

# Joyce and Salinger: A Study of Their References to Buddhism\*

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## I. Introduction

This study aims to compare James Joyce with Jerome David “J. D.” Salinger focusing on their references to Oriental religions, particularly Buddhism, in their works. Joyce and Salinger had many things in common. Both writers tended to write fictions based on their real-life experiences, and some of their works can be regarded as autobiographical novels. Both had Irish Catholic connections while they inserted numerous non-Christian elements in their works.

Joyce was a lapsed Catholic after he rejected to becoming a priest when he was at a Jesuit school like Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. He was more interested in Theosophy than the Irish Literary Revival in Dublin through his friendship with George Russell (A.E.). Theosophy has been deeply

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influenced by some Eastern religions, especially Buddhism, which has attracted many Christians who have felt a sense of not belonging more or less. In *Stephen Hero*, Stephen compared Jesus Christ with Gautama Buddha (*SH* 190).

Salinger, who has been often regarded as a writer longing for innocence, mainly described young middle-class people in their teens and 20s such as Holden Caulfield and Franny Glass who reject reaching adulthood. He can be contrastive to Joyce who described various lower-middle class people of all ages in Dublin. Salinger was born to a wealthy Jewish father and an Irish Catholic mother, although he did not know that his mother was not born Jewish because she converted to Judaism when she married. He was raised up in the strict Jewish atmosphere.<sup>1)</sup> However, he seldom mentioned Judaism or Anti-Semitism in his stories except “Down at the Dinghy” (1949) featuring Anti-Semitism while there are some Irish elements described in his novels. It is noted that he inserted many references to Eastern religions, especially Zen Buddhism.

The origin of Zen Buddhism is in India. In the late fifth century Bodhidharma (菩提達磨) transmitted it to China where it absorbed Taoism and was called “Shàn/Chán” (禪), the shorter form of “禪那,” the Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit word *dhayāna*, as Beongcheon Yu explained in *The Great Circle* (209). It was propagated in Korea earlier than in Japan where the Chinese character has been pronounced “Zen.”

We Asian readers must reaffirm that James Joyce was fundamentally a European writer mostly depicting Dubliners and his native Dublin, the Catholic-dominant city. Salinger was basically an American writer mainly describing urban young people with a sense of alienation among their family and friends.

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1) It is said that Salinger did not know that his mother was not born Jew before his *bar mitzvah*. See “J. D. Salinger: Jewishvirtuallibrary.org. January 1, 1919.”

## II. Joyce and Buddhism

James Joyce was educated in the two Catholic schools run by The Society of Jesus (SJ or Societas Iesu): Clongowes Wood College SJ (from 1888 to 1891) and Belvedere College SJ (from 1893 to 1898), which, no doubt, affected Joyce in his formative years in various ways. Clongowes Wood College was the best Catholic boarding school of Ireland at that time but he had to leave there halfway because of his family's financial decline. Joyce had to study at home, and for a time at the O'Connell School ("working man's Belvedere College") on North Richmond Street as described in his short story "Araby" before being offered a place at Belvedere College, which is also called St. Francis Xavier's College. The society has gained great fame for its missionary activities since the days of St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552) and its global education systems. The life of St. Xavier is narrated during the three-day spiritual retreat scene before the feast day of the saint in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (P 111-14). In the sermon, Asian readers would recognize what made Xavier a saint. It greatly owes to his great efforts of propagandism especially in India and Japan. As the rector told, Xavier also hoped to go to Mainland China for the same purpose but in the midst of preparation he died of fever in Shangchuan Island (上川島) off the south coast of China (P 111).

After Xavier's death, his successors came to Japan and China in sequence before Christian missionary activities were officially banned first in Japan in 1612, and finally in China in 1721.<sup>2)</sup> It is noted that the two Jesuit schools offered some opportunities to young Joyce to have been conscious of another world called Asia outside Europe by intensifying Jesuit achievements in missionary activities. The above description was supposedly based on the author's personal experience, and the fictional character Stephen Dedalus seems to overlap the real life of young Joyce here. Hearing the sermon they strongly felt that they committed "sins of impurity" in the night town as they told so in the confession. They were forgiven

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2) For more details, see Eishiro Ito, "Journey to the Far East: Reading Joyce in the Jesuit Context Featuring St. Francis Xavier" (53-78).

by the priest in the name of God, but their belief in Christianity seems to have been already unstable by that time.

Dated 6 February 1903, Joyce contributed to the *Daily Express* a well-disposed review about Harold Fielding-Hall's *The Soul of a People* (London: Macmillan, 1899), in which Hall tells his experience in Burma (now Myanmar) focusing on Buddhism. Joyce pointed out that Hall "omits some incidents which are among the most beautiful of the Buddhist legend—the kindly devas strewing flowers under the horse, and the story of the meeting of Buddha and his wife" (*CW* 93). This can be a proof that Joyce had already read some books on Buddhism. To say the least, he certainly had some knowledge about the life of Gautama Buddha. In *Stephen Hero*, Stephen thinks:

The woman in the black straw hat has never heard of the name of Buddha but Buddha's character seems to have been superior to that of Jesus with respect to unaffected sanctity. I wonder how she would like that story of Yasodhara's kissing Buddha after his illumination and penance. Renan's Jesus is a trifle Buddhistic but the fierce eaters and drinkers of the western world would never worship such a figure. Blood will have blood. (*SH* 190)

For now it is very difficult to identify the source of "that story of Yasodhara's kissing Buddha after his illumination and penance." On 7 May 1901 in Dublin Joyce obtained a copy of Henry Steel Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism* (1881) but there is no reference to the kissing Buddha story in it. Rather, it seems to be Joyce's fictional story or intentional misreading of the episode in which Siddhartha kissed his whole family on the night before he left for entering priesthood. However, it is easy to guess why Joyce admired the Buddha: It is probably because the Buddha had a family, his wife and a son while the Bible did not say anything about the marriage of Jesus Christ.<sup>3)</sup> The Buddha entered priesthood even leaving behind

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3) Cf. Margaret A. Salinger, *Dream Catcher: A Memoir*, p. 425: "The living Jesus of Nazareth was, we're told, celibate. The real-life of person who was to become the Buddha was married and produced several children before his enlightenment. He renounced them, as Jesus does his mother and father, and goes off to seek God and

everything, his family and his status as a crown prince. Stephen's opinion of "Renan's Jesus [*Vie de Jésus* (1863)] is a trifle Buddhistic" can be compared with Friedrich Nietzsche's opinion on Renan's depiction of Jesus as a "fanatic of aggression" (*Anti-Christ* 31).

In the review of *The Soul of a People*, Joyce admired Buddhism as "a suave philosophy" "which put war aside as irrelevant" as Richard Ellmann notes (*CW* 93). For Joyce, Buddhism is not what he believed in, but a philosophy that can make peace, not war. Joyce might have read Nietzsche's *Anti-Christ* (1888) in which Nietzsche admired Buddhism comparing it with Christianity and thought that Buddhism is perfectly free from militarism (17).

### III. Salinger as a Jewish Irish Writer

J. D. Salinger was born to Sol Salinger, a rich Jewish importer selling kosher cheese, and Marie Jillich (renamed Miriam in Jewish style when she married), a German-Scots-Irish woman in Manhattan, New York.<sup>4</sup> His paternal grandfather Simon was a rabbi for Adath Jeshurun Congregation, Minnetonka, Minnesota at one time. He did not know his mother's background very well until his *bar mitzvah* at the age of thirteen, as Kenneth Slawenski tells in his biography (12-13). However, he adopted his own parental setting for the fictional Glass family, although the Jewish elements in his father's side are not so stressed compared with the Irish elements categorized in the Glass family saga. It has been often argued that the absence of paternity is significant in Salinger's stories, and that therefore Jewishness is not so intensified in his works. His daughter Margaret Salinger remembers: "What I do know is that the whole subject of Jewishness is something my father is very touchy about indeed" (*DC* 21). Conventionally, Jewishness is

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become the salvation of humanity."

4) According to Slawenski, Salinger's mother later insisted that her mother, Nellie McMahon was a daughter of Irish immigrants (5-6).

traced through mother's side, so Salinger cannot be considered to be Jewish by the Orthodox. In "Hapworth 16, 1924" Buddy Glass narrates that the half-Jewish Glass family wishes to disguise an Australian accent (*H* 31). It probably reflects Salinger's sister Doris (1911-2001)'s comment as Margaret remembers: "It wasn't nice to be half-Jewish in those days. It was no asset to be Jewish either, but at least you belonged somewhere" (*DC* 28). Even in New York during the 1920s and 1930s, Anti-Semitism arose as it was in Europe. Margaret also tells that her father did not attend Jewish religious services as a child and that his family celebrated Christmas (*DC* 29). So he can be regarded as a non-Jewish Jew like Joyce's fictional character Leopold Bloom.

Salinger began to write short stories in secondary school and some of them were published in the magazine *Story* in the early 1940s before serving in the U.S. Army during World War II. In 1941, Salinger started dating Oona O'Neill, daughter of the Irish American playwright Eugene O'Neill but their relationship ended when she became intimate with the world's famous actor/filmmaker Charlie Chaplin who later became her husband in the West Coast. Also in 1941, Salinger started submitting short stories to *The New Yorker*, although seven stories were rejected. In October 1941, he finally received the magazine's acceptance of "Slight Rebellion of Madison" featuring the famous character Holden Caulfield for the first time, although it was not published because of the breaking news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December, which triggered the Asia-Pacific War.

There is no clear evidence that Salinger read Joyce's works. If any, Joyce's influence on Salinger would be negligible. However, his two American literary heroes Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald, as Sylvia Beach remembered in her memoir, frequently visited Shakespeare and Company, 12 rue de l'Odéon, Paris and made friends with Joyce in the late 1920s (116). As Beach told, Fitzgerald admired Joyce very much, but he was afraid of approaching Joyce, so her companion Adrienne Monnier cooked a nice dinner and invited the Joyces, the Fitzgeralds, etc. to their home at 18 rue de l'Odéon in July 1928: Fitzgerald even made a drawing of the dinner scene with Joyce "wearing a halo" on the end paper

of Beach's copy of *The Great Gatsby* (116-17). Salinger might have thought of Joyce in the same way. At the Hotel Ritz after the liberation of Paris in late August 1944, Salinger succeeded in arranging the meeting with Hemingway and kept a good relationship with him during World War II. Unfortunately Salinger had no chance to meet Fitzgerald who greatly inspired him.

Joyce and Salinger, however, can be compared in that the two writers enthusiastically found some inspirations from their own real lives and felt some sense of alienation and left their native land: Joyce left Dublin and Ireland to find a new literary life on the European continent, and Salinger abandoned both his fame and family to lead a secluded life keeping his privacy until his death.

Salinger casually and comically inserted Irish (and occasionally Jewish) elements in his urban stories, for instance, *Franny and Zooey* to intensify the characters' mixed racial identities: "the blue-eyed Jewish-Irish Mohican scout" (*FZ* 25), "one of her half-Irish, half-Jewish sons" (*FZ* 34), "every fat Irish rose" (*FZ* 38), "his rather long and singularly Irish upper lip" (*FZ* 66), etc. Judging from these descriptions, Salinger seems to have positively accepted his mixed racial identities of the Irish connection with the Jewish background.

#### IV. Buddhism and Hinduism in the Works of Joyce and Salinger

Presumably, the first American writer who experienced and wrote about an Eastern meditation was Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) who lived near Ralph Waldo Emerson in Concord and followed Transcendentalism advocated by him. In Thoreau's best known book *Walden; or Life in the Woods* (1854) he wrote: "I realized what the Orientals mean by contemplation and the forsaking of works" (83). His meditation reminds us of that of the Great Buddha sitting under the Bodhi Tree. Walden is described like Bodhi Gaya, India. Thoreau purified his inner world by meditation apart from the noisy outer world just like in Zen Buddhism. In addition, Thoreau noted the Transcendentalists' debt to Hinduism in the same book

in which he imagines that “The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges” (228). There must be a great resemblance between Zen Buddhism and Transcendentalism in the early nineteenth century America, especially in New England. This American literary tradition of Orientalism has been passed down to Salinger and the Beat Generation writers through Ernest Francisco Fenollosa, Lafcadio Hearn and some Lost Generation writers including Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and William Carlos Williams: many of them were close to Joyce in Paris. Therefore it can be said that Salinger and Joyce were located closely in literature even if they did not directly know each other.

By late 1946, Salinger had begun to study Zen Buddhism and mystical Catholicism. Kenneth Slawenski notes that Zen was especially attractive due to its emphasis on connection and balance, subjects that his writings often covered anyway (153). He even managed to meet with the famous Japanese Buddhist scholar Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki (鈴木 大拙, 1870-1966) in 1950. Slawenski explains that when Salinger had turned to his work as a source of spiritual sustenance, the combination of Zen philosophy with his own conviction that art was connected to spirituality resulted in a faith that equated writing with meditation (190). It was at the time Salinger was finishing *The Catcher in the Rye*. It is almost inconceivable that Salinger believed in Buddhism or Hinduism, even though he liked to read some books on the two India-originated religions. Rather, the practice of “meditation” in the two religions seems to have been much more important and significant for Salinger. His daughter Margaret remembers that Salinger once told a friend that for him the act of writing was inseparable from the quest for enlightenment, and that he intended devoting his life to one great work, and that the work would be his life: “there would be no separation” (*DC xi*). Salinger’s way of seizing idea of Buddhism can be compared with that of Joyce: “Though Buddhism is essentially a philosophy built against the evils of existence, a philosophy which places its end in the annihilation of the personal life and the personal will, the Burmese people have known how to transform it into a rule of life at once simple and wise” (*CW 93-94*). Joyce seems to have regarded Buddhism

not as a religion but as “a suave philosophy” to avoid struggles and conflicts, so he believed that the personal life and the personal will are finally denied in Buddhism: it cannot be a way of writing for him who positively used massive material from his personal life.

D. T. Suzuki was known as one of the most prominent figures that established the Zen Buddhist movement in the United States and Europe. After studying philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University while starting up Zen practice at Engaku-ji, Kamakura, Suzuki lived in the United States for many years (1897-1909, 1936 and 1949-1952), went on a lecture tour of American universities in 1951 and taught at Columbia University from 1952 to 1957. In 1911 He married Beatrice Erskine Lane (1878-1939), a Radcliffe graduate and Theosophist, and later he belonged to the Theosophical Society Adyar. W. B. Yeats’ interest with Zen Buddhism greatly owes to *The Eastern Buddhist* journal Suzuki edited in collaboration with his wife. Jane Iwamura notes about Suzuki’s appeal and influence that Zen offered its adherents the opportunity to go beyond logical thinking and the desire for moral certainty characteristic of Western religious traditions and philosophy and instead proposed a way to live with existential contradiction (24). In *Franny and Zooey* Suzuki is mentioned:

Much, much more important, though, Seymour had already begun to believe (and I agreed with him, as far as I was able to see the point) that education by any name would smell as sweet, and maybe much sweeter, if it didn’t begin with a quest for knowledge at all but with a quest, as Zen would put it, for no-knowledge. Dr. Suzuki says somewhere that to be in a state of pure consciousness—*satori*—is to be with God before he said, Let there be light. (FZ 30)

Salinger was essentially a short-story writer rather than a novelist. His only “full-length published novel” is *Catcher in the Rye*. James Lundquist argues that short stories of Chekhov, Joyce and Salinger are similar in that character is revealed through a series of actions under stress, and that the purpose of the story is reached

at the moment of ‘epiphany’ when the reader comes to know the nature of a character or situation (70). “Epiphany” in Joyce’s term is called “kensho” (見性; “seeing one’s true nature”) in Zen term. *Nine Stories* opens with a quotation of the famous *koan* (公案; literally “public case”), a Zen question to provoke “great doubt,” presumably to indicate that the novel was written with the guide of Zen practices clearly: “We know the sound of two hands clapping. But what is the sound of one hand clapping? – A ZEN KOAN.” It was originally made by the Japanese Zen priest Hakuin Ekaku (白隱 慧鶴, 1688-1769) of the Rinzai sect (臨濟宗) of Buddhism. This *koan* enlightens you to find out what is “vikalpa” (movements in the mind; fantasies and imaginations) symbolized in “the sound of one hand clapping.” It teaches how foolish prudence and discretion are: to be free from your obsessions, delusions and puzzlements is the objective of Zen. Salinger expected readers to find “the sound of one-hand clapping” or the moment of “epiphany” in Joyce’s term in each story of *Nine Stories*. It is equivalent to “duanwu” (頓悟) or the sudden enlightenment in Hui-neng (惠能; 638-713)’s Chinese Chán (Zen) term in *Franny and Zooey*.<sup>5</sup> After practicing Zen Buddhism, Salinger read *The Gospels of Sri Ramakrishna* (1942) and became interested in Hinduism around 1951, which influenced the short story “Teddy” (1952). Teddy is like the avatar boy of Seymour Glass, the eldest son of the family, professor at Columbia, Orientalist and *haiku* poet who committed suicide with a gun at the age of 31 in the ending scene of “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” (1948). As the pride of the Glass family, he is frequently mentioned in *Raise High the Roof Beam Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction* (1955) and *Franny and Zooey* (1961).<sup>6</sup> Seymour is also supposed to be the fictional 7-year-old writer of the letter “Hapworth 16, 1924” (1965).

In *The Catcher in the Rye*, the popular Scottish song written by Robert Burns can be considered as “the sound of one-hand clapping” (CR 179). When Holden

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5) Hui-neng, the Sixth and Last Patriarch of Chán Buddhism, is referred to twice in *Franny and Zooey*. See FZ 30 & 83.

6) Cf. Beongcheon Yu, *The Great Circle*, pp. 210-11.

told his plan to go to the West Coast and live as a deaf-mute to his beloved sister Phoebe, she asked to take her with him. However, he declined her wish as “the catcher in the rye,” the guardian of the juvenile playground “standing on the edge of some crazy cliff” (CR 180). As he recognized that it made her very upset, he decided not to go anywhere (CR 213). Instead, he took her to the Central Park Zoo. He was filled with happiness watching her ride a carousel just like John Lennon later singing in “Watching the Wheels” (CR 217-19).<sup>7)</sup>

In the Glass family saga, Franny Glass, the youngest member of the family, can be regarded as the female avatar of Holden Caulfield. “Franny” was published in *The New Yorker* in 1955 and “Zoocy” in the same magazine in 1957: The two stories were published in one book in 1961. Franny was a college student majoring in drama, and in the previous summer appeared on the stage as Margaret [Pegeen] Flaherty of *The Playboy of the Western World* by the Irish playwright John Millington Synge. Although many people praised her performance, she was not satisfied with it for some reason. She tried to enjoy a weekend lunch date with her boyfriend Lane Coutell, an excellent student who boasted his “A” paper on Flaubert eating “frogs’ legs” (*cuisse de grenouille*), but she did not eat anything feeling uncomfortable (FZ 18-19). Lane found her small book titled *The Way of a Pilgrim* in which it tells how a Russian peasant gains the power of “praying without ceasing” (FZ 19). His prayer is so simple: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me” (FZ 19). Franny explained how it works comparing with a Buddhist prayer: “because in the Nembutsu [Jp. 念仏: “a prayer to Amitabha”] sects of Buddhism, people keep saying ‘Namu Amida Butsu’ [Jp. 南無阿彌陀仏: “O Buddha! May his

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7) In the chorus part of “Watching Wheels” (1980): “I’m just sitting here watching the wheels go round and round/I really love to watch them roll/No longer riding on the merry-go-round/I just had to let it go.” The Dakota Apartments (1 W 72nd St.), where the Lennon family has lived since 1973, faces the west side of Central Park. The carousel, located at Mid-Park at 64th Street, has stood since 1871. Lennon was shot dead in front of their apartment on 8 December 1980 by his fanatic fan named Mark David Chapman. After shooting Lennon five times, Chapman reportedly remained at the scene reading *Catcher in the Rye* until the Police arrested him.

soul rest in peace!”] over and over again—which means ‘Praises to the Buddha’ or something like that— and the *same thing* happens. The exact same—” (FZ 20). She even cited the mantra sound of Hindu origin “Om” [or *Aum*] (FZ 21).<sup>8</sup> She seems to have believed that the simple prayer could save her soul, but her boyfriend did not show any interest in it.

In the second story, Zooley found his sister Franny in a state of emotional collapse at home and their mother asked him to lift her spirits, but he thoughtlessly upset her more seriously by questioning her motivation for reciting the simple prayer. Later, after contemplation in the former bedroom of his elder brothers, Seymour and Buddy, Zooley made an outside phone call to Franny pretending to be Buddy, but Franny soon recognized that it was Zooley. Nonetheless, they continued to talk on the phone and Franny told that she missed their late brother Seymour. So Zooley began to tell an episode featuring Seymour: When they appeared on the radio show “Wise Child,” Seymour once told Zooley to shine his dirty shoes for the Fat Lady (FZ 87). In the end Zooley revealed the secret: “And don’t you know—*listen* to me, now—*don’t you know who that Fat Lady really is?* ... Ah, buddy. Ah, buddy. It’s Christ Himself. Christ Himself, buddy” (FZ 88). Hearing Zooley’s voice on the phone, Franny felt relieved and “fell into a deep, dreamless sleep, she just lay quiet, smiling at the ceiling” (FZ 88). Seymour’s anecdote is, doubtlessly, “the sound of one-hand clapping” for Franny. It also reminds us of the following scene of *Ulysses*:

Stephen jerked his thumb towards the window, saying:  
 —That is God.  
 Hooray! Ay! Whrrwhee!  
 —What? Mr Deasy asked.  
 —A shout in the street, Stephen answered, shrugging his shoulders. (*U*  
 2.382-86)

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8) Cf. Joyce Maynard, *At Home in the World: A Memoir*, p. 352: “‘Someday, you may find yourself in a situation where it may help you to say this word,’ he [Salinger] told me once. *Om*.”

Both descriptions indicate the same doctrine that many religions including Christianity and Buddhism teach in different ways: God [The Buddha] is present everywhere.

In *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus refers to the Buddhist elements of Theosophy based on their interpretation of Jesus Christ and Buddhism:

Dunlop, Judge, the noblest Roman of them all, A. E., Arval, the Name Ineffable, in heaven high: K. H., their master, whose identity is no secret to adepts. Brothers of the great white lodge always watching to see if they can help. The Christ with the bridesister, moisture of light, born of an ensouled virgin, repentant sophia, departed to *the plane of buddhi*. The life esoteric is not for ordinary person. O. P. must work off bad karma first. (*U* 9.65-70)

In a sense Stephen shows a fine example of how Theosophy links Christianity with Buddhism or Hinduism. Daniel Nicol Dunlop (1868-1935) was the Scottish editor of the *Irish Theosophist* and the permanent chairman of the Theosophical Society of Europe. William Q Judge (1851-1896) was a Dublin-born American Theosophist who assisted Blavatsky to found the Theosophical Society in 1875. George Russell (A. E.), Irish writer and nationalist, introduced Joyce to Theosophy. Arval is the central council of twelve influential Theosophists. “The Name Ineffable” is K. H. (Koot Hoomi), one of Blavatsky’s two masters as well as Master Morya. After Judge’s death, his branch was variously called, like, the Great White Lodge. Then, the Theosophical interpretation of Christ’s career is described following Annie Besant’s *Esoteric Christianity* (1901). Originally, the word “buddhi,” widely known from the name of the Buddha, means “a wise or enlightened one, specifically, Gautama Buddha” (Hoult 29). In Theosophy, it also suggests “The bliss aspect of the Trinity” (Hoult 29). The Buddhist Plane is the Fourth World of consciousness: “that wherein human evolution reaches the Divine; for while there is still duality here, there is, withal, no separation” (Hoult 29). The life esoteric means the one approaching the Buddhist Plane, so it is not for O. P., that is, ordinary people who need to “work off bad karma first.” In Theosophy karma is used as the Sanskrit

word *karman* meaning “(moral or religious) action” (Hoult 66). In Buddhism and Hinduism, it also means the spiritual principle of cause and effect that the present actions of an individual (cause) will influence the future births and life situations of that individual (effect) (*Britannica 2014*).

The following passage in the same episode also refers to the activities of Theosophy in Dublin.

Yogibogeybox in Dawson chambers. *Isis Unveiled*. Their Pali book we tried to pawn. Crosslegged under an umbrel umbershoot he thrones an Aztec logos, functioning on astral levels, their oversoul, mahamahatma. The faithful hermetists await the light, ripe for chelaship, ringroundabout him. Louis H. Victory. T. Caulfield Irwin. Lotus ladies tend them i'the eyes, their pineal glands aglow. Filled with his god, he thrones, Buddh under plantain. Gulfer of souls, engulfer. Hesouls, shesouls, shoals of souls. Engulfed with wailing creecries, whirled, whirling, they bewail. (*U 9.279-86*) (my underline)

Dublin Theosophists met on Thursday evening in Dawson Chambers. *Isis Unveiled* is one of Blavatsky's major works. The “Pali book” suggests the Ur-Sanskrit book Blavatsky consulted with. In 1904 Joyce and Oliver St. John Gogarty made an “investigatory raid” in Dawson Chambers and surveyed “Yogibogeybox” with some occult books such as *Isis Unveiled* according to Richard Ellmann's biography (174). Blavatsky highly admired the Aztec logos as “the ground work of universal truth” (1:560). The “oversoul” is not mentioned by Blavatsky nor Hoult. It is of course the term defined by Ralph Waldo Emerson in his essay “The Over-Soul”: “that Unity, that Over-soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other” (214). So it can be considered as Joyce's unique comparison of the three similar terms, “astral levels, oversoul and mahamahatma [great-great-soul].” The “chelaship” means entering Hindi priesthood. The lotus ladies suggests Apsaras, amorous Hindi nymphs, and lotus is the “flower of power,” which has been a favorite symbol with the occultists and teachers in the East (Hoult 74). The “pineal gland” is called The Third Eye in Theosophy: “with his further

evolution, it is stated, they will become active, and the higher consciousness of the mental world will then be able to express itself through the physical brain” (Hoult 99). This idea of the Third Eye is definitely derived from the *ajna* or third-eye *chakra* in Hinduism. “Buddh under plantain” suggests that the Buddha in meditation under the tree of wisdom, which is precisely, a “bodhi tree,” not plantain (Gifford 211). It might be Joyce’s intentional fallacy again because Fielding-Hall noted that a grove of trees like “great broad-leaved plantains” is a landmark of a monastery, “for it is one of the commands to the monks of the Buddha to live under the shade of lofty trees, and this command they always keep” (142).

Salinger is not generally considered to have been a Theosophist, but his religious idea was similar to those of Theosophy under the influences of Buddhism and Hinduism. Salinger and Joyce had strong interests in the two Indian-rooted religions, enough to describe some allusions to them in their works.

## V. Conclusion

It is very meaningful to compare Joyce and Salinger from a Buddhist point of view, even if there is almost no direct connection between them. As we have seen, these two writers used their Irish Catholic connections for writing novels feeling some alienation from the place where each lived in. Joyce studied Judaism and Anti-Semitism to describe the Jewish protagonist Leopold Bloom and many other Jewish characters in *Ulysses* after writing his first writing on Jews, *Giacomo Joyce*. He did such a very good job that, in 1940 when Joyce attempted to flee from France to Switzerland during World War II, the Swiss government rejected his visa because they misdeemed that he was Jewish.<sup>9)</sup> Salinger did not mention his Jewishness very often because, as his daughter remembered, it was a very sensitive matter to him. After the publication of “Hapworth 16, 1924” on the 19 June 1965

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9) See *New Republic*, 3 September 2014.

edition of *The New Yorker*, Salinger stopped publishing his new stories and retired from the world and led a secluded life like a Zen monk in training until he died of natural causes on 27 January 2010.<sup>10)</sup>

The two writers tried to see into the heart of Christianity by approaching (Zen) Buddhism, even if both did not think it is a religion but a philosophy or a meditation practice. General readers do not have to know what is Buddhism to understand works of Joyce and Salinger. However, it is significant that the two writers felt a sense of unbelongingness to the church or synagogue, and approached Buddhism in order to seek their religious identities. They seem to have had a feeling of what Edward Said called Orientalism vaguely longing for the East to escape from the Western world, but it is noted that the East, especially Buddhism greatly inspired them to write.

Why is Zen Buddhism or the Indian meditation attractive to Western people? It is presumably because Christianity has taught that death is the only beginning of eternal life in Heaven while Buddhism has taught that it is not the end of life, but merely the end of the body we inhabit: “Some people believe, he [Leopold Bloom] said, that we go on living in another body after death, that we lived before. They call it reincarnation” (*U* 4.362-63). The ultimate goal of Buddhism is to enter Nirvana, free from the perpetual chain of Saṃsāra [reincarnation] and *Karma*. In *Finnegans Wake*, Taff is “looking through the roof towards a relevation of the karmalife order privious to his hoisting of an emergency umberolum in byway of paraguastical solation to the rhyttel in his hedd” (*FW* 338.5-8). St. Patrick appears as “Patriki San Saki” (*FW* 317.02), a Japanese Buddhist monk and later meets the Chinese Archdruid at Phoenix Park, Dublin (*FW* 611-13).<sup>11)</sup>

East Asian readers should try to analyze English literature from various East Asian perspectives. Then we will have great advantages to research English

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10) According to Maynard, Salinger had completed “at least two books” by 1972 since his last publication in 1965, and kept the manuscripts in the safe. See Maynard, p. 160.

11) Cf. Eishiro Ito, “‘United States of Asia’ (VI.B.3.073): A Post Colonial Reception of James Joyce and Japan,” pp. 115-17.

literature in East Asia and will be able to contribute to develop it globally.

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**Abstract**

## Joyce and Salinger: A Study of Their References to Buddhism

Eishiro Ito

This paper intends to compare James Joyce with J. D. Salinger focusing on their references to Oriental religions, particularly Buddhism in their works.

Needless to say, James Joyce was a European writer and J. D. Salinger was an American writer. They never met each other and there was almost no direct relationship in which one influenced the other. However, the two writers had Irish Catholic connections while they were familiar with Judaism. Both felt a sense of not belonging to the church (or synagogue) and approached (Zen) Buddhism and Hinduism. They did not regard Buddhism as a religion: Joyce thought it as “a suave philosophy” to avoid wars and conflicts, and Salinger found a similarity between the act of writing and Zen practice on the quest for enlightenment. In short, Salinger tried to describe “the sound of one-hand clapping” or the sudden enlightenment in Zen [Chán] Buddhism, or in Joyce’s term, the moment of “epiphany.”

Asian readers should attempt to analyze English literature from various Asian perspectives. Then we will find a significance of studying English literature in East Asia, and will be able to contribute to develop it globally.

■ **Key words**: James Joyce, J. D. Salinger, Buddhism, Christianity, Ireland, theosophy

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Salinger's Glass family stories have puzzled and intrigued readers for decades by means of their intricacies of narrative, both in form and in function, as well as through their use of unconventional religious and spiritual constructs in forming a conglomerate family faith. By utilizing these unique strategies, Salinger provides a narrative much unlike anything that precedes it. 1998 Joyce Maynard sells out Salinger Joyce Maynard auctions off the letters Salinger wrote to her during their brief relationship. In the same year, she publishes her memoir *At Home in the World*, which contains detailed and intimate descriptions of her relationship with Salinger. After its publication, Salinger's son Matt refutes his sister's account of their childhood. 2000 Margaret Salinger is eyewitness to Salinger's special filing system. On September 13, 2000, Margaret Salinger told NPR's Diane Rehm, "I do know he's been working all these years because, probably the second time I've ever been allowed in his study, he very proudly showed me a set of files, where a red dot meant this is ready to. Salinger studied a number of religions during his lifetime, including Zen Buddhism, Hinduism, Christian Science and Scientology. He also practiced yoga, homeopathy and macrobiotic eating, although his seeking may have taken an eccentric turn. According to his daughter Margaret's 2000 biography, her father drank urine and sat in an orgone box, a device invented by Wilhelm Reich, to restore health. Eccentric or not, his pursuit of healthy living may have worked—he died in 2010 at the age of 91. By.