

Reconfigurations of Traumatic Subjectivity: Lacanian Distortions of the Imaginary and Symbolic Orders in J.D. Salinger's *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction*

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This paper examines the interrelated themes of trauma, identity, and Lacanian psychoanalysis in J. D. Salinger's *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction*. The study aims to analyze the psychological fragmentation of Buddy and Seymour Glass and to investigate how trauma functions not merely as an individual psychological experience but as a structural force that disrupts subjectivity, identity formation, and the relationship between the self and the social world.

Methods: The study adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach grounded in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. Key Lacanian concepts—including the Imaginary and Symbolic orders, the Real, and the Death Drive—are employed to analyze Salinger's narrative techniques and character constructions. Through close textual analysis, the research explores the tension between the protagonists' inner fantasies and desires and the demands imposed by external social and linguistic structures.

Results: The analysis reveals that both Buddy and Seymour Glass are psychologically fragmented subjects caught between the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Trauma in Salinger's works operates as a persistent disruptive force that reshapes the characters' relationship to language, identity, and self-knowledge. The protagonists' inability to symbolize or articulate their traumatic experiences results in cycles of self-repression, silence, and existential frustration, leaving them trapped in an unresolved confrontation with the Real.

Conclusions: The study concludes that Salinger's representation of trauma offers critical insight into the limits of personal self-knowledge, the instability of symbolic identity, and the fragility of subjectivity in the modern, increasingly fragmented world. By applying a Lacanian framework, the paper demonstrates how Salinger's protagonists remain suspended in a state of psychological impasse, underscoring the tenuous nature of individual subjectivity and the enduring impact of unassimilated trauma.

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Introduction

The work of J.D. Salinger, particularly *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters* and *Seymour: An Introduction* is a rich avenue for analysis of themes such as trauma, identity, and the limitations of language. The Glass family's psychological fragmentation provides fertile ground for Salinger's exploration of these themes, as the Glass family members' identities are fundamentally shaped by their responses to societal expectations, existential anxiety, and most importantly, by the trauma they cannot articulate. The characters of Salinger, especially Seymour and Buddy Glass, illustrate the struggle between the internally driven desire of a person and the externally imposed constraints from society. Consequently, the article presents the argument that Salinger's use of psychological depth in his characters can be evaluated through the lens of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of the Imaginary and Symbolic order, which will provide a foundation for the analysis of the nexus between trauma, identity, and language (Lacan, *Écrits* 18).

According to Lacan's theory, the human subject is not a whole and never really will be; rather, the subject is split between three general areas: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. The Imaginary is the area where subjects form their identity based on images and fantasies, and this development occurs when people are younger (Lacan, *Écrits* 45). The Symbolic relates to our daily activities and giving meaning to our existence; it does this through language, rules of society, and culture, which all impose a limit on subjectivity and how subjects relate to the world in general (Lacan, *Seminar II* 78). The area in between: the Real is where subjects experience a part of being and the world which cannot be described because it has not been taken into account or taken into understanding of being or the world around (Lacan, *Écrits* 97). According to Lacanian theory, trauma is defined as an event or experience that tears apart the subject's identity when the Real interrupts the Imaginary and Symbolic (Lacan, *Seminar II* 145). In *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters* and *Seymour*, trauma happens as a force of structure and its ability to change the subjectivity of Salinger's characters. Seymour Glass, in particular, embodies the ideal of the Lacanian subject who is always split between the Imaginary (the realm of wholeness) and the Symbolic (the laws and conventions of society) (Hameed, *Salinger's Glass Family* 29). Seymour's experience of disintegrated identity, as expressed through an unattainable and idealized concept of self, illustrates the Lacanian self as a divided subject who experiences a longing for a unified self but is subjected to a sense of alienation due to the normative structures of society that work to

impose themselves upon him. Seymour's eventual suicide can be seen as one of the ways his inability to navigate the tension between the Imaginary and the Symbolic finally fails him and signifies an ultimate destruction of a subject that remains in a state of unresolved trauma (Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* 183).

Buddy Glass, much like the others, bears witness to the overwhelming influence of the family's structure and the devastation resulting from Seymour's loss, but he himself has not experienced the same tragedy. All three characters are not merely passive recipients of circumstances, but rather they each play an integral role in their own fractured selves. It is evident that each character has profound difficulty finding a way to express or communicate their trauma; reflecting Lacan's belief that the unconscious is organized like a language and that the experience of trauma is seldom fully symbolized, instead manifesting in the void, silence, and contradictions that define them (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 20). Salinger's characters are manifestations of Lacan's Real; their language is incapable of serving as a means of fully articulating the depth of their despair and disillusionment, and their language fails to describe adequately the intricacies of their disjointed selves (Wiseman, *Lacan and the Concept of the Real* 57).

Understanding how trauma connects with the inability of words to convey meaning helps understand the nature of the existential crises represented in these stories. All three characters—Seymour, Franny, and Buddy—are experiencing their losses as a result of how trauma has interrupted their relationship with themselves through the Lacanian Real. What they hope for is a return to a sense of unity as promised by the Imaginary order and a place within society, as suggested by the Symbolic order, but neither of these will completely accommodate the trauma they have experienced. The three characters remain to navigate their way through a psychic landscape where language is unable to assist them, and their experiences continue to exist in a state of transition and disarray (Micale and Lerner, *Trauma and Memory* 135). Lacan describes the subject in crisis as being caught between competing demands of individual drive and collective drive (Lacan, *Seminar II* 98).

The article will highlight how Salinger's representation of trauma within *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters* and *Seymour* relates to Lacan's theories of psychoanalysis, particularly to show how Salinger's characterizations illustrate the tension between the Imaginary and Symbolic orders regarding subjectivity. Because of the fractured identities of both Buddy and Seymour Glass in

particular, the study will demonstrate how Salinger's characters are perpetually attempting to reconcile their inner desires with the external limitations and constraints of language imposed upon them by society and their own understanding of themselves. Salinger's characters' experiences of trauma, whether personal or collective, shaped their identity and also indicate how trauma reveals the limitations of language to mediate the emotional complexity of the human experience. Through this Lacanian reading, the aim is to provide insight into the ways in which Salinger presents subjectivity, trauma, and how to find opportunities for change/alternative ways to be in an existence filled with existential dislocation (Slawenski, *J.D. Salinger: A Life* 120).

Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

Salinger's *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction* provides an important aspect for studying the relationship between trauma, subjectivity, and identity by utilizing the theory of Jacques Lacan and Cathy Caruth. Both Lacan and Caruth are essential to understanding how trauma has impacted the formation of identity. Lacan's structuralist theory will allow for an analysis of the fragmentation of the characters' subjectivity, while the trauma theories of Caruth will provide the ability to study trauma as a psychological experience and as a cultural phenomenon. Together, the two theories provide insight into the relationship between the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real, and how these modes of being interact with the characters' trauma.

Lacanian Psychoanalysis

The psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan provide a unique approach to understanding identity and trauma in order to analyze Salinger's characters. At the core of Lacan's theories are the three registers of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. These registers are psychological constructs but also represent epistemological and social constructs that influence how a subject perceives itself in relation to the world around them. Lacan's theory argues that an individual's subjectivity is always divided: there is one desire to be whole and, along with that, there is alienation from a large part of this desire due to the social and language structures that exist. The division of an individual's subjectivity is crucial to the analysis of Salinger's characters because their identities are, in part, always being created by unresolved conflicts between the Imaginary and Symbolic orders. Early childhood development and ego creation are tied to the Imaginary order. The Imaginary order's relationship with these developments occurs primarily through identifying with

an image of one's mother as found in the mirror phase. This sense of identity is constructed mainly through an image of oneself and the use of fantasy, or so-called idealization, to create coherence and unity for oneself; however, this idealization always has an element of illusion and cannot be achieved. The characters of Salinger's novels all have similar idealized mirrors of themselves and an experience of the alienation and confusion generated by their inability to achieve idealized selves or body images; for instance, Seymour's identity develops from a constant state of distress, as it is torn between the internalized fantasy of being a complete self and the external constraints imposed by societal expectations, creating a fragmented and distorted perception of the self. Unlike the Imaginary order, the Symbolic consists of these various systems such as language, law, and social norms that provide the structure for an individual's use of language and how they interact with the world outside of them. The process, through which an individual gains meaning in the world around them, as stated by Lacan, is to utilize the Symbolic to become identified as part of much larger social and cultural structures, thereby establishing roles and expectations that govern their future behaviour. Salinger's characters experience the Symbolic as a force that inhibits them, leading to further fragmentation of their identities. One of the characters, Seymour, is in constant conflict with himself; he struggles to reconcile what he wants as an individual with what is socially mandated or expected by the Symbolic order. The resultant internal conflict that he experiences causes him to become increasingly disillusioned and withdrawn from society. In addition, the imposition of roles by the Symbolic limits Seymour's ability to outwardly express his desires and forces him to consider the significant disparity between his ideal self and the imposed societal roles that he must fulfill. The demands of the Symbolic may help to provide the potential for social integration, but they exacerbate Seymour's alienation as the true self will never completely exist in the Symbolic.

To Lacan, the Real is something that cannot be defined or thought of as being symbolized by either the Imaginary or Symbolic. The Real is the core cause of trauma, the part of existence that has no way to be thought about or processed through language. When the Real breaks through the Imaginary or Symbolic, trauma occurs. The characters in Salinger's works experience trauma as a break in their identity; they experience psychic violence that cannot fully be thought through. In a sense, Seymour's suicide can be viewed as his final escape from the Real that has dominated his life; he effectively retreats into an unthinkable or incomprehensible space. The Real does not solely

represent that which cannot be thought of via emotions or thoughts, instead the Real represents the ultimate rupture between one's internal and external experiences; and as such, the Real cannot be accessed through language or societal systems.

Lacan developed a theory of a divided subject where there exists a constant and ongoing struggle between the Imaginary and Symbolic in order to explain how individuals exist in a state of pursuit toward an illusory whole. This is a good perspective to explore the psychological fragmentation of both Seymour Glass and Buddy Glass and their difficulty in articulating their trauma, identity, and desire. Both Seymour and Buddy's struggle to articulate their trauma, identity and desire reflect Lacan's notion of the divided subject: a subject that is forever torn between their idealized self-image and the constraints of the Symbolic order. The division of the subject's identities prevents the subject from engaging with and thereby expressing their desire. The division creates instability for the subject, leaving the subject in constant psychic disarray. Seymour's tragic end is an illustration and culmination of this fragmentation as he withdraws from society and into the Real due to his inability to reconcile the self he desired to be and the self he was constructed as by society.

Cathy Caruth and Trauma Theory

Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, particularly as articulated in her seminal work *Unclaimed Experience*, serves as both an important complement to Lacanian analysis and a valuable resource in understanding trauma's impact. Caruth is particularly concerned with trauma as something that takes place outside of conscious experience or understanding and that re-emerges long after the actual event has passed, frequently in fragmented and nonsensical ways. According to Caruth, the notion of the belatedness of trauma is essential to the understanding of how trauma affects the individual, since the individual cannot adequately process the event at the time it occurs. Because of the above definition of trauma as the psychological manifestation of an extremely disturbing or threatening experience, it can be assumed that long after being affected by an event outside of conscious awareness, the feeling and emotion associated with that experience are often not realized until the event can be fully processed. Therefore, when the traumatic experience has finished affecting an individual after several times, and traumatic happenings continue through other means of a past traumatic event (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 4), as noted above. It is important to note that the repetitive return of one's traumatic experience will take place in some degree as a result

of having an incompletely processed traumatic experience in a manner both repetitive (i.e. the same way) and/or distorted (i.e. in some alternative). The key principle of Caruth's idea is that trauma distorts the ability to create coherent narratives, resulting in a person who cannot integrate an experience into a cohesive idea of themselves. The characters in J.D. Salinger's work demonstrate that they experience trauma not just on a personal level, but also through their culture and by their society at large. Seymour's Inability to articulate his traumatic experience through language is similar to Caruth's assertion that trauma occurs to the victim in a series of fragmented and disrupted occurrences that return in the form of repressed events (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 18). According to Caruth, the idea of trauma being a "return" to a repressed experience is key to analyzing Seymour's struggle to balance his idealized self-image with his tragic death. His suicide can be seen as a final attempt to escape the traumatic return of his own psychic fragmentation, a desperate attempt to silence the unspeakable trauma of his identity (Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* 161). Caruth also explores the cultural dimensions of trauma, showing that it can be an individual or a group experience as well. This point becomes useful for comprehending the dynamics of the families depicted in Salinger's Glass family series and how they fit into the larger cultural context of Salinger's writing. The characters in the Glass family series are confronted with both their individual traumas and the larger social and existential forces that define their lives. The characters' traumas due to war, existential alienation, and the collapse of traditional values all contribute to the Glass siblings' struggles with trauma leaving them with experiences of trauma that are both personal and collective (Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* 42).

Material and Methods

Methodology: Psychoanalytic Literary Analysis

By using Lacanian psychoanalysis and trauma theory for the psychoanalytic literary analysis of Seymour Glass and Buddy Glass, the study employs a method of psychoanalytically examining the psychological and existential aspects of both protagonists' personalities through extensive textual analysis. Through an examination of how each character relates to language, desire, and trauma, the research project will reveal how Salinger's narratives express the complexity of identity, alienation, and how language fails to articulate trauma (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 7). In particular, attention is drawn to how the relationship between the Imaginary Order and the Symbolic Order relates to the construction of each character's identity, and how trauma interrupts

this relationship. An analysis of the Glass family's psychic fragmentation will use Lacan's concepts of the mirror stage, ego, and the influence of the unconscious on desire (Lacan, *Écrits* 50) in the identification of the division of the Imaginary and Symbolic Orders in the construction of identity and the resultant ongoing conflict within the construction of identity (Lacan, *Seminar II* 80). The Symbolic Order acts as a source of conflict for Seymour and continually negatively impacts the idealized vision of himself in the Imaginary as a result of all the limits imposed on him. This conflict has played an important role in his psychological fragmentation and, ultimately, his death (Bryan, *Salinger's Glass Family* 45). The analysis of Buddy will also illustrate how these conflicts manifest through his grief and unresolved trauma as a result of Seymour's death.

Cathy Caruth's concept of the belated nature of trauma will also be utilized to explore how the characters' unresolved traumas manifest in distorted and fragmented ways, ultimately leading to existential crises (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 9). Caruth posits that the experience of trauma often occurs outside the subject's conscious awareness and only returns, in fragmented pieces, sometime later, thereby complicating the character's understanding of who they are and where they fit in relation to their past experiences. For instance, Seymour's death can be understood as an attempt to flee from the return of repressed trauma, which corresponds to Caruth's assertion that the return of trauma is an unpredictable and fragmented experience that disrupts narrative coherence (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 12). Based on this combined theoretical framework, the purpose of the study is to provide an enhanced understanding of the psychoanalytic dimensions of Salinger's writing and to demonstrate the relationships among the themes of trauma, language, and identity within the experience of the Glass siblings. The methodological approach of the research is aimed toward gathering information about the structural forces that define the psychological state of each character and to demonstrate how Salinger's fiction illuminates the complex nature of human subjectivity within a fragmented world. Per Lacan's and Caruth's writings, the relationship between the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real registers profoundly defines each character's psychic trajectory, particularly with respect to how trauma is expressed (Lacan, *Écrits* 160; Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 15). By examining these tensions, the study will demonstrate the narrative complexities that shape Salinger's representation of subjectivity and trauma.

Results and Discussion

Based on the evidence analyzed thus far, trauma acts as a structural mechanism which reshapes the subjectivity of both Seymour and Buddy Glass. They both experience fragmentation in response to the conflicts they feel between their desires, the expectations imposed upon them by society, and their distinct relationships to language. By applying Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis to these characters, the analysis will attempt to examine and expand upon the many ways in which trauma and identity are linked through the emotional struggles of the members of the Glass family (Lacan, *Écrits* 97).

1. Trauma as a Reconfiguring Force on Subjectivity

In J.D. Salinger's *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction*, the trauma experienced by the characters does not just impact their reality; it is also a significant change agent that reconfigures their identities. The Glass's identities are made unstable through striving to satisfy their desires (Imaginary order) as well as their obligations (Symbolic order). Lacan's theory states that the human subject is always in a state of division or fragmentation; therefore, this division is manifested through the experiences of trauma shared by the Glass siblings (Lacan, *Seminar II* 88). Seymour's fragmentation is attributable to the collision between his internal desire for wholeness or unified self (Imaginary) and the obligations placed on him by society (Symbolic). Seymour could not achieve the pure, complete, and transcendent idealized self-image created by his fantasies; therefore, he suffered from a deep rift in his psyche (Hameed, *Salinger's Glass Family* 33). As a result of the inability to reconcile the competing forces within his mind, Seymour eventually collapses psychologically and takes his own life. The fragmentation of the Glass's identities creates a reality marked by instability, and their attempts to find stability or reality through the example of the Imaginary and Symbolic are futile. In the same way Seymour is an example of how to cope with trauma, Buddy's experience after Seymour's death offers testament to how trauma can manifest itself in different ways, and how those forms can have similar effects on individuals' sense of identity and self. While not as overtly tragic, Buddy's grief for Seymour, and the disillusionment that accompanies it, reflects the fragmentation of self that result from trauma, albeit less visibly (Bryan, *Salinger's Glass Family* 48). His inability to articulate his grief for Seymour, as well as his ongoing existential confusion, demonstrates both characters' entrapment in cycles of self-repression. Trauma, then, is not a singular event in the

Glass family's experience; through their experiences of loss and dislocation, trauma is reproduced as an ongoing force that fractures their identities and reshapes their relationships with self and the world. The rupture between the Imaginary and Symbolic systems reveals the vulnerability of the self and the futility of achieving a coherent, integrated identity. For Seymour, the inability to synthesize his idealized self-image with the realities of the Symbolic order resulted in his retreat to the Real, which is a traumatic space and cannot be symbolized or understood completely (Lacan, *Écrits* 132).

2. Trauma and the Lacanian Real: The Unspeakable Void

Lacan's concept of the Real is an important basis for understanding how trauma functions in Salinger's work. The Real is something that cannot be symbolized; therefore, it resists being represented by language or by society. Trauma in Lacan's framework is the rupture that happens when the Real bursts through the Imaginary and Symbolic orders, creating a fragmentary and alienated self (Lacan, *Seminar II* 112). Seymour's suicide can be read as his final encounter with the Real—retreat to the realm of the unsaid: a place that no longer allows the person to share the pain he bears (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 5). Seymour's psychic collapse stems from his inability to process or symbolize his trauma. His idealized self constantly confronts the demands of the Symbolic order. When these two orders clash, the result is a fragmentation of the psyche that is impossible for Seymour to put back together. As such, his death is more than just a tragic ending; it is an expression of the Real, a rupture in his identity beyond what language can express and what the Symbolic order can contain (Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* 41). In summary, the loss of Seymour's psychic system represents the complete breakdown of his identity. This breakdown is linked to the recurring trauma of having failed to find a symbol for that trauma. Buddy's story does not have as many visceral tragedies, but it also shows how difficult it is for the Real to be absorbed into one's idea of self-identity and language. Buddy's narration is full of silence and gaps in rendering his trauma into a narrative (Slawenski, *J.D. Salinger: A Life* 134). Buddy's grief from Seymour's death and his inability to express how he feels about Seymour's death shows how difficult it is for Buddy to integrate his trauma into language. Like Seymour, Buddy is affected by the Real, the pressure of which he cannot symbolically represent and which impacts how he interprets the world around him. The absences of language in Buddy's narration reflect the Real's capacity to cause disruption and create an inability for both brothers to heal through language,

therefore trauma exists as an unspeakable pain that cannot be completely understood through language (Lacan, *Écrits* 141).

3. Desire, Jouissance, and the Trauma of the Death Drive

Seymour's unquenchable craving for wholeness is a central concern for Lacan in terms of understanding how trauma affects the subjectivity of the Glass family. There is an intrinsic link between Seymour's jouissance, his desire for wholeness, and the search for something greater. However, jouissance is outside the pleasure principle, meaning it can never be attained and serves to lead the subject into a cycle of desire and frustration (Lacan, *Seminar II* 116). Seymour's quest for the idealized self-image he believes will bring him unity adds to his fragmentation. As he searches for jouissance, the more destabilization occurs within his psychic architecture (Bryan, *Salinger's Glass Family* 52).

Seymour's jouissance, his aspiration for a perfect self, is ultimately a path to destruction. The incomplete nature of his quest for wholeness increases the level of trauma experienced by Seymour, and brings him into a cycle of repression and self-destruction. Thus, his suicide serves as both an escape from the demands of the Symbolic order, and as an act to silence the non-stop yearning for jouissance that drives him toward his unreachable dream (Lacan, *Écrits* 137). Buddy's relationship with desire and jouissance is more complex. While he does not experience the same intensity of desire as Seymour, his grief over Seymour's death and his attempt to narrate his brother's life and legacy reflect a similar dynamic of unattainable desire (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 9). Through the act of grieving over Seymour, Buddy has expressed his desire to have an understanding of Seymour's life, the reason for his death, and also the way Seymour identifies with his existence, as well as the difficulty of achieving knowledge about these things. Buddy tries to put an end to the uncertainty of his quest for knowledge by trying to express that which cannot be expressed through his written work; he is pursuing a form of satisfaction in desire, but in pursuit of this satisfaction is creating a fragmentation of his psyche that is like that of Seymour's (Slawenski, *J.D. Salinger: A Life* 140).

4. The Failure of Language: Silence and the Unrepresentability of Trauma

Language fails to fully convey the trauma experienced by many characters in *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters* as well as in *Seymour: An Introduction*. Both Seymour and Buddy find that they can't use language to describe the depth of their respective psychic wounds (Herman, *Trauma and*

Recovery 51). Seymour's suicide is the ultimate example of how language has failed to give voice to his trauma related to identity; while Buddy's narrative contains gaps and contradictions that illustrate his difficulty telling a traumatic experience that cannot be fully symbolized (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 12). Although Buddy's attempt to memorialize Seymour's life through narrative illustrates an attempt at preserving memory, it also indicates, in some measure, language's inadequacy for accomplishing this goal. Buddy's narrative is fragmented, incomplete, contains many silences, and conveys an inability to capture/represent the enormity of Seymour's traumatic experience(s). These silences may be understood through Lacanian theory, as representing the Real, or the traumatic core of Seymour's experience, which cannot be represented or symbolized in language (Lacan, *Écrits* 140). Ultimately, Buddy's inability to articulate his grief serves to further illustrate the limitations inherent in using language as a means of coping with trauma, similarly to the way that Seymour's inability to reconcile his own idealized self-image with his actual experiences demonstrates the limitations of using language as a means of coping. Seymour's suicide represents his last step into silence and turning his back on the Symbolic world and the responsibilities of communication. His death represents the moment when the liability of being unable to verbalize or process a traumatic event becomes too great and cannot be done anymore. As such, Seymour's suicide is an act of ruin and an escape from the restrictions of language and the Symbolic order (Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* 56).

5. Spirituality, Aesthetic Practice, and the Possibility of Redemption

In Salinger's works, the depiction of trauma is mainly dark; however, there are times when engaging in spiritual or aesthetic practices are a way of finding a path to healing or redemption. Seymour's experience with Zen Buddhism is about attempting to rise above the restrictions of language and the symbolic order and find a sense of spiritual completeness. Unfortunately, Seymour was unable to align his desire for spiritual fulfillment with the requirements of the Symbolic order, which results in his breakdown. While Seymour's art and spiritual self, like his idealized view of himself, are simply ways to escape from the reality of his brokenness, his death also symbolizes the end of those attempts to move beyond trauma or sadness (Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* 171). Buddy's story indicates that there is potential for something different to happen. His mourning for Seymour is not finished, but writing and thinking about Seymour's life has the possibility for Buddy to heal mentally. Buddy narrating Seymour's life, even with its limits,

is an act of reconciling something. Writing is ultimately how Buddy can begin to deal with his trauma, which illustrates the possibility of redemption through examining oneself and looking at how he identifies (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 15).

6. The Collective Dimensions of Trauma

Both individual and collective experiences contribute to the overall concept of trauma that is prevalent within *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters* and *Seymour: An Introduction*. The difficulties endured by the Glass family epitomize a larger and more difficult world filled with myriad cultural and historical trials. According to Salinger, trauma is defined as a post-World War II angst, disillusioned existentialism, and disintegration of traditional values. Seymour's death represents not only a personal disaster, but also the larger frame of cultural destruction. Buddy searches for meaning in the aftermath of Seymour's demise as a way to find the connection between personal trauma and collective trauma, thus showing that both types of trauma exist in cultural and societal instances (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 17).

Conclusion

The interconnections between trauma, linguistic identity, and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, as well as defining trauma through Cathy Caruth's theories of trauma within literature, are explored in the present paper. A detailed analysis of Salinger's works clearly illustrates how trauma operates structurally as opposed to being experienced as a momentary psychological event, thus providing insight into the foundational impacts that trauma can have on identity and relationships for all characters in the Glass family. In Lacanian terms, the Glass siblings are fragmented between their desire to be whole, as indicated through the Imaginary, and the restrictions placed on them by the Symbolic. Seymour's struggle to reconcile his idealized self-image of who he believes he is, with the expectations of society ultimately result in his wishing to retreat into the Real, the realm of experience that cannot be symbolized by language, thereby preventing him from articulating the depth of his emotional suffering. Seymour's suicide acts as a symbolization of the collapse of his psychic structure and therefore the inability to integrate his fragmented self. Seymour's death leaves Buddy grieving; he is not able to symbolically articulate his loss and also shows how an individual's traumatic experiences shape them as well as their sense of self in relation to others. Additionally, the research demonstrates that trauma in Salinger's writing is not mutually exclusive from Lacan's ideas regarding desire and jouissance—in particular delineating the conflict between

nonsensical fantasies of wholeness and external alienation. Seymour's continual search for a more perfected-image-of-self contributes to increasing levels of psychic fragmentation; whereas Buddy's more subtle experience of trauma also illustrates the complex interplay between desire, repression, and suffering without words. In conclusion, the research draws attention to an often-overlooked collective aspect of trauma. Salinger's portrayal of the Glass family offers readers insight into broader societal issues of social anxiety in a post-World War II United States. By examining these two characters through Lacan's framework of how to use psycholinguistic structures to express and understand oneself, Salinger's fiction reveals the inadequacy of communication and individual self-awareness.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of Islamic Azad University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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