“I Mean You Didn’t Really Know Walt”: Walt Glass as Salinger’s Way of Keeping His “Oath” About Telling War Stories

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1 “This whole goddam house stinks of ghosts,” moans Zooey Glass midway through J.D. Salinger’s Franny and Zooey. “I don’t mind so much being haunted by a dead ghost, but I resent like hell being haunted by a half-dead one,” he continues (102-3). Zooey is referring to his brothers Seymour and Buddy; the former is wholly dead, and the latter cannot make up his mind. What is curious is that Zooey does not include his brother Walt in this list of ghosts. In fact, Walt, who, unlike Buddy, is dead and who, unlike Seymour, did not have any choice in the matter, appears only a smattering of times in Franny and Zooey (one of which is in a footnote), and just as few times in Salinger’s other Glass family stories. Moreover, as is clear from Zooey’s words above, Walt does not haunt the Glass family as Seymour so clearly does, and Walt’s presence is even more absent from the already brief list of criticism on Salinger’s short fiction and works other than The Catcher in the Rye.1 However, Walt’s repeated presence, as well as his marked absence, from Salinger’s work is extremely significant and worth scholarly attention, most particularly because it is Walt Glass who embodies Salinger’s statement on war, and the telling of stories about war. Salinger may be communicating through the often absent and almost always silent character of Walt what he communicates through the speeches of characters in other stories: that war and one’s experience in it is not a thing that should figure in stories or in speech, but should instead be kept behind closed lips or figured only in a shaken fist.2

2 Salinger’s perspective on the possibility of telling war stories—what Kenneth Slawenski, his most recent biographer, calls his “statement on war”(73)—can be inferred from two of Salinger’s works in particular: the first is his 1944 story “Last Day of the Last Furlough”; the second, Seymour’s response to the Gettysburg Address in “Raise High the Roof Beam,
Carpenters." In the first story, Babe Gladwaller objects to his father's talking about the First World War "as though it had been some kind of rugged, sordid game by which society of your day weeded out the men from the boys," arguing that such talk likely made the youth of Germany eager to embrace Hitler in order to prove themselves braver and stronger than their fathers. Instead, Babe endorses silence:

"I believe...that it's the moral duty of all the men who have fought and will fight in this [second world] war to keep our mouths shut, once it's over, never again to mention it in any way. It's time we let the dead die in vain. It's never worked the other way, God knows. [...] But if we come back...all of us talking, writing, painting, making movies of heroism and cockroaches and foxholes and blood, then future generations will always be doomed to future Hitlers." (47)

Slawenski calls these words "a kind of oath, one that Salinger himself never broke" (73). Walt's own absence and silence in Salinger's stories can be viewed as Salinger's fulfillment of Babe's words in "Last Day of the Last Furlough"; through Walt, Salinger lets the (war) dead die in vain. Attaching grand purpose to those deaths would only, we infer, perpetuate the stories of "heroism and cockroaches and foxholes and blood" that only send new generations to their own vain deaths.

However, Babe's words are not the entirety of Salinger's view on speaking about war (at least, as far as that view can be inferred from his fiction). Silence, rather than storytelling, is part of this view; the other part makes clear that this silence need not, and must not, be passive. In "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters," Buddy Glass comes across these words in Seymour's diary; they concern what Seymour believes to be the dishonesty of the Gettysburg Address:

He [a psychoanalyst Seymour was seeing] also had the impression I'd said it was a dishonest speech. I told him I'd said that 51,112 men were casualties at Gettysburg, and that if someone had to speak at the anniversary of the event, he should simply have come forward and shaken his fist at the audience and then walked off—that is, if the speaker was an absolutely honest man. (86)

Seymour's words in this passage imply that Salinger's vow of silence about the war does not indicate a lack of protest or action; the shaken fist is mute, but acts as its own testament. So, rather than parading obnoxiously through his works (as, one might argue, Seymour does at times), Walt Glass, both present and silent throughout the fiction in which he is (inevitably briefly) mentioned, is instead just such a mute testament. In "Uncle Wiggly in Connecticut," Walt (not yet Glass) and his death are things that deeply affect his former girlfriend Eloise, but she finds herself unable to speak adequately about either. In "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters," Buddy mentions Walt's death briefly in a story otherwise overtaken by Seymour's wedding and diary. In "Zooey," Walt Glass child in a list, an unmentioned ghost haunting the Glass apartment, and a soldier whose death was "freakish." And finally, in "Seymour: An Introduction," Walt is mentioned as having been a "very elegant young man while he lived" (216), but is also—and deliberately—avoided as a topic entirely. In all of these works, Walt and his death are present but not commented upon. The overwhelming impression in his work is that Salinger holds to his "oath" through Walt by not making him a hero, and also by refusing to allow readers to forget that Walt died in vain. However, in all four of these stories, another theme also develops: as Salinger tells us less and less about Walt the soldier, he gives us a clearer and clearer image of Walt the person; finally, Salinger replaces any preoccupation we might have had with Walt's soldiery and death with a lively picture of...
who Walt was in life. If anything, this shift further emphasizes the fact that he died in vain as not a soldier-hero, but as a beloved human being.

However, it must be noted that this picture of Walt in life, though a lively one that emphasizes his humanity over and above anything he did as a soldier, is drawn at the expense of Walt’s own input on the matter. Ironically, even as Walt’s humanity is privileged more and more over his identity as a soldier in Salinger’s fiction, a significant aspect of his humanity is ignored. Whether a soldier or a beloved brother and friend, Walt is always defined; he is never free to define himself. This irony adds another facet to Salinger’s view on telling war stories, emphasizing the shortcomings even of storytelling that is faithful to his “oath”: part of the soldier’s humanity is, finally, always unrecoverable. What is recoverable is some sense, however limited, of the soldier’s humanity through the memories of those who loved him.

The first of these memories is Eloise’s in “Uncle Wiggly in Connecticut.” Her tipsy confessions reveal that Eloise, who clearly loved Walt, has been unable to speak to anyone about him for a long time, and that even when she does, she is unable to fully articulate all that he seems to have meant, and still means, to her. When the story begins, readers are introduced to Eloise and her friend Mary Jane, former college roommates (neither of whom finished college), both of whom used to be involved with soldiers. These early pages of nostalgia, gossip, and spilled drinks have an undercurrent of unease; at one point, for example, Eloise remarks that her daughter Ramona looks so much like her husband and mother-in-law that she’d like to get a “cocker spaniel or something” just to have something that looks like her in the house (35). However, the cause of Eloise’s unease does not become clear until later in the story and after a break in the text: “I mean you didn’t really know Walt,” she says out of the blue to Mary Jane, two hours and several drinks into their visit. Throughout much of the rest of the story, Eloise tries to help Mary Jane get to know Walt, but is unable to, because Mary Jane—and, later, Eloise’s husband Lew—both want stories of Walt the soldier, while Eloise’s stories are about not Walt’s soldiery, but his idiosyncrasies, the little personal things she loved him for.

In her first attempt to help Mary Jane get to know Walt, she tries to describe what is for her one characteristic she especially cherishes: “He was the only boy I ever knew that could make me laugh. I mean really laugh,” she says (41). She continues:

“He could do it when he talked to me. He could do it over the phone. He could even do it in a letter. And the best thing about it was that he didn’t even try to be funny—he just was funny. […] Once…I fell down. I used to wait for him at the bus stop, right outside the PX, and he showed up late once, just as the bus was pulling out. We started to run for it, and I fell and twisted my ankle. He said, ‘Poor Uncle Wiggly.’ He meant my ankle. Poor old Uncle Wiggly, he called it….God, he was nice”. (42)

Eloise clearly wants to illustrate Walt’s strange sense of humor to Mary Jane, and is just as clearly moved by the story of Walt and “Uncle Wiggly” that she tells. However, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what about this story illustrates Walt’s unique sense of humor, and the conclusion of Eloise’s story—“God, he was nice”—is a strange mix of intense, genuine emotion and shallow expression of it. Eloise punctuates the profundity of Walt’s effect on her with “God,” but cannot find the words to adequately describe what he meant to her beyond the rather general-sounding “nice.” Walt, it seems, is a difficult entity to fully describe through story.

Mary Jane’s reaction to Eloise’s story pushes Walt further into the margins of Salinger’s story. Perhaps in an effort to divert her friend’s attention away from painful memories,
Mary Jane does not comment on Eloise’s story at all; instead, immediately after Eloise’s “God, he was nice,” Mary Jane asks, “Doesn’t Lew have a sense of humor?” (42). Clearly, she does not understand Eloise’s need to have someone else know and remember Walt, and her lack of understanding becomes even clearer as the story progresses.

The second memory Eloise describes for Mary Jane, in an effort to illustrate how Walt was “either funny or sweet. Not that damn little-boy sweet either. It was a special kind of sweet,” is also derailed:

“We were on a train going from Trenton to New York—it was just right after he was drafted. […] Well, he sort of had his hand on my stomach. You know. Anyway, all of a sudden he said my stomach was so beautiful he wished some officer would come up and order him to stick his other hand through the window. He said he wanted to do what was fair. Then he took his hand away and told the conductor…if there was one thing he couldn’t stand it was a man who didn’t look proud of his uniform. […] It wasn’t always what he said, but how he said it.” (43-44)

Eloise’s point in this story—aside from a general, pressing need to talk to someone about Walt—is unclear, just as it was also difficult to discern just what about “Uncle Wiggly” in the earlier memory illustrated Walt’s unique sense of humor. And again, Mary Jane does not try to help Eloise explore her memories more deeply and communicate them clearly: “Have you ever told Lew about him—I mean, at all?” she asks (44). The reader gets the impression that Mary Jane would rather not hear about Walt at all—Eloise has Lew to tell these stories to.

Lew, however, does not want to know Walt, either. He seems to want a story about Walt according to the pattern Babe Gladwaller and Seymour Glass reject: he wants the story of Walt the soldier. Indeed, both Lew and Mary Jane primarily imagine Walt as a soldier, and do not seem to want to understand what Eloise found so special about Walt as a person (however bad Eloise is at articulating those feelings). In answer to Mary Jane’s question about whether she has ever told Lew about Walt, Eloise says, “I started to, once. But the first thing he asked me was what his rank was.” Mary Jane’s next question is, of course, “What was his rank?”; Eloise replies with a laugh (44). The memory Eloise relates next is perhaps the most significant in the story, aside from the actual telling of Walt’s death: Eloise, and Walt, through her, talk about rank in Salinger’s terms rather than the terms of the soldier-hero:

“You know what he said once? He said he felt he was advancing in the Army, but in a different direction from everybody else. He said that when he’d get his first promotion, instead of getting stripes he’d have his sleeves taken away from him. He said when he’d get to be a general, he’d be stark naked. All he’d be wearing would be a little infantry button in his navel.” (44-5)

Rather than giving Mary Jane and Lew the information they want about Walt’s rank, Eloise instead strips him of all rank, leaving only himself. The progressive stripping of honors Eloise says Walt described for her exemplifies Babe’s protest and Seymour’s mute, shaken fist: rather than presenting the perfect picture of a hero, Walt’s imagined, gradual divestment of uniform and honors dismantles old notions of heroism. Walt, in this glimpse of him we get through Eloise, refuses to be a hero, or to be remembered as one; stripped of his Army vestments, he becomes what he is: a human being, who died in vain.

Just how he died is clarified later in the story, as is the fact that Eloise has not told anyone, especially not Lew, about how Walt died. Eloise’s telling of Walt’s death is what finally moves her to tears:
“[H]is regiment was resting someplace. It was between battles or something, this friend of his said who wrote me. Walt and some other boy were putting this little Japanese stove in a package. Some colonel wanted to send it home. Or they were taking it out of the package to rewrap it—I don’t know exactly. Anyway, it was all full of gasoline and junk and it exploded in their faces. The other boy just lost an eye.” (48-9)

16 Walt’s death is without purpose and accidental; Eloise is not even certain of the reason why he and “some other boy” were moving the stove in the first place. Further, the exaggeratedly un-heroic nature of Walt’s death allows it to hyperbolically illustrate Salinger’s refusal to tell hero stories about the veterans of the Second World War. Rather than inspiring another Hitler, Walt and his story cause pain for his loved ones, misunderstanding in less than sympathetic others, and leave readers with an acute sense of tragedy: Walt, we know, did die in vain, and his absence acts as a grieving fist shaken at his—and, perhaps also, Eloise’s—wasted life.

17 Walt Glass is next mentioned in “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters,” but he is only mentioned once. However, Buddy’s description of him, and of his death, are certainly worth remarking upon, and Walt’s absence itself is further evidence of Salinger fulfilling his “oath” of silence about the war. Buddy mentions Walt only a few pages into the story, as one of the many (seven) Glass siblings. Though the story concerns the date of Seymour’s wedding in 1942, Buddy tells it as one looking back upon it from 1955, after both Seymour and Walt have died. “In late May of 1942,” Buddy writes, his siblings were “flung…all over the United States”; as for Walt:

Walt was somewhere in the Pacific—or on his way there—with a field artillery unit.
(We’ve never been altogether sure where Walt was at that specific time. He was never a great letter writer, and very little personal information—almost none—reached us after his death. He was killed in an unspeakably absurd G.I. accident in late autumn of 1945, in Japan. (6-7)

18 In this brief passage, two related elements stand out: the first is a new characteristic of Walt’s, that he is a poor letter writer; the second is Buddy’s referring to the accident that killed Walt as not just absurd (as was already clear in “Uncle Wiggly”) but “unspeakably” so. Walt himself, in other words, is not eager to aggrandize himself; far from it—telling his family the story of his soldiering is something he is poor at doing. Perhaps Walt’s poor letter writing skills point to something lacking in his character, but based on the very few times Salinger mentions him, I find that idea unlikely. Rather, the significance of Walt’s own silence, as well as of Buddy’s calling his death absurd to an unspeakable degree, point again to Salinger’s stance, through Babe and Seymour, that the war not be spoken about, nor stories made of it, for fear of inciting new generations to violence. Therefore, Walt keeps silent, and does not send letters to his family allowing them to turn his experiences into a war story or even a family story; therefore, the manner of Walt’s death is also unspeakable, a tragedy that does not translate into a story but rather testifies to the fact that Walt died absurdly. Seymour’s remarks about the Gettysburg Address, which appear later on in this story, mirror the way Buddy describes Walt and his death: rather than making even a very short, moving speech on his brother’s sacrifice, Buddy instead describes his death as just that: a death, a senseless loss.

19 Walt is mentioned several times in “Zooey” (though he is not mentioned in “Franny”), and often in ways similar to Buddy’s mention of him in “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters.” The first place he is mentioned is in a long list of the Glass siblings contained in a footnote five pages into the story; his brief biography is two sentences long: “Walt
had been dead just over ten years [at the time in which “Zooey” takes place, in 1955]. He was killed in a freakish explosion while he was with the Army of Occupation in Japan” (53). The details of Walt’s death, as given in “Zooey,” are in keeping with the details we already know from “Uncle Wiggly” and “Raise High the Roof Beam,” but here we also see that there has been a progressive reduction of detail in each story’s description of his death. Eloise’s explanation of the exploding stove that killed Walt was by far the most detailed. Once Buddy tells it the first time, in “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters,” Eloise’s paragraph-long description, which attempted to assign a cause and even blame to the accident, has been cut down to four words: an “unspeakably absurd G.I. accident” (7). Now, in “Zooey,” Walt’s death has been whittled down to two words (in a footnote): a “freakish explosion” (53). Clearly, the story of Walt the soldier’s death should not be expounded upon or assigned greater significance; the words required for its telling are ever more sharply reduced.

Walt is mentioned a few other times in passing in “Zooey.” One of these is in a paragraph about the communicative abilities of his mother, Bessie Glass’s, eyes—or, rather, about how they have gradually lost their ability to communicate significant (and often painful) things:

It was very touch-and-go business, in 1955, to get a wholly plausible reading from Mrs. Glass’s face, and especially from her enormous blue eyes. Where once, a few years earlier, her eyes alone could break the news...that two of her sons were dead, one by suicide...and one killed in World War II (her only truly lighthearted son)—where once Bessie Glass’s eyes alone could report these facts, with an eloquence and a seeming passion that neither her husband nor any of her adult surviving children could bear to look at, let alone take in, now, in 1955, she was apt to use this same terrible Celtic equipment to break the news...that the new delivery boy hadn’t brought the leg of lamb in time for dinner or that some remote Hollywood starlet’s marriage was on the rocks. (89-90)

Som P. Ranchan argues that Bessie’s eyes express “not philosophy but the power of concern and compassion for the dead and the living,” but he makes no distinction between what she could once communicate and what she is now “apt to use” her eyes to express (99). I contend that, rather than revealing Bessie’s unique powers of compassion, this passage reinforces the incommunicable, unspeakable nature of Walt’s death; where once, Bessie could express her sorrow over it, she can no longer. Of course, her eyes also held sorrow for Seymour, but, unlike the family’s relative silence where Walt is concerned, the Glasses seem to give Seymour no small number of biographers and younger brothers moaning about his ghost.

A passage later in the story might explain why Walt haunts the Glasses far less than Seymour does. While Zooey tries, rather unproductively at first, to console his sister Franny, he remarks upon the Glass children’s strange religious leanings; Walt, apparently, “was a hot one”:

Walt once told Waker that everybody in the family must have piled up one helluva lot of bad karma in his past incarnations. He had a theory, Walt, that the religious life, and all the agony that goes with it, is just something God sick on people who have the gall to accuse him of having created an ugly world. (153)

This passage has nothing to do with Walt’s death—and that is just the point. Rather than urging readers to remember the absurdity of his death, and the brief snippets of it that they have been given in “Zooey” and in others of Salinger’s stories, this passage about Walt’s “hot” religious philosophy points to the heretofore less than fleshed-out characteristics of Walt in life: his sense of humor, his niceness, the fact that he was
Bessie’s “only truly lighthearted son.” Significantly, while Seymour’s is the ghost that haunts the Glass family and its stories the most, and while Seymour’s influence is what has brought Franny to the brink of nervous breakdown, Zooey’s description of Walt and his tongue-in-cheek religious philosophy brings a “titter of appreciation” from Franny (153), when before she had told Zooey that she wanted to talk to Seymour (150). Perhaps the bare-bones nature of Walt’s story as a soldier allows readers to concentrate more on the details of Walt’s story as a person and a brother in “Zooey,” and remember those details already given in “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters” and “Uncle Wiggly in Connecticut.” Walt may have died in vain, but here we remember that he lived, too.

Finally, in “Seymour: An Introduction,” Buddy (and Salinger, of course) mentions Walt four times; all are, again, in keeping with Salinger’s stance on war stories and also reinforce this new idea, clear in “Zooey” and emphasized in earlier stories, that Walt’s war story is far less important than the memories the Glass children have of him as a brother. The entirety of “Seymour” is Buddy’s attempt to write an introduction to Seymour’s poems, to be published posthumously; four pages before Walt is mentioned the first time, Buddy states that he “yearn[s] to talk, to be queried, to be interrogated, about this particular dead man [Seymour]” (166). Buddy’s preoccupation with Seymour, his person, and his death are really the subject matter of the story; none of the Glasses, and not even Salinger, can let Seymour rest. However, Buddy seems all too eager to allow Walt to rest: “My late younger brother Walt, who was killed in a postwar accident in Japan (and of whom I plan to say as little as possible in this series of sittings, if I’m to get through them) was a dancer, too” (170). Though Buddy seems to suggest that he must avoid talking about Walt, perhaps so that the latter does not start to take the focus away from Seymour (though this seems improbable at best), he also patently refuses to say any more than he absolutely must about Walt. Included in the “little as possible” is, again, a very brief account of Walt’s death; again, too, Walt’s death is worth mentioning but not worth turning into a narrative. The story of Walt’s death remains that mute, shaken fist. However, another detail—that he was a dancer—is added to his life, strengthening our image of Walt the person just as our image of Walt the soldier becomes less defined.

In keeping with Buddy’s emphasis on Walt’s dancing abilities rather than his soldiery, in the other two places Walt is mentioned in “Seymour: An Introduction,” he is not a soldier, either; instead, he is a child, fascinated by Seymour’s wrists in one instance (192), wanting to dress elegantly and making up stories about how his mother found a clothing shop in another (217), and, finally, as the proud owner of one of two red-and-white striped bicycles; he, unlike his brother Waker, refrained from giving his away (239). In the end, Buddy—and Salinger—choose to remember Walt as a precocious child and Glass brother rather than as a soldier whose death was “unspeakably absurd.”

Significantly, however, in these stories, Walt is only ever remembered—he is never given the opportunity to speak for himself. Here lies the irony that I mentioned above: through Salinger’s and his characters’ efforts to define Walt not as a soldier but as a beloved brother, friend, and lover, Walt himself is always defined, never self-defining, in Salinger’s work; he is always passive, without agency. When he does speak, he only does so through other characters—indeed, only through one: his old girlfriend Eloise. When he acts, he acts in the memories of those who love and miss him: his brothers and sisters remember his precociousness, his dancing skills, or his “hot” religious philosophy. Walt’s lack of freedom, and the irony it causes when considered alongside Salinger’s efforts to emphasize his uniqueness as a human being rather than his existence as a soldier, might
seem to undercut what are, in my view, Salinger’s efforts to return to Walt the particular human identity that the war stole from him. Perhaps neither Salinger nor his characters can recreate Walt as a beloved human being if they are not also striving to give him the agency and freedom that are significant aspects of that humanity.

However, this irony does not undercut Salinger’s efforts; rather, it bolsters them, and defines another aspect of Salinger’s stance on telling war stories. Babe Gladwaller survives the war, and can choose whether or not to tell his own story, or how to instruct others to tell it; Seymour, too, returns, and is able to describe his preferred method of telling war stories: the mute, shaken fist. Walt, however, does not survive, and lives only in the memories of his family and friends. The war, and its unspeakable horror and absurdity, have taken away Walt’s freedom and agency, and however many stories about Walt his loved ones tell, they cannot restore him to life. Walt’s lack of agency throughout these stories, therefore, is due not only to Salinger’s inability but also his refusal to give him that freedom. Walt is dead, and cannot be resurrected except in memories; Walt is dead, and to return to him agency that the war stripped him of would only lessen the truth of his death’s wrongfulness and absurdity. We, Salinger, and his characters are left to recover what we can.

Throughout all four of these stories—“Uncle Wiggly in Connecticut,” “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters,” “Zooey,” and “Seymour: An Introduction,” it becomes more and more clear that the story of Walt the soldier is unspeakable and absurd. However, throughout these stories there also develops a gradually clearer picture of Walt: as “nice,” “funny,” as a sweet boy and a “light-hearted son,” as a brother with a “hot religious philosophy” and a child who admired his brother’s wrists, as a dancer. And throughout these four stories, Salinger holds true to his “oath” that it is the “moral duty” of veterans to keep their mouths shut, and to protest senseless deaths honestly, both through the absence and silence about Walt as a soldier, and through his presence as a lover and a brother. If we “didn’t really know Walt,” then, it was because we, like Lew and Mary Jane, asked for his rank first, and not about Uncle Wiggly.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


NOTES

1. For example, Som P. Ranchan’s *An Adventure in Vedanta (J.D. Salinger’s the Glass Family)*, while mourning the fact that “no critic has come up with even so much as an insight into the perspective that will give a meaningful entry into the cosmic spectrum of energies, that is the Glass family” (v), mentions Walt only twice, one-third as many times as he discusses Waker Glass, Walt’s twin brother. Eberhard Alsen, who seeks to establish a view of *Salinger’s Glass Stories as a Composite Novel*, also mentions Walt only twice and in passing, and does not even include “Uncle Wiggly in Connecticut,” the Glass family story in which Walt is most prominently featured, in his list of Glass stories (xi). Alsen’s *A Reader’s Guide to J.D. Salinger* contains a mere paragraph of commentary on “Uncle Wiggly” (95), chiefly citing Warren French’s commentary on that story in *J.D. Salinger*; French’s criticism of the story also focuses less on Walt than on Eloise and Walt’s effect on her life. Of the other scholarly attention paid to Salinger’s work, the vast majority of it concerns not the Glass family but *The Catcher in the Rye*.

2. Though some scholarship has focused on the idea of silence in Salinger’s fiction, particularly with reference to Eastern religious ideas and the author’s own silence and reclusiveness (see, for example, Dipti R. Pattanaik’s “‘The Holy Refusal’: A Vedantic Interpretation of J.D. Salinger’s Silence”), Salinger’s as well as the Glasses’ (and Eloise’s) silence where Walt is concerned is more in keeping with Salinger’s statement about war in “Last Day of the Last Furlough” (before his burgeoning interest in Eastern religion), a statement which, I argue, remains consistent in his later fiction.

3. “Last Day of the Last Furlough” originally appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*, July 15, 1944, pp. 26-27, 61-62, 64; it was not republished (legally).

4. Worth noting here is the promise, however questionable, that J.D. Salinger approved additional works for publication before his death. According to David Shields and Shane Salerno’s 2013 biography *Salinger*, and repeated in their documentary of the same title, these works will be published between 2015 and 2020, and at least two will be directly concerned with World War II (575). However such news might delight Salinger fans, there is little evidence outside of Shields and Salerno’s book that such works, even if they do exist, will be published. Further, should these heretofore unpublished war stories appear, it is fair to assume that Salinger will continue to adhere to his (and Babe Gladwallter’s) “oath,” if for no reason other than that a writer of Salinger’s talent and meticulous attention to detail would suddenly break from a pattern he established not just in stories featuring Walt Glass, but in stories like “Last Day of the Last Furlough” and others of his war-related writings.

5. These stories are “Uncle Wiggly in Connecticut,” “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters,” “Zooey,” and “Seymour: An Introduction.” I will not be exploring Walt’s presence in “Hapworth
16, 1924,” as that story figures too early in the Glass family chronology for Walt to be a soldier (it is as a soldier, of course, that he is remembered and mentioned—however briefly—in the rest of the Glass family stories). Walt is not mentioned in the Glass stories “A Perfect Day for Bananafish,” “Down at the Dinghy,” or “Franny.”

6. Walt was not identified as being Walt Glass, one of the seven children in the Glass family, until “Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters” was published in 1955. “Uncle Wiggly” was published in the New Yorker in early 1948.

7. Ranchan quotes this passage in a chapter on Bessie in his book An Adventure in Vedanta, which considers Salinger’s interests in Eastern religion as revealed in the Glass family. Though I am not, in this essay, concerned with his particular interpretation of the Glass family stories, I do find fault with his interpretation of this passage in “Zooey,” as I argue above.

8. Some of Babe’s activities following his return from the war are described in the 1945 story “The Stranger.”

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ABSTRACTS

La guerre et ses effets sont rarement, et souvent de façon indirecte, mentionnés dans l’œuvre de J.D. Salinger. Cependant, dans ses nouvelles, il offre un point de vue sur la façon dont il faut raconter des histoires de guerre. Cet essai soutient que l’œuvre de Salinger rejette les histoires de guerre qui se préoccupent d’actes de soldat, de morts héroïques, et accuse même ces histoires de perpétuer la guerre. Au contraire, dans son œuvre, Salinger raconte l’histoire de Walt Glass, un soldat tué pendant la guerre, mais plus important encore un frère, un ami, un amant bien aimé. La présence de Walt, et particulièrement son absence, telle qu’elle est racontée par Salinger, nous montre une histoire plus véritable de la guerre qui, loin de glorifier Walt, ses actes et sa mort en tant que soldat, célèbre sa vie comme un être humain aimé.

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