more clearly discern how Salinger, almost exclusively through dialogue, delineates a number of different factors simultaneously: how Muriel and her mother are conditioned by society, how this conditioning limits how these two women communicate with and understand one other, how their personalities transcend this conditioning, and how this

particular kind of exchange exclusively between women can perhaps lead to a fuller awareness of the self and the world, an awareness which, through the lens of mythic criticism associated with the hero adventure, is the boon of knowledge denied by the Western patriarchy.

““Who drove?”” (5) This question, which Muriel’s mother asks early on, points to an underlying subtextual concern of the entire conversation: control. What does it mean to be in control within a patriarchal society whose gender constructs often determine power relations and individual identities? The next few lines of dialogue begin to convey the multilayered complexity of this question as it pertains both to Muriel’s sense of self and to her marriage:

“He did,” said the girl. “And don’t get excited. He drove very nicely. I was amazed.

“*He* drove? Muriel, you gave me your word of—”

“Mother,” the girl interrupted, “I just told you. He drove *very* nicely. Under fifty the whole way, as a matter of fact.”

“Did he try any of that funny business with the trees?”

“I *said* he drove very nicely, Mother. Now, please. I asked him to stay close to the white line, and all, and he knew what I meant, and he did.” (5)

The content of Muriel’s immediate response to her mother’s question reflects complex, contradictory elements in her character. The authority with which she manages her husband’s condition indicates Muriel’s assertiveness and independence, qualities which Salinger has already drawn attention to in the first few paragraphs of “Bananafish” where Muriel is depicted as being at ease on her own and in her own skin. Muriel’s handling of her complicated marital circumstances is evidence of a congenital sense of self-possession and guidance. That said, Muriel’s use of language points to facets of her influence which, in contrast, have nothing to do with innateness. Her sense of control, as implied by her description and authoritative

encouragement of Seymour's driving, complies with expected female norms associated with the maternal figure. Patriarchy, in most cases, privileges the male over the female as the dominant figure but motherhood is in many ways a socially constructed state which provides females with a limited and impermanent sense of control and influence. It is therefore unsurprising that Muriel, who carries a considerable amount of strength and independence as an individual, would adopt a maternal position of power over her incapacitated husband. It is one of only a few statuses of authority allowed a woman within a patriarchy. But how secure is this weight? Muriel's mother answers Muriel with the question, "*He* drove?" (5). Harold Bloom writes that "Salinger's stylistic skills are beyond question" (2), a compliment which no doubt pertains at least partially to Salinger's gift for dialogic nuances as can be seen by his use of italics to show when a character stresses certain words over others while speaking. But Salinger's italicizations are never employed simply to reflect conversational shadings; they often direct the reader's attention toward underlying thematic and cultural elements as well. For instance, the mother's emphasis on the male pronoun once again brings the male/female binary into sharp relief with the male component in the dominant position. This accentuation questions Muriel's control by reestablishing the reality of traditional patriarchal privileging, indicating that her mother more clearly recognizes the destructive factor of both Seymour's condition and, more intuitively, the patriarchal society of which they are part and which has, to a certain extent, brought about that condition. In contrast, Muriel declares, "I *said* he drove very nicely" (5) as a response to her mother asking about Seymour's "funny business with the trees" (5). Muriel does not see her mother's questioning as anything but a rejection of Muriel's spirit as an individual. It is then reasonable that Salinger would have Muriel emphasize the word 'said'; it is her way of overshadowing her mother's dismissal with the energy of her disposition.

It is clear that both mother and daughter are making an effort to convey something meaningful to the other. Muriel seeks to assert the strength and fullness of her identity and the assurance of her influence while her mother wishes to underscore the severity of Seymour's condition and, consequently, call attention to how superficial Muriel's sense of control is in relation to the patriarchal order which has affected these characters' identities. But these women are unable to forthrightly communicate these beliefs. Muriel cannot fully assert her sense of self because she is unaware of how patriarchal gender constructs have repressively shaped her social position and her overall personality. And her mother weakens the justification of her own concerns because patriarchal conditioning has both greatly governed her own mentality and made her incapable of looking at her daughter beyond the boundaries of female stereotypes. In addition, Muriel and her mother have been socialized to speak "with characteristic female elements" such as "unfinished sentences" and "exclamations" (Dobie 120), a feature which scholars often interpret as inherent character flaws. For example, David Seed writes that Muriel "under-reacts throughout" and that "In her, nonchalance is taken to the point of indifference" (77). But Salinger is not depicting Muriel and her mother's use of language in order to indicate shameless character faults. Instead, he is calling attention to how these women have been "socialized into using a subordinated language" (Bressler 156) and thus implying that it is only through this exclusively female discourse that women can possibly produce "linguistic qualities" (Dobie 108) of their own which would accurately define their womanhood and "articulate their own social constructs of what it means to be a woman" (Bressler 152), rejecting the language which has labeled them "as the other" (152).

These women have also been socialized to accept stereotypical terminology one might associate with Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's identification of two "principle images: 'the

angel in the house” (Bressler 154) who “lives to care for her husband” (Dobie 108) and, more directly, “the madwoman in the attic” who is an “‘obviously’ sexually fallen” (Bressler 155) woman. Salinger assesses this kind of tolerance when Muriel and her mother discuss Seymour’s nicknames for his wife. After a brief exchange about payments to repair a car Seymour crashed, Muriel’s mother asks, “‘Did he keep calling you that awful--’” (5). Muriel then cuts off the end of her mother’s question, responding that Seymour has come up with a new name for her. These two lines of conversation, which initiate the brief dialogue about nicknames, insinuate a number of particularities previously mentioned about these characters. First, as is often the case, Muriel and her mother interrupt each other so that their thoughts are left incomplete. These disruptions and broken sentences once more suggest how these and many women have, at an early age of development, been dominated by the male “in the discourse of language” (Bressler 156), thereby accepting a mode of communication which fails to properly represent the female condition in any concrete, autonomous way. Second, this initial exchange further calls attention to how differently Muriel and her mother consider and respond to Muriel’s circumstances which are emblematic of the circumstances of all women shaped by patriarchy. By referring to Seymour’s unspoken sobriquet as “awful” (5), Muriel’s mother is, again without being entirely aware, already expressing a disapproval of a specific female stereotype though the reader is not immediately given which one. Muriel’s reply implies her indiscriminate surrender to female stereotypes over an extended period of time. It is this blind acceptance of gender constructs which subverts the inborn self-determination of her identity as established by the opening paragraphs of the story.

Upon learning that Seymour has devised a new nickname for her daughter, Muriel’s mother inquires as to what it is. Muriel answers sharply by asking, “‘Oh, what’s the *difference*, Mother?’” to which her mother responds, “‘Muriel, I want to *know*. Your father--’” (5). Over and

over again, the dialogue between Muriel and her mother underlines what each woman is attempting to convey to the other and the same patriarchal conditionings which prevent them both from doing so. Muriel's mother's desire to know and be fully aware of the individual cognomen testifies to her concern over the way these specific patriarchal stereotypes compromise the intricacies of Muriel's identity and the female identity as a whole. But her particular method of illustrating this concern through persistent, demeaning questioning paradoxically discredits this concern by calling attention to her inability to see her daughter apart from other but no less restrictive female stereotypes. This, in part, explains why Muriel's mother is continually attempting to articulate her husband's perspective; she, the angel of the house, has inadvertently adopted the patriarchal lens through which her husband views womanhood. And Muriel's indifference to what Seymour calls her, emphasized by her stressing of the prefix of 'difference,' is her method of opposing her mother's debasing. But it is also indicative of her incapability of recognizing the importance of these stereotypes and the manner in which they and other constructs have affected her individuality.

Muriel has already demonstrated the manner in which she infantilizes her husband in order to maintain a sense of control over her plight, a process that disregards the seriousness of Seymour's deteriorating psychological state and, in its maternal conformity, indicates an upholding of certain patriarchal gender constructs. This unknowing adherence is again highlighted when Muriel reveals Seymour's new nickname to her mother: "'All right, all right. He calls me Miss Spiritual Tramp of 1948,' the girl said, and giggled" (5). Muriel's snickering illustrates her inability to take notice of the gravity of the sobriquet's implications and demonstrates the frivolousness and triviality that the patriarchal order expects of women and, as a consequence, compels women to possess. Seymour's cognomen gives notice to a number of

different images and ideas associated with the oversimplification of the female identity. 'Miss' is a title given to an unmarried girl or woman that carries negative connotations related to silliness and obstinacy. Seymour's rejection of Muriel's marital status effectively separates her from imagery analogous to the 'angel in the house' stereotype while also focusing attention on those superficial characteristics further implied by Muriel's giggle. Seymour has undoubtedly known Muriel long enough to recognize that her self-reliance does not adhere to the characteristics of domestic, angelic womanhood and this kind of female autonomy often causes male anxiety which goes "as deep as everyone's mother-dominated infancy" (Gilbert and Gubar 28). Seymour thus moves further toward the angel stereotype's antithesis for the nickname's other two components. There is obvious irony in Seymour's use of the word 'spiritual' which definitionally refers to when someone is unconcerned with material possessions. Capitalist patriarchy strongly advocates materialism in its inhabitants, particularly women, and Seymour's complicated awareness of and relationship to this element, qualities which will be later explored, makes his ridiculing of Muriel's adherence to it particularly revealing. Those attributes which patriarchy pressures women to adopt are the same attributes which are scorned by men and which place women in a perpetually subservient position. And by relating Muriel to a tramp, or a woman who has many sexual relationships, Seymour is wholly identifying his wife as a madwoman in the attic. He sees that since she does not conform to the "inspiring otherness of the spirit," she must incarnate "the damning otherness of the flesh" (28).

Upon learning Seymour's nickname and her daughter's implied response to it, Muriel's mother responds, "It isn't funny, Muriel. It isn't funny at all. It's horrible. It's *sad*, actually. When I think how--" (5), before again being interrupted. This condemnation of Seymour's nickname for Muriel is, up to this point, the most perspicuous example of Muriel's mother's

sentiments and her deeper awareness of the wider emotional and societal implications behind Seymour's cognomen. There is a progression of feeling between her use of the word 'horrible' and her use of the word 'sad.' 'Horrible' refers solely to Seymour's new nickname as it parallels her description of Seymour's previous name for Muriel as 'awful' a few lines earlier. But her emphasis on 'sad' removes it from its immediate context, widening the range of its frame of reference. Seymour's nicknaming of Muriel is not an isolated occurrence; it represents the overall male attitude toward women within a patriarchal society and how that attitude compartmentalizes the ways a woman might perceive her individuality, complicating "the essential process of self-definition" with "those patriarchal conditions that intervene between herself and herself" (Gilbert and Gubar 17). Her feelings of sorrow are not for Muriel alone; they are for the lives of all women. But again, as a result of her limited use of language and the transparency of her patriarchally constructed opinion of her daughter, Muriel's mother is unable to make her emotions known in a way that Muriel can apprehend and accept. By reason of this, Muriel interrupts her mother's remark and thus reasserts her own sense of self, again illustrating how patriarchy's effect on individual identities cripples the process of direct, meaningful communication.

The conversation having once more reached a point which offers no likelihood of progress or development, Muriel begins to talk about something different: the location of a book of German poems given to Muriel by Seymour when he was stationed in Germany during the war, poems which, according to Seymour, "happen to be written by the *only great poet of the century*" (6). Though the name and gender of the poet are not given, many scholars, including Warren French and James Finn Cotter, assume that he is Rainer Marie Rilke, owing to Salinger's widely known admiration for his work and to thematic similarities between Rilke's poetry and

“Bananafish.” But despite the fact that these academics have written extensively and persuasively on the connection between Salinger and Rilke, they fail to fully investigate the implications of this passage of “Bananafish” as it is presented to the reader. To begin with, one must engage Muriel and her mother’s relationship with the poetry as indicated by Salinger’s text. Muriel’s misplacement of the book, her inability to recall the name of the poet, and her mother’s removal of it from its original location as a consequence of there not being “room for it” (6) suggest the extent to which these women have been prepared to value scholarship within a patriarchal society. From its inclination to determine what it means to be female, patriarchy subordinates women by impelling them to be “secondary or nonexistent” players in “the major social institutions” of their “culture, such as the church, government, and educational systems” (Bressler 149). Institutionally marginalized throughout their lives, Muriel and her mother have been manipulated into accepting “the assumption that males have the power to control the dominant discourse and the power to define cultural terms and roles” (150). Therefore, Muriel and her mother’s accepted literary ignorance is another indication of their failure to communicate constructively with one another. There is no articulated “female discourse,” no established “female social convention as defined by females” (150) with which these women can wholly identify themselves outside of the limitations of patriarchal constructs.

Apart from it being an indication of these women’s imposed educational positions, the anonymity of the German poet is itself, outside of its narrative context, a detail Salinger uses to help one better notice how phallogocentric principles have shaped cultural assumptions over time. By not providing the name or even the gender of the poet, Salinger provokes the reader to speculate and reflect. Who does one think the poet is and why? Does one assume that the poet is a male or female? By raising these kinds of questions, Salinger underlines the patriarchal

privileging of the male identity over female identity throughout Western history while also criticizing the West's preconceptions about a literary canon "dominated by male belief and male writers" (Dobie 256). This kind of patriarchal privileging is also emphasized when Salinger alludes to the illusion of female ownership of culture and social institutions through a strangely worded exchange early on in this segment of Muriel and her mother's overall conversation. Following Muriel's question about what she herself did with the book of poetry, her mother tells her, "You have it" (6). In response, Muriel, whom the narrator again refers to as 'girl,' asks, "Are you *sure*?" to which her mother answers, "Certainly. That is, I have it. It's in Freddy room" (6). The mother's miscommunication concerning who has the book--she says, mistakenly, that both she and her daughter have it-- implicitly reveals Salinger's motivation for focusing entirely on a conversation exclusively between two women, a mother and her daughter: the promise of growth through mutual understanding and recognition. Salinger assumes that Muriel and her mother must communicate with each other from outside a patriarchal setting if they are to ever recognize through reciprocal empathy how their lives are inextricably linked by way of female suppression, a conclusion in accordance with separatist feminism. Here, mother and daughter are united by a shared sense of ownership of a book of poetry which represents a facet of the Western culture to which they belong. But though they are connected to this society, they are not permitted to be active participants in its primary establishments. And from the manner in which they speak about this book, it is beyond doubt that they have both been brought up to be entirely ignorant of their own subjugated states. For this reason, the location of the book not in a female space but in a male's room is important as it de-privileges the women's mutual claim of authority and control as implied by Muriel's mother. Within a patriarchal system, Muriel and her mother cannot establish their own autonomous right of possession; it, like so many other aspects

of their identities, can only be defined and, in turn, undermined by the oppressive androcentric perspective.

Here, as happens throughout Muriel's section, Salinger makes known his desire for these women to begin to understand, through shared feelings and experiences, "the nature and origin" of the images and ideas which have shaped their identities throughout their lives, and to acknowledge finally "with pain, confusion, and anger" that what they "see in the mirror is usually a male construct" (Gilbert and Gubar 17). But again and again, Muriel and her mother fail to achieve this realization through meaningful communication and consequently fail to fully grasp themselves and each other. Even within a temporarily enclosed female sphere, patriarchal influence cannot be removed; it is too powerful, too firmly established. The only discerned sense of commonality is one based not on societal and individual revelation and insight but on ignorance and the inability, regardless of their characters, to recognize how external constructs have manipulated and suppressed their intrinsic identities, and how severe their alienation is "from the sources of power" (31). And the effect of patriarchal determination, which Salinger wishes Muriel and her mother could discern in one another, is the same element which, by its imposition of female constructs and a subordinated use of language, prevents them from communicating meaningfully for the whole of Muriel's section of "Bananafish." An exchange about a psychiatrist's concern for Seymour's pallid physical appearance is interrupted by Muriel and her mother's intense interest in garments, particularly the psychiatrist's "horrible" wife's "awful dinner dress" (8). And once the discussion again reaches a topic--Seymour's childhood--which should be explored further, Muriel's mother questions her daughter about a blue coat and the year's popular fashion. Immediately after, Muriel and her mother exhibit social prejudice when Muriel describes a group of fellow diners as looking "as if they drove down in a truck" (9).

Capitalist patriarchal conditioning has pressed the importance of social status, consumerism, and physical appearances to such a degree that Muriel and her mother are incapable of maintaining an extended discussion of any real significance. Both women have serious matters they wish to convey to the other person--Muriel's selfhood and her mother's reasonable distress over both Seymour's condition and Muriel's misguided sense of security and control-- but their inability to recognize how greatly patriarchal constructs have affected their individual identities and their use of language keeps them from properly communicating these issues. The lengthy series of communicational failures which makes up Muriel's section of "Bananafish" denotes Salinger's pessimistic attitude toward the possibility of these women ever defining themselves outside the limitations of patriarchalism. The only promise of transcendence is in the final lines of this section:

"Call me the *instant* he does, or *says*, anything at all funny--you know what I mean. Do you hear me?"

"Mother, I'm not afraid of Seymour."

"Muriel, I want you to promise me."

"All right, I promise. Goodbye, Mother," said the girl. "My love to Daddy." She hung up.

(10)

A promise is made between mother and daughter to remain in contact with each other in case anything happens with Seymour. At this point in the narrative, the reader has no expectation that such a call will be necessary, and it seems that Muriel does not either. As the conclusion of the story reveals, however, Seymour's suicide gives substance to her mother's concerns. Such an incident will test the strength of this commitment and will perhaps initiate the kind of self-

reflexivity needed for these women to communicate meaningfully with one another. It may be that the daughter will finally accept the mother; the hero, the goddess.

It is essential to read Muriel's section of "Bananafish" through a feminist critical lens and, to a somewhat lesser extent, a mythic lens as it delineates an important facet of Salinger's distinct concern with the modern world. For Salinger, the increasing awareness of the way patriarchalism affects each and every stage an individual's life carries extreme historical and mythic implications. Patriarchalism impairs the process from innocence to experience, i.e., the hero adventure, when an individual would obtain a fuller understanding of her selfhood and her milieu, by imposing constructs which prevent the natural development of one's innate identity. Muriel Glass has been conditioned to accept a false conception of womanhood defined by the male perspective. Hence, her progression from innocence to experience, particularly those moments associated with the meeting with the goddess when one, through one's acceptance of that goddess, comes to fully possess one's self or "the totality of what can be known" (Campbell 97), has left her with a distorted understanding of herself and the world around her. Individuality is subverted. Therefore, no boon is acquired and no communication can be made.

Salinger does not make any direct associations between his characters and the hero adventure, but he does use suggestive, traditional archetypal imagery in order to permit a mythic reading of Muriel as a character, which must be juxtaposed with Salinger's societal and gender-oriented concerns, and to encourage a more direct Jungian archetypal reading of Seymour's section later on. The moon, which Muriel accentuates on "the nail of her little finger" (3), is often equated with "the female or mother principle" (Guerin et al. 227) while the tree which fascinates Seymour often denotes "life of the cosmos: its consistence, growth, proliferation, generative and regenerative processes" (qtd. in Guerin et al. 230). In both cases, the archetypal imagery carries

problematic implications with regards to the character it is intended to represent. Muriel's movement from innocence to experience has left her with a misguided, manipulated grasp of herself and the female condition. And, as one will see, Seymour's process from innocence to experience--his hero adventure--has, because of the overbearing nature of patriarchal determination, left him mangled, emasculated, and unable to communicate something meaningful to those around him.

3. Seymour

Salinger begins Seymour's section of "Bananafish" with an injunction given by a child: "See more glass," said Sybil Carpenter" (10). This command, directed to a certain extent to the reader, emphasizes the notion of transparency with regards to how we see ourselves and the world, and it is a principle continually challenged throughout the remainder of the story, particularly as it pertains to the transition from innocence to experience, a transition precisely emphasized by the reader's realization that Sybil is in fact speaking to her mother. And it is the very same sentence containing the injunction to Sybil's mother which also contains the element signifying that which poses such a challenge: the hotel. This bourgeois establishment symbolizes, as it does in Muriel's half of the narrative, the Western patriarchal environment encompassing Salinger's individuals, persistently obscuring the transparency required for self knowledge. The imposition of patriarchalism is so forceful that it reduces Sybil's command to a question: "Did you see more glass?" (10) Transparency is not easily achievable in this environment.

As a matter of course, her mother's response typifies how any civilized person in the West might respond to this kind of appeal for psychic clarity: "Pussycat, stop saying that. It's driving Mommy absolutely crazy" (10). We do not desire to directly confront our personal

unconsciences, where dwells the harsh, unflattering “face we never show the world” (Jung, “Archetypes” 304), let alone that which rests beyond it. For many, “the meeting with ourselves belongs to the more unpleasant things that can be avoided so long as we can project everything negative into the environment” (304). But Salinger is not merely illustrating a commonly acknowledged reaction to an encounter with the unconscious; he is placing this experience entirely in the context of the American patriarchy and sequentially challenging our understanding of that experience. The second half of Sybil’s mother’s reply is very significant as concerns Salinger’s interest in the passage from innocence to experience and therefore in the process of individuation. Carl Jung suggests that the images, symbols, and institutions of one’s culture often greatly interfere with one’s intuitive capability of integrating the unconscious with consciousness. As Jung writes, civilized man’s “complicated living conditions and the influence of his environment are so strong that they drown out the quiet voice of nature” (“Aion” 160). But for Salinger, patriarchy’s decisive effect on the development of the human identity frequently gives rise to an extraordinary degree of neurosis. Sybil’s mother’s utterance, “You’re driving Mommy absolutely crazy” (10), signals this psychosocial problem as well as foregrounds the character through whom Salinger will examine it for the remainder of the story: Seymour Glass.

Before Seymour Glass is properly introduced, highly symbolic imagery directs the reader toward an archetypal reading of Sybil and the remainder of the text. Salinger describes the blades of Sybil’s back as “delicate” and “winglike” (10) and positions her on an “inflated beach ball, facing the ocean” (10). The ocean, in archetypal terms, “is the symbol of the collective unconscious, because unfathomed depths lie concealed beneath its reflecting surface” (Jung, “Individual” 330). Thus, Sybil’s relationship with the ocean can be understood in a number of different ways. First, Salinger’s angelic description of Sybil’s back allows the reader to regard

Sybil as a representation of an imago of the anima, one not “of the mother but of the daughter, the sister, the beloved, the heavenly goddess, and the chthonic Baubo” (Jung, “Aion” 150). Such a figure counterpoises the mother-imago, that is, the “projection-making factor” (148) who wishes to forestall man’s engagement with the life adventure. To accept the heavenly goddess is to dissolve one’s projections, assimilating the unconscious into one’s consciousness and thus achieving individuation. Apropos of Seymour Glass, one must then couple Sybil with Muriel Glass for the reason that Muriel, Seymour’s beloved, serves a similar symbolic purpose. Both females demand from Seymour “his courage and resolution when it comes to throwing his whole being into the scales” (149); both demand “his greatest” (150). But as the reader will soon discover, Seymour cannot embrace these representations nor can he even bear to face the shadow which comes before them; the persistent pressure of patriarchal determination has, overtime, infantilized him, and turned him into “a man living regressively” (149).

But as important as it is to understand what Sybil’s association with the ocean represents in relation to Seymour’s psychology and narrative path, one must remember to recognize Sybil as her own person, born into the same patriarchal environment as Seymour, who will eventually have to make her own transition from innocence to experience and, therefore, brave the depths of the unconscious. She, still a child, is “facing the ocean” (Salinger 10) but has not yet seen the mirror of its surface, nor has she descended into it. As with Muriel’s half of “Bananafish,” Salinger utilizes the opening lines of this second section to illustrate how a patriarchal social system can manipulate the development of the female identity at its earliest stages by means of oversexualization: “She was wearing a canary-yellow two-piece bathing suit, one piece of which she would not actually be needing for another nine or ten years” (10). By describing Sybil’s bathing suit as “canary-yellow” (10), the story alludes to a long established usage of bird

imagery to symbolize female entrapment within hegemonic patriarchies, an important example being Kate Chopin's utilization of such figures in *The Awakening*. And again as in Muriel's segment of the story, Salinger illustrates a detached community of females in contact with one another. Moreover, the women's concern for material items--here a "silk handkerchief" (10)--prevents the reader from easily acquiring any other insight into these characters and their concerns. Bearing these elements in mind, one might read these initial interactions between Sybil, her mother, and Mrs. Hubbel as an encapsulation of certain thematic elements exhibited in the first half of "Bananafish": the way patriarchal constructs impel women to foreground physical appearances and material concerns, and the importance of female communication and its potential to help women overcome that kind of patriarchal determinism and achieve individuation. Salinger goes so far as to once again conclude this female exchange with a communicational agreement between mother and daughter: "Now run and play, pussy. Mommy's going up to the hotel and have a Martini with Mrs. Hubbel. I'll bring you the olive" (11). Here, as in Muriel's section, there is an undeniably pessimistic attitude toward the likelihood of self-reflexivity, but the longing for it still exists in Salinger's firm conviction that the interrelationship between mother and daughter will continue past the limits of this story. This alternative portrayal of female identity, community, and communication forbears the reader from assessing Sybil only in relation to Seymour's existence, and to consequently recognize her as being an equally important representation of her portion of this binary opposition between innocence and experience. The complex relationship between a character of innocence--Sybil--and a character of experience--Seymour-- will be Salinger's principle concern for the remainder of "Bananafish." Before this relationship can be established however, Salinger must first present a singular portrait of Seymour.

Once Sybil has left the company of her mother and Mrs. Hubbel, Salinger writes that she “immediately ran down to the flat part of the beach and began to walk in the direction of the Fisherman’s Pavilion” (11). This sentence, more than any other, functions as Salinger’s proper introduction to Seymour as a character, an introduction not in the literal sense, but rather one which links Seymour absolutely to Jungian psychology and the mythic hero. According to Jung, the achievement of individuation necessitates the “Successful discovery, acceptance, and integration of one’s own shadow, anima/animus, and persona” (Dobie 72). One must “know that the treasure lies in the depths” and that we must “become fishers who catch with hook and net what swims in the water” (Jung, “Archetypes” 308). The Fisherman’s Pavilion links the development of Seymour’s identity to the difficult process of integrating the unconscious with consciousness, of reconciling oneself to the harsh realities of experience. But Jung also mentions that “not every man is a fisherman” and that “Sometimes this figure remains arrested at an early, instinctive level” (308). In other words, the hero’s journey is not always triumphant. Often, societal structures and their “Opinions, beliefs, theories, and collective tendencies” (Jung, “Aion” 160) bring about a great deal of separation between our consciousness and our unconscious. The “soggy, collapsed castle” (Salinger 11) into which Sybil sinks her foot can clearly be understood as a symbolic representation of this form of nonfulfillment; such an image also underscores Seymour’s mental breakdown. This implicit link between the failure of the hero adventure and Seymour’s psychological state allows the reader to ascribe Seymour’s instability to his inability to attain individuation and, in turn, to an unsuccessful transition from innocence to experience. Seymour’s failure to come to terms with the dark waters of the unconscious is further stressed by the effective image of Seymour “lying on his back” near “the soft part of the

beach” (11). Unlike Salinger’s earlier description of Sybil facing the ocean, here the image evokes a man washed ashore, overthrown by the powers of the sea. This man is no fisherman.

This line of interpretation inevitably leads one to seek the precise causes of Seymour’s psychological and mythic failure. Jung would doubtlessly credit Seymour’s condition to a rather common “maladaptation of consciousness” (“Archetypes” 314). Up until the 16th century, Western culture always had historical or religious formulas “for everything psychic” (291). Then, as Jung writes, the Reformation gave rise to “the alarming poverty of symbols that is now the condition of our life” (297), leaving us intensely close to the unfiltered, immediate experiences of the human psyche. Under ideal conditions, these experiences would be altogether natural and unchallenging for us to embrace and integrate with our conscious minds. But our environment, that is to say, the cultural condition into which we are born, encourages us to comprehend the figures of the unconscious as entities separate from ourselves since they by and large reflect dark and troubling qualities, inferiorities, and uncertainties which do not correspond with our society’s elevated principles. Our culture directs “man’s strivings . . . towards the consolidation of consciousness,” towards establishing “dams and walls to keep back the dangers of the unconscious, the ‘perils of the soul’” (306). Consequently, our conscious minds learn to be terrified of the unconscious, and to see it only as a vessel for “wicked blood-spirits, swift anger and sensual weakness” (304). Jung understands that “helplessness and weakness,” feelings which we have when confronting the unconscious, “are the eternal problem of mankind” (305), and that it is only when we wholly give in to those feelings, with “no cover from the rear” to offer “even the slightest hope of security,” that it becomes “possible for us to experience an archetype that up till then had lain hidden behind the meaningful nonsense played out by the anima. This is the *archetype of meaning*” (316-7). But instead, we resist those conditions by way

of projections, which “change the world into the replica of one’s own unknown face” (Jung, “Aion” 146). Projecting inevitably leads to individual isolation because it enables us to place blame on our environment instead of ourselves. The more we project, “the harder it is for the ego to see through its illusions” (147), and the more susceptible we are to neurosis. Once more, here is Jung on the consequences of projecting:

It is often tragic to see how blatantly a man bumbles his own life and the lives of others yet remains totally incapable of seeing how much the whole tragedy originates with himself, and how he continually feeds it and keeps it going. Not *consciously*, of course-- for consciously he is engaged in bewailing and cursing a faithless world that recedes further into the distance. Rather it is an unconscious factor which spins the illusions that veil his world. And what is being spun is a cocoon which in the end will completely envelop him. (147)

One could without difficulty relate Seymour to the kind of man Jung describes here, making sense of his psychological state entirely by way of Jung’s evolving archetypal theories. But such an analysis would fail to take into consideration Salinger’s fierce antagonism toward the West’s patriarchal tendencies as illustrated throughout the first half of “Bananafish.”

As far as this segment of “Bananafish,” Salinger has concentrated almost exclusively on detailing the effects of patriarchal determinism on female identity and communication. It is therefore somewhat startling to read of Sybil reaching a place near “the soft part of the beach . . . where a young man was lying on his back” (11). This image is, in its own way, as significant as the opening portrayal of Muriel alone in her room since one may read both descriptions as general assessments of the consequences of patriarchal conditioning on male and female selfhood. In Muriel’s section of “Bananafish,” Salinger concentrates on how patriarchal

constructs, created in response to our culture's established ideology and "marketplace needs" (Guerin et al. 276), inhibit women at an early age from developing identities in any natural manner and from establishing a wholly female method of discourse. Salinger communicates this subtextual content by first portraying an isolated Muriel performing a number of different actions within her hotel room, and then by providing the entirety of her dialogue with her mother. Concerning the portrayal of Seymour in the first half of "Bananafish," the reader is allowed only secondhand knowledge from mother and daughter, both of whom are biased and thus in some measure unreliable for reasons previously noted. But there are matters which the reader may accept with near indubitable certainty. For instance, Seymour fought in World War II and was somewhat recently discharged from an Army hospital. It is therefore entirely logical to relate Seymour's wartime experiences to his apparent psychological collapse, a connection many scholars have made. However, one must be mindful of the context in which we acquire these details about Seymour. Associating Salinger's indirect representation of Seymour with the sociopolitical implications of Muriel's section invites the reader to understand Seymour not only as a sufferer of wartime trauma but, more broadly, as a victim of patriarchal determinism as well. One might go so far as to relate aspects of Seymour's military service to that very same doctrine. The compulsory recruitment of more than eleven and a half million men during World War II points to the type of expectations our culture had and continues to have of the male sex: strength, aggressiveness, assertiveness, authoritativeness, courageousness, intrepidity. These expectations delineate the kinds of gender constructs imposed on males at an early age, constructs which, for both men and women, devalue the potential for "gender ambivalence, ambiguity, and multiplicity of identities" (Guerin et al. 277). Again, Salinger does not provide any knowledge of Seymour's formative years, but the context in which the reader becomes aware of his military

background and current condition allows us to recognize both Seymour and Muriel as sufferers since prepubescence of the same patriarchal system which “portrays binary oppositions like masculine and feminine ... as natural categories” (275), and enforces strict, predetermined gender constructs associated with those oppositions at an early age. Clearly, Seymour and Muriel’s respective experiences are dissimilar in view of the distinct constructs linked to each sex; Salinger’s use of separate narrative sections for Muriel and Seymour emphasizes these differences. But what is just as self-evident is the disparity between each character’s particular response to patriarchal determinism. Muriel, though undoubtedly affected by androcentric conditioning, gives the impression of being adrift but still somewhat unbroken, her “faculties” more or less “intact” (Salinger 103). But Seymour, as implied by the marginally unreliable first half of “Bananafish,” appears to have been almost entirely undone, his identity subsumed by society’s imposed gender constructs. Thus the reader, even before he or she properly encounters Seymour in the narrative, regards him as an individual who has failed to acclimate to the patriarchal environment into which he has been born. Consequently, the “soggy, collapsed castle” (11) does not merely symbolize Seymour’s failure to properly make a transition from innocence to experience, his inefficacy as a mythic hero, and his inability to achieve individuation; it also points to their cultural causes. One identifies the castle as a phallus which, in a patriarchal society, is “the ultimate symbol of power” (Bressler 317), signifying the virility and powerfulness our culture expects “proper” men to possess. Ergo, the softness of the castle in “Bananafish” suggests impotence, emasculation, and other tokens of the failed masculinity which is at the heart of Seymour’s psychological condition and, on an interpretive level, his unsuccessful relationship to the process of individuation and to the mythic hero adventure. Again, this reading of Seymour’s character leading up to Salinger’s description of him “lying on

his back” (11) permits the reader to interpret that remarkable image as a symbolic encapsulation of the psychological consequences of Seymour’s patriarchal conditioning as implied in Muriel’s half of “Bananafish.” As a result of this developing interpretation of Seymour and, as already discussed, Muriel’s characters thus far, as well as the culture in which they live, the reader may conclude that “Bananafish” is not, in some measure, an undemanding fictional expression of Jungian reasoning, but rather a reassessment of that reasoning from a gender-oriented perspective.

Jung theorizes that the ego, or the “centre of the field of consciousness” (“Aion” 139), “seems to arise in the first place from the collision between the somatic factors and environment, and, once established as a subject, ... goes on developing from further collisions with the outer world and the inner” (141). Thus, as noted, Jung would attribute Seymour’s condition to the failure of his ego, which rests on both somatic and psychic bases, to adapt to the environment in which he lives, his consciousness facing “situations and tasks to which it is not equal. Such a person simply does not understand how the world has altered, and what his attitude would have to be in order to adapt to it” (“Archetypes” 314). Inevitably, Seymour experienced a pernicious transition from innocence to experience, being incapable of facing up to the particulars of his unconscious. Instead of learning to reconcile himself to “the dark aspects of the personality” (“Aion” 145), the shadow, Seymour began projecting “everything negative into the environment” (“Archetypes” 304). The more and more Seymour resisted in this manner, “the harder” it became for his “ego to see through its illusions” (“Aion” 147), ultimately resulting in the condition in which the reader finds Seymour at the time “Bananafish” takes place. But from a gender-oriented perspective, “Bananafish” comes across as a radical rethinking of Jungian psychological theory, one which candidly incriminates the Western patriarchal system of being a

predominant cause of many individuals' inability to integrate the unconscious with the conscious mind. Emotion, Jung writes, "is not an activity of the individual but something that happens to him" and that its effects "occur usually where adaptation is weakest, and at the same time, they reveal the reason for its weakness, namely a certain degree of inferiority and the existence of a lower level of personality" ("Aion" 145-6). But this "tragedy," which Jung concludes "originates" with ourselves (147) and leads to a failed reconciliation with our environment, is instead perceived as something which emanates from that intolerant patriarchal environment into which we are born. Seymour's sense of inferiority is rooted in his conscious personality's deficient adaption to abnormal patriarchal gender constructs, and in the irreconcilable conflict between that patriarchally determined conscious personality and his entire self, or "the total personality which, though present, cannot be fully known" (142). Those illiberal "binary oppositions like masculine and feminine" (Guerin et al. 275) allowed little space for any innate development of Seymour's conscious personality, therefore making it nearly impossible for him to properly reconcile that identity with the content of his unconscious, which partially consists of those non-enculturated, "repressed" and "forgotten contents" (Jung, "Archetypes" 286) he's been trained to reject and see as unnatural.

When Sybil approaches Seymour, she promptly asks, "'Are you going in the water, see more glass?'" (11) Her question bespeaks the predominant narrative and thematic paths of this portion of "Bananafish." Needless to say, the movement from the shore to the sea and back again provides the framework for Seymour's telling of the bananafish story to Sybil. But from both archetypal and mythic viewpoints, the reader again identifies the sea with the unconscious and, as a result, the passage into and out of the sea with the process of braving its depths, though this process means something very different to each of the characters involved. For Sybil, it

embodies the inevitable coming of adolescence which, like all adventures, “rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration--a rite, or moment, of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth” (Campbell 42-3). Ideally, this development from a state of innocence to a state of experience also occasions at least a partial proper integration of “the unconscious into consciousness” (Jung, “Archetypes” 324), or individuation. Seymour, on the other hand, has, as an adult, before now endeavored such an amalgamation and failed due the perverted expectations of inculcated patriarchal gender roles and characteristics, leaving him in a profoundly neurotic state. Seymour’s failure to arrive at a state of individuation is, mythically, his nonfulfillment of the hero adventure, his inability to become “a superior man, a born king” (Campbell 148). No process where “the individual becomes what he always was” (Jung, “Archetypes” 324) has occurred; and, consequently, no boon of “perpetual life-giving, form-building powers of the universal source” (Campbell 149) has been obtained. Nevertheless, “Bananafish” invites the reader to interpret Seymour’s passage with Sybil from shore to sea as his overwhelming determination to bestow boons upon another person, regardless of his being “stuck in a blind alley,” a virtually “impossible situation” (Jung, “Archetypes” 323) created by patriarchy.

“Bananafish” calls attention to this deviation from the long-established particulars of the hero adventure by having Sybil approach Seymour regarding their voyage into the sea. The triumphant hero would traditionally be the one who makes overtures to his fellow man to consider the “numinous contents” (325) of the unconscious; such a trajectory is reversed in “Bananafish,” reflecting that mythic divergence and, moreover, patriarchy’s inversion of the conscious personality’s natural development. Seymour’s response, ““I was waiting for *you*” (11), thus reveals an imperative truth about the antithetical nature of his mythic and

psychological condition. Sybil's interest in Seymour's migration from land to sea also reinforces her status as an anima figure for Seymour, the beautiful, terrifying "siren" (Jung, "Archetypes" 309) who is the summation of "all the statements of the unconscious" (311), "the solace for all the bitterness of life" as well as "the great illusionist" who draws Seymour into "not only ... life's reasonable and useful aspects, but ... its frightful paradoxes and ambivalences" as well, "where good and evil, success and ruin, hope and despair, counterbalance one another" ("Aion" 150). But as the reader will soon see, "Bananafish" goes to great lengths to illustrate Seymour's irreconcilable conflict with the female character and the psychological and mythic implications which come with so great a conflict.

Sybil soon tells Seymour that her "daddy's coming tomorrow on a nairplane," (11) to which Seymour responds, "Well, it's about time he got here, your daddy. I've been expecting him hourly. Hourly." (12) Here and throughout the second half of Salinger's story, Seymour communicates with Sybil in ways which appear, at first glance, to be purely indicative of his psychosis, utterances without any fundamental meaning. But one must remember that the text, from the very first page, encourages gender-oriented and archetypal readings. Therefore, the reader should be reasonably prepared to interpret Seymour's remarks from those same literary perspectives. This particular exchange about Sybil's father functions as the first half of a short subsection of "Bananafish" which economically considers Seymour's psychological and mythic relationship with each of the two main sexual categories, male and female, and the established gender expectations which come with each of them. As yet, "Bananafish" has approached the concept of gender from the perspective of social constructivism, underlining the way patriarchal pressures enforce the belief that categories like 'male' and 'female' "can be defined in finite terms" (Bressler 323), that their meanings are unchanging. One may ascertain from the context in

which he or she first learns about Seymour in the first half of the story that his instability stems, in part, from his failure to properly conform to these sustained conventionally masculine characteristics perpetuated by patriarchal determinism. Being mindful of this reading of Seymour so far, the reader is better prepared to interpret through a gender-oriented lens those remarks and questions from Seymour which might not appear, at first glance, to follow any sort of rational logic. Here, Seymour's anticipation of Sybil's father betrays a deep-seated desire to receive a patriarchally masculine sense of self, to possess those attributes associated with our society's rigid gender construct for the male sex. These lines of dialogue about Sybil's father are also symbolic of Seymour's monomythic failure, particularly concerning the "Atonement with the Father" (Campbell 105). Campbell writes that "when the roles of life are assumed by the improperly initiated, chaos supervenes. When the child outgrows the popular idyl of the mother breast and turns to face the world of specialized adult action, it passes, spiritually, into the sphere of the father--who becomes, for his son, the sign of the future task" (115). He goes on to declare that "the father is the initiation priest through whom the young being passes on into the larger world. And just as, formerly, the mother represented the 'good' and the 'evil,' so now does he, but with this complication--that there is a new element of rivalry in the picture: the son against the father for mastery of the universe" (115). Needless to say, Seymour is among the "improperly initiated" (115), those male persons who cannot defeat the father, the master of the universe. Masculine heterosexual privileging, or the "assumption that heterosexuality is the standard by which sexual practice is measured" (Dobie 125), others male individuals who do not adjust to those masculine expectations perpetuated persistently by patriarchal social forces. One who is not conventionally virile and straight must be frail and inadequate, and he is treated as such. His individual process of knowing the father is incessantly challenged, and thus he is more

susceptible to failure, to being unable to “open his soul beyond the terror” and see the world not as a “vale of tears but a bliss-yielding, perpetual manifestation of the Presence” (Campbell 126). He can never defeat or be the father; he cannot be an exemplification of this patriarchy’s limited construction of maleness. The mythic reading of such a person’s social and individual circumstances as described here is without question applicable to Seymour Glass and his undoing. But the complexity of Seymour’s ruination has an additional element: he must, in response to this, blame, fear, and reject the female, to whom Seymour perhaps closely relates, and all of her archetypal and mythic representations.

Sybil innocently guides the conversation away from her father and toward Muriel, about whom she evidently knows, candidly asking Seymour, ““Where’s the lady?”” (12) Again, Salinger utilizes discourse not only to advance the narrative, but to underscore the thematic or purely symbolic elements of his work as well. Here, Sybil’s question emphasizes Seymour’s essential mythic and psychological conflict with the female identity, stressing his failed masculinity within a patriarchal society, the repression of any ambiguity or even femininity concerning Seymour’s gender, and, subsequently, his exceptionally problematic relationship both with the women around him and the feminine archetypes, particularly the mother archetype and the anima. Seymour’s response, in turn, makes known the details of that conflict: ““The lady?’ the young man brushed some sand out of his thin 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 pink. Or making dolls for poor children, in her room.’” (12) This caustic reply from Seymour is complex in its implications. Most obviously, it reveals that Seymour is indisputably aware of the deep-rooted materialistic tendencies in his wife and, most likely, his culture in general. And Seymour’s sardonic tone betrays an intensely unsympathetic attitude toward such tendencies. Just as our

society habituated Muriel at an early age to assume a male-constructed idea of womanhood, one profoundly associated with excessive material interests, so too has that society taught Seymour to comprehend womanhood in an identical way, though with an added condemnatory element. Most devastating of all is Seymour's unmistakable inability to see past his repression and become conscious of the qualities which he may share with the female identity, and of the fact that both he and countless women are victims of patriarchal conditioning. The reader apprehends this sense of detachment in Seymour's way of stating that Muriel could be "one of a thousand places" (8), none of which, we suspect, would possibly pertain to him. What is more, Seymour's dialogue here serves as a clarification of what is implied in Muriel's section about Seymour's attitude toward women: his intense, complex antipathy to them. By the end of "Banafish," Seymour's aversion will result in two encounters: one of intense hostility and one of violent expression.

Making an effort to understand from a Jungian viewpoint Seymour's abhorrence and the patriarchal conditions which, in part, gave rise to it yields an invaluable analysis of Seymour's relationship with his own psyche, a relationship which, again, as a further matter carries significant mythic implications as well. Once more, an important facet of Seymour's condition lies in his failure to reconcile himself to the shadow archetype, which "represents first and foremost the personal unconscious" (Jung, "Aion" 147), "our darker side, the part of ourselves we would prefer not to confront, those aspects that we dislike" (Dobie 58). Gender criticism would, of course, contend that many of these undesirable qualities are doubtless ones which patriarchal conditioning compels individuals to see as unpleasant or inferior despite the fact that they are not inherently so. The imposition of patriarchal gender constructs on an individual from his or her earliest stages of life significantly suppresses the possibility for that person to evolve in

a manner which might be more natural to his or her identity. For male persons in particular, effeminacy and homosexuality are fiercely discouraged in favor of strength, aggressiveness, and heterosexual privilege. Though Salinger omits precise details concerning Seymour's disorder, one can infer from the context in which he or she first acquires knowledge about his character and from the symbolic elements expressed in the second half of "Bananafish" that Seymour has been undone by "the masculine norms of society" (Guerin et al. 275). Seymour's intense fascination with archetypal images associated with the female character--trees, the yonic banana hole, the sea--strongly suggests a repression of intrinsic female attributes in order to endeavor to attune to the patriarchal gender constructs which his society imposes. His effeminacy, which he cannot bear to address, has now become an influential part of his personal unconscious. This kind of fierce resistance is, as Jung writes, "usually bound up with *projections*" ("Aion" 146) which the subject rarely perceives. This subject projects his "unknown face" (146), explaining the "feeling of sterility ... by projection as the malevolence of the environment, and by means of this vicious circle the isolation is intensified" (147). But Seymour's circumstances are very distinct in that his projections are propelled not onto the whole of the outside environment but onto female persons in particular. As a consequence of incessant patriarchal pressures throughout his existence, the barren and impotent Seymour Glass has taken his feared and repressed essence of identity and thrust it onto the opposite sex whom he now deplures and damns with quiet fervor, inculcating the female character for his own emotions of inadequacy. As noted, Jung would most likely have held Seymour himself responsible for his own psychological collapse, for failing to properly adapt, and for becoming "not only the passive victim of his affects but also singularly incapable of moral judgment" (146). But Salinger is here suggesting that the harsh patriarchal conventions of this society are inorganic, and make it exceedingly difficult for people

to integrate their conscious identities with their unconscious minds. He presents the reader with a man who is entirely unknown to himself, whose personal unconscious comprises qualities which should be indispensable components of his conscious personality. If such a man is unable to withstand the realities of what his shadow represents, he cannot possibly brave what lies beyond nor acquire anything beneficial from it.

Seymour's response to his own personal unconscious insinuates a great deal about his relationship with the mother archetype and the anima. Concerning the former, one must, in order to better understand it, assess Seymour's implied "mother-complex" (Jung, "Psychological" 338). Salinger does not make available any information concerning Seymour's childhood or relationship with his mother, but the Jungian and gender-oriented interpretations of his character employed thus far allow the reader to come to a number of conclusions, some of which directly call to question details of Jung's theory on the effects of the mother-complex on a son. As has already been discussed, the images which fascinate Seymour throughout "Bananafish" are, from a Jungian archetypal perspective, highly suggestive feminine symbols. More specifically, Jung notes that most of those images--the cave, the tree, the sea--are forthright "symbols of the mother in the figurative sense" and with the mother archetype, and that "All these symbols can have a positive, favorable meaning or a negative, evil meaning" (333). Jung notes that "all those influences ... being exerted on the children do not come from the mother herself, but rather from the archetype projected upon her, which gives her a mythic background and invests her with authority and numinosity" (335). He goes on: "the etiological and traumatic effects produced by the mother must be divided into two groups: (1) those corresponding to traits of character or attitudes actually present in the mother, and (2) those referring to traits which the mother only seems to possess, the reality being composed more or less fantastic(i.e., archetypal) projections

on the part of the child” (335). Approaching Jung’s concepts from a gender-oriented perspective, one is compelled to expand upon the nature of the origins of a male child’s projections onto his mother. Jung, who believed that homosexuality was an unnatural effect of the mother-complex (336), was without doubt a product of his patriarchal environment which stressed an androcentric ideology and heterosexual privilege. The notions of patriarchal determinism, of sexuality being “disengaged from gender altogether and from the binary opposition of male/female” (Guerin et al. 277), and of the normalcy of non-heterosexual orientation, do not appear within the infrastructures of any of Jung’s concepts, and thus the reader must come to understand how a knowledge of these concepts and beliefs can affect a Jungian interpretation of an artistic work. On the subject of Seymour and his mother, the reader can without difficulty surmise that overwhelming patriarchal influence has, since childhood, jeopardized and upended his innate link to the female identity, giving rise to a series of projections from Seymour’s unconscious onto his mother which reflect his own intense self-hatred. Those positive qualities of the mother archetype-- “maternal solitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful instinct or impulse; all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility” (Jung, “Psychological” 333-34)-- were and continue to be suppressed; Seymour’s mother thus solely became a witch, one that “devours, seduces, and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate” (334). And from this experience with the earliest female in his existence came a very distinct variation of what Jung would define as Don Juanism with Seymour unconsciously seeking “his mother in every woman he meets” (337), and, as a result, detesting those women. Jung believed that the effects of such a mother-complex and the resulting projections on a son could very well be “self-castration, madness, and early death” (337), consequences which look to be exceptionally relevant when

regarding Seymour's demise. Jung also writes that it is not "Our task ... to deny the archetype, but to dissolve the projections, in order to restore their contents to the individual who has involuntarily lost them by projecting them outside himself" (336). But "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" demonstrates that the enforcement of our society's patriarchal constructs sternly delimits how a person may dissipate his or her projections. Salinger's story continually asks how someone like Seymour Glass can eliminate his own self-hatred and the ways it manifests in the women around him when the patriarchal environment in which he lives persistently encourages this individual to reject his inborn identity and regard it as unnatural. Moreover, a person like this cannot conceivably come to terms with that "*archetype of life itself*" (Jung, "Archetypes" 317), the anima, and her "chaotic capriciousness" (316) when he is forever impelled by patriarchal forces to hold firm to his fear and hatred of such an archetype, to detest its female representation, and to refuse to "surrender our own powers" (316) to its deeper meaning.

These relationships with a mother, with other women, and with those archetypes which manifest themselves as female representations also carry mythic parallels, particularly with regards to that portion of the hero adventure known as "The Meeting with the Goddess" which is again, as Campbell writes, when the hero must finally attain "the boon of love, ... which is life itself enjoyed as the encasement of eternity" (99) to bring back and bestow on his fellow men. Muriel's section of "Bananafish" questions what this stage of the monomyth means for a woman born into a patriarchal society which manipulates the female identity to an extreme degree. The second half of Salinger's work in part addresses what "The Meeting with the Goddess" (99) signifies for a man born into that same environment, albeit a man who does not inherently correspond to what patriarchal society considers rightly masculine. The goddess, "The Lady of the House of Sleep," is whatever in the world "has seemed to promise joy For she is the

incarnation of the promise of perfection; the soul's assurance that, at the conclusion of its exile in a world of organized inadequacies, the bliss that once was known will be known again" (92). But Campbell ensures to also make known that this "remembered image is not only benign" but also "hampering, forbidding, punishing, ... dangerous" (92), an encapsulation of "the death of everything that dies," "the tomb" (95). This dichotomy of meaning corresponds to Jung's interpretation of the mother archetype and the anima, just as the monomyth altogether corresponds to the process from innocence to experience and to the integration of the unconscious with the conscious mind. That being the case, one may draw similar conclusions regarding the way patriarchal determinism has influenced Seymour's association with this segment of the hero adventure. As with his relationship to feminine archetypes, the system of society in which Seymour lives has greatly frustrated his innate ability to know and accept the goddess, and "match her import" so that "the two, the knower and the known, will be released from every limitation" (97). Patriarchal determinism has, since Seymour's earliest days, instructed him to forsake his own inherent character tendencies and to, as a result, renounce and despise those who have come to symbolize those tendencies. Hence for Seymour, the goddess is not a nourishing guide toward a boon of love; instead, "by the evil eye of ignorance she is spellbound to banality and ugliness" (97) and death. Here again is Campbell: "Fully to behold her would be a terrible accident for any person not spiritually prepared" (97). Due to social forces far outside his control, Seymour was and is indeed unprepared and entirely unwilling to welcome the goddess. As a consequence, his process from innocence to experience, his hero adventure, was a failure. Yet here Seymour remains, washed ashore by unconscious forces he cannot endure, making a frantic effort to communicate something consequential to the young Sybil Carpenter, both her own person and a figurative imago of the anima. Moreover, she is a

female individual whom Seymour can receive, an innocent not yet altogether transformed by patriarchal influence, one who does not so far epitomize Seymour's repressed selfhood, and thus one to keep safe.

Preparatory to Seymour Glass's communication of the *Bananafish* story to Sybil, Salinger substantiates its archetypal and mythic importance by again conversationally highlighting Seymour's profound interest in feminine archetypal representations. Following their exchange concerning Sybil's father and Muriel, Seymour comments on Sybil's beach outfit, telling her, "That's a fine bathing suit you have on. If there is one thing I like, it's a blue bathing suit" (12). Sybil then corrects Seymour, stating, "This is a *yellow*" (9). Upon closer scrutiny, Seymour sees that the bathing suit is in fact yellow: "You're absolutely right. What a fool I am." (12) Seymour's preoccupation with blue, "the color of the Great Mother or Holy Mother" (Guerin et al. 227), is again emblematic of a repressed individuality projected outward onto women, and of his monomythical failure to amalgamate himself with the Goddess and, by implication, the anima. Salinger once more gives prominence to the absorption in this stage of psychological and mythic failure when Seymour and Sybil engage in a peculiarly repetitive conversation about "Whirly Wood, Connecticut" (14), where the latter lives: "Whirly Wood, Connecticut," said the young man. "Is that anywhere near Whirly Wood, Connecticut, by any chance?" Sybil looked at him. "That's where I *live*," she said impatiently. "I *live* in Whirly Wood, Connecticut." ... "You have no idea how clear that makes everything," the young man said" (14). Jung again details many images which function as "variations of the mother type," such as "things arousing devotion or feelings or awe, as for instance ... the woods, the sea" ("Psychological" 333). As in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," the woods here in "Bananafish" are, in part, a "female designation" of the anima in the "male psyche," the anima which "carries ... both his

personal and his collective unconscious” (Guerin et al. 241). The woods here are the destination of the hero’s journey, the location where he will “perform impossible tasks, battle with monsters, solve unanswerable riddles, and overcome insurmountable obstacles in order to save the kingdom” (230), and achieve individuation. It is from where he will return to bestow boons on his fellow men. Seymour’s curiosity for these woods, and Salinger’s deliberate decision to label Sybil’s hometown Whirly Wood, communicates Seymour’s bewildered attitude toward what the woods symbolize. He can accept neither the shadow nor the anima. His mythic undertaking, his quest, was a failure. No boon was gained; no transformation took place. At the time “Bananafish” takes place, Seymour is caught between two states, the “world of common day” and “the region of supernatural wonder”(Campbell 23), but an occupant of neither, though he is nevertheless fixated on endowing an innocent with some didactic element of his experience, some wisdom about the world and human identity.

Sybil at one point asks Seymour if he is going to go into the water, to which Seymour replies, “I’m seriously considering it. I’m giving it plenty of thought, Sybil, you’ll be glad to know”(12). It is at this exact moment that Seymour considers passing on the bananafish story to Sybil. The movement from land to sea is a symbolic movement from the realm of the conscious mind to the unconscious which is where the hero acquires the boon, “the profound repose of complete enlightenment” (Campbell 29). Thus, for Seymour, the sea is an appropriate place to narrate his tale about the attempt and perfect failure to properly attain the treasure of the unconscious mind. Once the pair arrives at the place in the ocean where the water is “up to Sybil’s waist,” Seymour begins the telling of the bananafish story: ““You just keep your eyes open for any bananafish. This is a *perfect* day for bananafish.”” (15) Sybil, an innocent, cannot see the bananafish since she is not among those who have arrived at that stage when they must

strive to obtain experience. Seymour then notes that their “habits are *very* peculiar” and that “They lead a very tragic life” (15). He goes on:

“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 closer to the horizon. “Naturally, after that they’re so fat they can’t get out of the hole again. Can’t fit through the door.” (15-6)

Sybil promptly asks what happens to the bananafish ““after they eat so many bananas that they can’t get out of the banana hole”” (16). The remainder of their discussion about the bananafish is as follows:

“Well, I hate to tell you, Sybil. They die.”

“Why?” asked Sybil.

“Well, they get banana fever. It’s a terrible disease.” (16)

As a means to assessing this passage from mythic and archetypal lenses, the reader must question what significance the bananafish story has in relation to the mythic boon, as well as the attainment of individuation. Campbell, in order to best describe the returned hero’s passing of the boon, gives an account of Jesus in relation to his followers: “Jesus the guide, the way, the vision, and the companion of the return. The disciples are his initiates, not themselves masters of the mystery, yet introduced to the full experience of the paradox of the two worlds in one” (197). Such mastery--the boon or the reward-- “may be represented as the hero’s ... union with the goddess-mother of the world, ... his recognition by the father-creator (father atonement), his own divination” (211). But as we have seen, patriarchal determinism has, since the beginning of Seymour’s life, diminished this natural construction of his innate personal identity by way of a

rigid masculine gender construct, an inflexible prejudice against those who do not conform to this construct, and a limited male-oriented use of language. In the course of his movement from innocence to experience, Seymour's growing self-hatred effectuated both his rejection of the mother and, in turn, all women, and his inability to triumph over and thus become the father. Similar to Campbell's picture of Jesus, the blessed hero is master of the two worlds: the world of the common day and the region of supernatural wonder, the conscious mind and the unconscious. Contrary to this blessed hero, Seymour Glass is one who has been defeated, having "lost his way in the darkneses" (Jung, "Archetypes" 321), one who is now ceaselessly pursued by unconscious forces he could not resolve. Thus the quality of his boon is neither helpful nor beneficial; rather, it is symptomatic of his own failure and, in turn, his doom.

In many ways, Seymour's *Banana Fish* story can be understood as a reassessment of a dream Jung examines in his "Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy": "In the sea there lies a treasure. To reach it, he has to dive through a narrow opening. This is dangerous, but down below he will find a companion. The dreamer takes the lunge into the dark and discovers a beautiful garden in the depths, symmetrically laid out, with a fountain in the centre" ("Individual" 374). Jung writes that "The 'treasure hard to attain' lies hidden in the ocean of the unconscious, and only the brave can reach it" (374), this "fiery source of life" (377). He then states that "no *lapis* and no self can come into being" (377) if this treasure is not obtained. In a similar way, the *Banana Fish*'s journey into the banana hole for bananas can be read as man's crossing into the unconscious to become "what he always was" ("Archetypes" 324) by way of individuation. But Seymour cannot conceivably come to be his own person owing to the fact that patriarchal determinism has devalued his intrinsic identity, shepherding him toward a self-hatred and a self-destruction which Seymour "feeds ... and keeps ... going" through projections until

they “completely envelop” (“Aion” 147) his character. This kind of self-destruction is the fundamental essence of Seymour’s bananafish story. Jung states that one will come “into the desert, into a wild land remote from men--an image of spiritual and moral isolation. But there lie the keys to paradise” (“Archetypes” 319). But for Seymour Glass, there is only spiritual and moral isolation; there are no keys, no paradise to obtain. Exposure to this “elixir” (Campbell 211) and to the unconscious which contains it provokes disease. To encounter one’s unconscious, in part functioning as a container for one’s repressed and despised selfhood, is to encounter one’s own ruination. The boon of individuation is not a regenerative form or concept one acquires and brings back, but rather something which only overwhelms, drowns, and ultimately destroys.

The negativism of Seymour’s message invalidates it as a mythic boon and a consequence of individuation; the moral of the bananafish story could in no way restore the world (Campbell 211), nor could it ever be seen as “the boon of perfect illumination” (163) which allows the mind to break “the bounding sphere of the cosmos to the realization transcending all experiences of form” (163). But that is precisely Salinger’s point: our system of society subverts the development of the human identity and the utilization of language to such a degree that transcendence and the process of expressing its meaning to others is nearly impossible. Perhaps Seymour’s abrasive representation of his own demise is itself a caution, a fable harshly characterizing the effect our society has on the human condition. But Salinger does not make certain whether or not Sybil achieves any benefit from it. The reader’s final image of Sybil is of her running “without regret in the direction of the hotel” (17), a rather unsettling picture when one again considers the hotel’s symbolization of the despotic patriarchal environment which has already begun to falsify Sybil’s selfhood, modeling her into a materialistic sexual object. But she

is also speeding back toward to her mother, a relationship which “Bananafish,” though not without pessimism, seems to privilege as a necessary starting point for routing patriarchal determinism.

The opening sentence of the final section of “A Perfect Day for Bananafish,” a kind of epilogue to the story’s preceding diptych structure, shows Seymour, now alluded to exclusively as “the young man” (17), tightly closing the lapels of his robe, and plodding “alone through the soft, hot sand toward the hotel” (17). This upsetting description of Seymour highlights his emasculatory self-doubt and his society’s rigid gender labeling, while also positioning him back in the conscious world--that is to say, the world of the common day, a patriarchal space. “Bananafish” again makes use of the hotel motif in order to lay stress on the androcentric social system in which his character exists. Once within the establishment, Seymour, beginning “on the sub-main floor of the hotel” (17), has an uncomfortable encounter with “a woman with zinc salve on her nose” (17) in an elevator on his way up to his and Muriel’s hotel room. One must note as well that there is a second woman, a girl, in the elevator who is “operating the car” (17). The altercation between Seymour and the woman has to do with Seymour’s distress over his belief that this woman is sneakily gazing at his feet. (17) This confrontation leads to her quickly departing from the elevator out of fear, and to Seymour declaring, “I have two normal feet and I can’t see the slightest God-damned reason why anybody should stare at them” (18). Again, Salinger gives prominence to Seymour’s process of projecting the patriarchally imposed hatred of his repressed selfhood onto the women around him. His rage over the impotence and sense of emasculation implied by his insecurity about his feet is consequently directed toward the female character which he regards as malevolent. Equally significant is Salinger’s decision to surround Seymour with women. Here, Salinger is once more initiating his regard for ideas associated with

separatist feminism, an esteem already well established in Muriel's section. Such approbation of separatist feminist ways of thinking will reach its culmination in the final moment of "Bananafish."

Seymour's movement in the elevator from "the sub-main floor" (15) to the fifth floor of the hotel is the story's final symbolic expression of ideas associated with Jungian archetypal theory. Again, in his "Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy," Jung describes a dream where the "dreamer is in an American hotel. He goes up in the lift to about the third or fourth floor. He has to wait there with a lot of other people. A friend (an actual person) is also there and says that the dreamer should not have kept the dark unknown woman waiting so long below, since he had put her in his (the dreamer's) charge" (401). Jung goes on: "The friend now gives him an unsealed note for the dark woman, on which is written: 'Salvation does not come from refusing to take part or from running away. Nor does it come from just drifting. Salvation comes from complete surrender, with one's eyes always turned to the centre'" (401). Jung interprets the lift movement as someone "coming 'up' from the 'sub-'conscious" (402), and describes the entire dream as being indicative of man's desire to "re-establish a state of wholeness" (401). The dark woman is obviously the anima left behind on the way back to toward conscious thought (402), and the note's advice is that which must be accepted in order for the dreamer to achieve individuation. "Bananafish" provides a strikingly similar scenario: an American hotel, an upward elevator movement, a dark "threatening" woman. But in addition, Salinger's story is profoundly permitting of gender-oriented interpretation. The hotel's "American background" (402) here only further draws attention to Western patriarchy's overwhelming influence on the human psyche, an influence which prevents this dreamer--Seymour Glass--from embracing his own identity, his own unconscious mind, and those figural and literal female entities who can only designate his

unique nonfulfillment and self-hatred. Here is a man forced to unendingly live in a regressive state until he has no choice but to flee “from a cold cruel world which denies him understanding” (“Aion” 149), never to return.

Once on the fifth floor, Seymour Glass walks to and enters his room which smells “of new calfskin luggage and nail-lacquer remover” (18). He then glances at Sybil “asleep on one of the twin beds” (18), puts together his “Ortgies calibre 7.65 automatic” (18), looks at Muriel once more, and finally fires “a bullet through his right temple” (18) while sitting on the opposite bed. If the upward elevator movement is the high point and overall summation of the story’s reassessment of Jungian archetypal and mythic theory, then Seymour’s suicide is the apogee of the story’s concern with gender-oriented thinking. Salinger makes use of the beginning of his epilogue to reconstruct the story’s milieu as a primarily female space. Seymour’s numerous glimpses at Muriel immediately before his suicide foregrounds Salinger’s desire to accentuate an overwhelming female presence throughout “Bananafish.” As noted, Salinger’s story looks to be particularly accepting of certain principal tenets associated with separatist feminism. Accepting such a reading continually throughout certain sections of “Bananafish” allows one to regard Seymour’s death as its radical conclusion. Seymour’s suicide functions as the story’s method of removing the only present male character from a narrative of women. As with separatist feminist, “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” advocates a separation between women and men in order to allow for growth and individuality not defined by the “phallogocentric, patriarchal system” (Bressler 158). Clearly, “Bananafish” is not advocating the suicide of men in order for patriarchal determinism to subside, but it does seem to suggest that androcentric thinking simply cannot be disconnected from this social system, and that the proper development of the human identity outside of the rigid patriarchally defined male/female gender binary cannot occur until

the female identity independently defines itself first. Seymour Glass's suicide at the end of "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" is a tragedy, but the flicker of optimism contained in the promise made between daughter and mother at the end of Muriel's section still remains.

4. Conclusion

Approaching J.D. Salinger's "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" from gender-oriented, archetypal, and mythic viewpoints enables the reader to make sense of the story in a manner that is genuinely novel in relation to the dominant Salinger criticism established thus far. The overall narrative, its structure, its themes and motifs, and the characters involved, begin to reflect theoretical concepts which are not clearly seen or understood on the surface of Salinger's text. Acting as a gender critic, one is prepared to regard the story's layout as a means to highlighting Salinger's interest in gender division and dissension within a patriarchal system, and more specifically, in ideas associated with separatist feminism. This same analytical perspective induces one to no longer consider Muriel and her mother as adverse characters who must only be assessed in relation to Seymour Glass, but rather two women who are in all respects as central to "Bananafish" as Seymour. More precisely, these women are profoundly complex and sympathetic individuals, each urgently seeking to explain her distinct selfhood to the other notwithstanding the dominant patriarchal system which has moved heaven and earth to define from birth their identities and use of language through oppressive gender constructs. Muriel and her mother's compromised movement from childhood through adolescence to adulthood also functions as a significant component of archetypal and mythic readings of this first section of "Bananafish." Such a customary human development from innocence to experience can be translated into both the process toward individuation—the reconciliation of the conscious mind with the unconscious—and "The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero"

(Campbell 23) by which that hero leaves the world of the common day, and proceeds to take part in an adventure within a supernatural realm before returning to the normal world with boons to bestow on his or her fellow men. But rather than enabling these three critical interpretations to function separately from one another, Salinger's text obliges one to recognize how a gender-oriented reading substantially affects how one views "Bananafish" from archetypal and mythic lenses. In a word, Salinger makes use of Muriel's section of his story as a means to begin investigating the ways in which patriarchy's persistent enforcement of delimiting gender constructs on both women and men from birth suppresses the evolution of a person's innate identity and thus damagingly upsets the overall process from innocence to experience, and both its mythic—the monomyth—and its psychoanalytic and archetypal parallel—the passage toward individuation. By the end of its first part, "Bananafish" suggests that an independent female selfhood and method of communication apart from patriarchal constructs must be established in order for the influence of that androcentric system on mankind's psychological and mythic conditions to subside.

Examining Seymour's sections from this same amalgamation of critical lenses brings to light a new system of unraveling Seymour, his psychological uncertainty, his exchange with Sybil Carpenter, and his subsequent suicide. One must acknowledge that Muriel *and* Seymour Glass are to some extent products and sufferers of patriarchal determinism. By embracing this type of reading, one is poised to assign responsibility for Seymour's mental state not exclusively to war, materialism, and the modern world's spiritual barrenness, as many scholars have already done, but to the detrimental effects of patriarchal determinism on a more intrinsically equivocal personality as well. What is more, Seymour's portions of "Bananafish" are suitable for more exceptionally Jungian archetypal and mythic readings than Muriel's portion, though these

readings are all the same profoundly transformed by the reader's concurrent gender-oriented analysis. Several elements take on considerable symbolic force when interpreted in relation to long-established archetypal imagery, Jungian theoretical concepts, and monomythical stages. As regards Jungian principles, Seymour's predominant misfortune pertains to his failure to reconcile himself to the shadow and the anima which are archetypal representations of Seymour's personal unconscious and collective unconscious, respectively. When approached from a gender-oriented perspective, the reader may regard such psychosomatic nonfulfillment as a consequence of Seymour's repression and subsequent projection of his inherent selfhood onto the entirety of womanhood in view of patriarchal determinism and its heteronormative and homophobic spurning of gender and sexual ambivalence in the male sex. He cannot achieve individuation inasmuch as the patriarchal social system does not assent to his acceptance of either the subdued content of his personal unconscious or the anima and its feminine form. These psychological consequences of patriarchal determinism give birth to mythic equivalences as well. These effects impact how one reads Seymour's relationship to two distinct sections of Campbell's presentation of the monomyth: "The Meeting with the Goddess" (91) and the "Atonement with the Father" (105). Seymour cannot synthesize with the goddess for the reason that he has been forced to reject and despise those epicene and effeminate qualities in himself which partially relate him to different dimensions of womanhood. Ergo, Seymour cannot conceivably reconcile himself with the father because he does not possess those stereotypically masculine characteristics privileged by a patriarchal system. In essence, these monomythical disasters mark Seymour's failure as a mythic hero. That being so, the reader is urged to interpret Seymour's effort to bestow a boon of knowledge onto Sybil Carpenter by way of his bananafish story also as a failure, a story which encourages self-destruction rather than paramountcy, ruin instead of transcendence. And by the

conclusion of “A Perfect Day for Banananfish,” the reader may very well surmise, in view of Seymour’s suicide, that Salinger himself consents to this kind of philosophical pessimism over the future of his and our society. What hopefulness remains is contained in the potential for female self-determinism entirely outside patriarchal influence.

It is imperative that ensuing academic work on J.D. Salinger bring into play a synthesis of gender-oriented, archetypal, and mythic lenses when analyzing his writing as these interpretive courses have not so far been explored. The remainder of *Nine Stories* alone would undoubtedly yield fascinating results when considered from these critical perspectives. By way of illustration, “Down at Dinghy” comprises a comparable two-act narrative structure. The first has as its major concern a discussion between two female house servants while the second part examines the relationship between their employer and her relationship with her son. An important analytical course of action would be to again consider the story’s representation of communication within a separated female space, as well as the story’s assessment of patriarchal agency and its effect on the way in which women see themselves and those around them. The reader could also examine the mother’s conversation with her son as another of Salinger’s distinct versions of the passing of a boon of knowledge by a character of experience onto a character of innocence. Such an exchange between mother and son must also carry gender-oriented implications as well. “Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut” also portrays both a wholly female space and a focal exchange between a mother and her child, and “For Esme—with Love and Squalor,” another examination of the effects of patriarchal determinism, can be understood as all but revolutionary in its manner of illustrating how a child of innocence can, as it happens, relay a boon onto a character of experience. Likewise, the reader would doubtless discover equally worthy results when interpreting later Salinger works like *Franny and Zooey* and *Raise*

High the Roof Beam, Carpenters. Literary scholars must no longer view Salinger's "social attitudes and spiritual stances" as "archaic or quaint" (Bloom 8-9). Rather, they must begin to be conscious of Salinger as a novel social, mythic, and psychological analyst whose profundity has yet to be fully understood.

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