



ANDREW MADIGAN

SALINGER'S NASCENT BUDDHISM: NON-DUALISM, SIDDHA AND WU WEI IN 'UNCLE WIGGILY IN CONNECTICUT'

Abstract

The Buddhistic and Taoist elements in Salinger's work have been studied by a variety of scholars (including Eugene Antonio, Dennis O'Connor, Yasuhiro Tae and Yasuhiro Takeuchi), but no one has examined 'Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut' in this light. My argument is that 'Uncle Wiggily' is an early example of Buddhistic influence in Salinger's work. In particular, I will examine the concepts "non-dualism" (the interconnectedness of all things), "siddha" ("crazy wisdom") and "wu wei" (action without attachment). Although it's a rather unassuming story that's been overlooked by scholars, 'Uncle Wiggily' should be seen as a pivotal work in the Salinger canon not only because it's an early example of his Buddhist-inflected writing, but also because it's such a profound example. The central concerns of his fiction—authority, reason, individuality, conformity, Zen, childish wisdom, silence, etc. — are all found in this text, they are embedded deeply and widely in the narrative, and they are crucial to the story and its meaning.

Key words

Salinger; Buddhism; wu wei; siddha; non-dualism; Uncle Wiggily

J.D. Salinger began publishing short stories in 1940. By the end of the decade, he was a regular contributor to *The New Yorker*, a rising writer, and a student of Buddhism. These are not unconnected issues, however; from very early in his career, Salinger's fiction was informed by Buddhism. The Buddhistic and Taoist elements in his work have been studied by a variety of scholars (including Eugene Antonio, Dennis O'Connor, Yasuhiro Tae and Yasuhiro Takeuchi), but no one has examined 'Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut' in this light. My argument is

that ‘Uncle Wiggily’ is an early and significant example of Buddhist influence in Salinger’s work. In particular, I will examine the concepts “non-dualism” (the interconnectedness of all things), “siddha” (“crazy wisdom”) and “wu wei” (action without attachment).

‘Uncle Wiggily’ was included in *Nine Stories* (1953), but it originally appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1948. It has the distinction of being the only work of Salinger’s for which he approved a film adaptation, 1949’s *My Foolish Heart*.¹ The story, driven by character and conversation, is structurally quite simple: Mary Jane visits her college friend Eloise, who lives in the upper-middle-class Connecticut suburbs; they drink and talk; Eloise fights with her daughter Ramona. Characteristically, the piece is very funny, and the dialogue is impressively – at times excruciatingly – realistic. At first pass, ‘Uncle Wiggily’ might be taken for an insubstantial comic vignette peppered with minor domestic conflict, but only because Salinger dramatizes the serious issues with such a light touch. In reality, it is a detailed, thorough critique of western values and a meditation upon Buddhist ideals.

The protagonist, Eloise, is affluent, outgoing and quick with a joke, yet beneath the surface she’s clearly bored, disillusioned and miserable. This discrepancy between appearances and reality is signaled in the opening paragraph. Mary Jane claims in the second sentence that “everything had been absolutely *perfect*” (27), but despite this assertion, the key word of which Salinger italicizes for a more emphatic apophasis, what follows is a story of dire imperfection. In the same paragraph, the narrator describes Mary Jane as “looking upset even fouled” (27), the “damn lunch” as “burned” (27–8), and the snow is “soiled” (28). As the scene progresses, the images and vocabulary continue to evoke desolation, cruelty and unhappiness. The maid is “dopey” (29), an old friend a “dope” (30), the windowpane covered with “grit” (31). Even nature is despoiled: “Outside, the filthy slush was visibly turning to ice” (31). If filthiness was not bad enough, nature is growing colder; the same could be said of the people. The old friends’ conversation is largely based on character assassination:

“She only weighed sixty-two pounds. When she died. Isn’t that terrible?”

“No.”

“Eloise, you’re getting hard as nails.”

“Mm. What else’d she say?” (33)

This exchange is a representative, but not the most dramatic, example of Eloise’s temperament. She is by turns cruel, unfeeling and vindictive toward her husband, maid and daughter.

Children generally play a central role in Salinger’s fiction. This is true of *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), all of the Glass works, and every piece in *Nine Stories* – that is, in all of his published books. This is an astonishing fact. Many writers relegate children to the margins or fail to mention them at all, but, in Salinger, adults often become mere shadowy figures lurking at the periphery of the narrative. Moreover, he typically portrays adults in a negative manner while the child

is an enlightened, strong or even heroic figure.² When he depicts an adult character positively, the adult is generally childlike, such as the diminutive deaf-mute in 'Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters' (1955) who sits peacefully smiling while the other adults engage in angry, fatuous conversation. He is an enlightened being³ although others see him as "a fool, even an imbecile" (109).

In 'Uncle Wiggily' and elsewhere, Salinger depicts children as wise, independent, self-determining, intuitive and imaginative, whereas adults tend to be dull, conformist, depressed and overly rational. Children are individuals, but adults are mass-produced. Consider the ten-year-old title character of 'Teddy' (1953). He is an intellectual prodigy, Buddhistically wise and serene, practices meditation (275), recites Japanese poetry (282–83), bemoans the spiritual life of Americans (287), believes in reincarnation (286), and critiques the logocentrism of adults (286, 290). His father, on the other hand, is loud, violent, ineffectual and cannot control his precocious son, no matter how hard he tries. In one passage he says to Teddy: "I'd like to kick your goddam head open" (257). As we will see shortly, the parent-child dynamic in 'Uncle Wiggily' is quite similar. Salinger inverts the function and characterization of children/adults because, first, he is critical of western society and, second, he argues that we should adopt a more eastern orientation. Adults symbolize the rationalization, routinization and "dualism" of western society; children symbolize the intuition and "non-dualism" of eastern orthodoxies, especially Zen.

According to Tae (1985) and Avery M. Fouts (2004: 102), "non-dualism," the ultimate goal of Zen, is a detachment from the material world and an understanding that all things are interconnected ($A = A$ and $A = \text{not-}A$). Everything – good and bad, self and other, one material object and another – includes and requires its opposite. Western "dualism," on the other hand, focuses on the separateness of things ($A = \text{not-}B$) and emphasizes an attachment to reason and the material world. If we insist on approaching the world from a rational perspective, dualism – with its tendency to dissect, label, separate and categorize – is inevitable. Zen is illogical, according to Fouts, and incapable of being completely understood through rational analysis (102). Objects that appear separate are actually non-separate. From a western, rationalistic standpoint, this position is inconsistent with "the law of non-contradiction," which maintains that all objects are individuated. This assumption, Fouts argues, has been dominant in the West since Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and is one of the major distinctions between Zen and western thought (101). According to Zen, conflict is the result of unnecessarily discriminating between objects (i.e., dualism). Harmony comes when we refuse to recognize discrete barriers between A and B, self and other (Tae 1985, Madigan 2010). In 'Teddy,' for instance, the title character, who's portrayed as an enlightened Buddhist sage, has a mystical experience at age six that teaches him "that everything was God [...] I saw that *she* was God and the *milk* was God" (288). Teddy understands the truth of dualism, which maintains that everything is connected and nothing is separate.

Salinger's critique of reason, mass society and ultimately dualism is ubiquitous in 'Uncle Wiggily'. Eloise and Mary Jane met in college, to begin with, and

academia is one of the primary symbols of rationalism. As they reminisce, however, their conversation is invariably mean-spirited and superficial. For the most part, they talk about what people were wearing back in college. In fact, the story ends on a sartorial note. Eloise has a physical and emotional fight with Ramona. Afterward, when we might have expected a climax and perhaps an epiphany on Eloise's part, Eloise wakes up a drunken Mary Jane:

“Mary Jane. Listen. Please,” Eloise said, sobbing. “You remember our freshman year, and I had that brown-and-yellow dress I bought in Boise, and Miriam Ball told me nobody wore those kind of dresses in New York, and I cried all night?”

Eloise shook Mary Jane's arm. “I was a nice girl,” she pleaded, “wasn't I?” (56)

The story ends here. Eloise has reached an emotional and spiritual crisis, but rather than gain a better understanding of herself and therefore change, she seems to repress the salient issues and fall back on the only objects available in her spiritual overnight bag: meaningless conversation about clothing. University – that is, reason – taught her nothing, has not prepared her to resolve this crisis. The friends' relentless, empty chattering throughout the story further reifies Salinger's critique of reason because words and reason are so closely aligned. Eloise is spiritually atrophied because, as a college-educated, middle-class American in post-war society, she has placed inordinate value on reason (and material comfort⁴) to the exclusion of intuition, reflection, harmony, etc.

Books are another obvious symbol of reason. In ‘Uncle Wiggily,’ however, they are used to suggest the limitations of a reason-oriented value system. Although Mary Jane and Eloise are college-educated, they discuss personalities and clothing rather than books and ideas. Eloise complains about her husband for lying about having read Jane Austen, but it isn't clear whether she's read the author herself. When asked why she married him, Eloise says: ““Oh, God! I don't know. He told me he loved Jane Austen. He told me her books meant a great deal to him”” (46). Books, and therefore reason, have precipitated what is clearly a bad marriage. The other reference to books is related to Mary Jane. The narrator writes that she “pass[ed] two heavily stocked bookcases without glancing at any of the titles” (31–2). Here, books and reason do not lead to enlightenment; they are simply material objects, decoration, status symbols. Mary Jane has no interest in their substance, and Eloise cannot consult them to fix her existential dilemma. Reason is, in the West, seen as a path toward enlightenment, but in ‘Uncle Wiggily’ reason is ineffectual.

Logocentrism is most emphatically critiqued in relation to Eloise's relationship to Ramona. Eloise is a symbol of the impotence of traditional western values, such as reason, order and authority. Though she desperately tries to control her daughter, to establish order and parental authority in the household, her efforts are almost completely inadequate. (We will discuss this in more detail shortly,

while exploring Ramona's serenity and inaction in the face of her mother's rage and agitation.) As a parent Eloise wavers between negligence and cruelty. She spends most of the story getting drunk, correcting Ramona's grammar/behavior, and giving orders to the maid relevant to Ramona (take off her galoshes, feed her dinner). Ramona's imaginary friends are an escape from her unhappy family life; tellingly, her friend Jimmy has "[n]o mommy and no daddy" (38), which can be interpreted as the fulfillment of an unconscious wish. Symbolically, the imaginary friends represent the quest for a new social order, which Salinger locates in the East. We know this because of the imaginary friends' association with intuition rather than logic, and dualism rather than non-dualism (Ramona does not recognize a "western" distinction between real and imaginary). Salinger is arguing, here and elsewhere in the story, that logocentrism, which is associated with the West, is a source of disharmony.

While Eloise represents the West and its flaws, Ramona stands for the East and the possibility that its wisdom and values can serve as a corrective for contemporary western society. The first clue that she is associated with wisdom is her mysterious eye condition. In both western and eastern mythology, blindness, and problems with vision more generally, is a sign of wisdom.⁵ Blindness is often symbolic of the ability to foresee the future as well. The blind seer cannot negotiate through the material world on a visual level so other resources are called upon; for Buddhists, this means forsaking the rational/visual world of appearances for the intuitive world of non-dualism. Blindness is closely associated with non-dualism because someone who cannot see, or cannot see very well, would, from the outset, be detached from the material world and therefore less likely to be "fooled" by the separateness of physical objects.

Salinger is quite mysterious about Ramona's eyesight. We know that she wears glasses, but otherwise the narrator is enigmatic. When she first appears in the story, off-screen, Mary Jane says: "I haven't seen her since she had her -" (34). Eloise does not respond directly; instead, she calls to her daughter: "'Ramona,' Eloise shouted, with her eyes shut" (34). Whatever Ramona "had" is clearly too painful for Eloise to discuss. On the next page we guess that it is a serious eye condition when Mary Jane asks: "Can she see at all without her glasses?" (35). Eloise does not know the answer, and the subject is dropped until the climax of the story when Eloise is fighting with her daughter: "She picked up Ramona's glasses and, holding them in both hands, pressed them against her cheek" (55).

The meaning of this climactic action is obscure, but Salinger's use of Ramona as a symbol of eastern enlightenment is not. Her vision is poor, but her insight is superior to that of adults. Another example of her eastern wisdom and non-dualism involves the imaginary friends. Ramona has no attachment to the external world of appearances; she does not favor reason or the material world, but rather imagination, intuition and internal reality. We know this because she has a series of imaginary friends and because her relationship to them is stronger than her relationship with her mother. She has reached the state of non-dualism, in which she sees no distinction between one object or concept and another (in this case,

between real and imaginary). Eloise, on the other hand, is strongly attached to the material world. She becomes inordinately upset by Ramona's imaginary friends, which demonstrates her symbolic association with dualism. This culminates in the final scene when she wakes up her sleeping daughter and asks: "Why are you sleeping way over there?" (54). In the past, Ramona had slept on the far side of the bed to make room for Jimmy, but since Jimmy has "died" this no longer seems necessary. Ramona answers that she has a new friend, Mickey. Eloise becomes enraged, for what seems no valid reason⁶:

Eloise raised her voice to a shriek. "You get in the center of that bed. Go *on*."

Ramona, extremely frightened, just looked up at Eloise.

"All right." Eloise grabbed Ramona's ankles and half lifted and half pulled her over to the middle of the bed. (54–5)

Salinger is showing us how a western dualist orientation is not healthy or balanced. The family's disharmony is the result of Eloise demanding that her daughter discriminate between real and imaginary, but Salinger, critiquing her from a Zen perspective, is arguing that her demand is arbitrary and ultimately harmful.

Salinger dramatizes Ramona's enlightened dualism through the fact that she has imaginary friends – something associated with childhood and creative foolishness – because it is an example of "siddha" or "foolish wisdom" (also called "holy madness" or "crazy wisdom"). "Siddha" is strange, erratic or shocking behavior. According to Peter Phan (2001), *siddha* is used in a variety of religious traditions, especially Zen, in order "to induce *satori* or enlightenment" (732). These traditions believe that "foolishness is a path to true wisdom" (742). Ramona's strange behavior is intended to shock Eloise into a recognition that her life is unharmonious. There is no epiphany, however, because Eloise is unable to perceive the wisdom in Ramona's seemingly foolish behavior, or perhaps is unwilling to acknowledge and act on what she does perceive. Ramona is a "bodhisattva," an enlightened being who remains on earth in order to guide others toward enlightenment, but she is unable to rouse Eloise from her rationalist slumber.

There is another bodhisattva/holy madman in the story, Walt⁷, an old boy-friend of Eloise's who died in the war. He is described by Eloise as childlike, funny and irrational, as opposed to her husband Lew, who is "mature," pragmatic and with whom she's quite unhappy. "He [Walt] was the only boy I ever knew that could make me laugh. I mean *really* laugh" (41). Walt did not adapt well to military life and had no ambition to advance through the ranks. Eloise recounts a strange, funny, irrational conversation:

"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)

Walt is Eloise's ideal, a nonconformist who exhibits both non-dualism and siddha. He is not concerned with reason, material objects, status or how he's judged by others; instead, Salinger injects him with playfulness, humor, imagination and other Buddhistic qualities. Crucially, Walt is placed in Japan, which many consider the spiritual homeland, though not the birthplace, of Zen. Equally poignant, Walt's death makes him, and by association his ideals, unattainable, which suggests why Eloise reverts to a husband who has the opposite qualities and why she cannot be awakened by her daughter's "teachings."

"Wu wei" or "non-doing" is closely related to non-dualism and siddha. It is a Taoist principle that was adopted by Zen Buddhists, which would be how Salinger stumbled upon it. According to Zhu Rui (2002), wu wei means that we distance ourselves from the material world. The person in a state of non-doing "forgets the distinction which he draws between himself and the rest of the world by acting on the will of his petty ego – he does not hide from the world, but is united with it" (56). Wu wei further suggests "natural action or action restricted to what is necessary" (53). The crux of wu wei is this: if one remains detached from one's goal, and free from all desire to reach that goal, then paradoxically (at least from a western rationalist perspective), one is more enabled to reach that goal. Eugen Herrigel addressed this aspect of non-doing in *Zen in the Art of Archery* (1948), published the same year as 'Uncle Wiggily'. The archery student must not focus on hitting the target; only then will he do so. Rui argues that "non-action is a mental transformation, a liberation of mind from the confinement of ego and the bondage of things" (57). The ideal, he says, is for people to act spontaneously and follow their nature. Wu wei is, in many respects, a summation of Zen principles and of the value system embedded in Salinger's fiction, including 'Uncle Wiggily'.

Ramona is an early incarnation of the Salingerian bodhisattva. Much like the little smiling deaf-mute from 'Roof Beam' (see Note 3), she exhibits all three Zen attributes: non-dualism, siddha and wu wei. She is characterized by stillness, serenity and inaction. The first way she demonstrates non-doing is through speech, or rather her lack of it. Eloise and Mary Jane prattle relentlessly – their dialogue is so frantic that it is often overlapping. Ramona, however, speaks only when absolutely necessary, that is, when her mother goads or forces her to. In response to one of Mary Jane's questions, for example, Ramona says nothing and does nothing. Eloise responds: "'She won't tell anybody. She's lousy with secrets'" (36). Mary Jane asks for a kiss, but Ramona says: "'I don't like to kiss people'" (36). Mary Jane then asks if Ramona has a boyfriend, but once again the girl says and does nothing: "Ramona's eyes, behind thick, counter-myopia lenses, did not reflect even the smallest part of Mary Jane's enthusiasm" (37). Even Ramona's imaginary friend Jimmy displays wu wei: "'He won't talk to you,' said Eloise" (38).

Ramona is completely detached from external reality, but also entirely comfortable with it, as opposed to the women, who are unhappy, insecure and con-

fused, whose constant activity is a sign of discord and uncertainty. Ramona is quiet, serene and meditative even though the women are loud, aggressive and fidgety. She represents the ideal Zen adept who can remain at peace even amid chaos, who is unaffected by society. As Fouts (2004: 102) contends, non-dualism is a state “in which all distinctions are seen for what they are, mere ‘words’ as opposed to the ‘facts’. Words – “desk,” “chair,” “apple” – imply a dualism that, in Zen, does not exist. The facts (i.e., the connectedness of objects) are contradicted by the words (different labels for different objects). Therefore, an enlightened being such as Ramona places little value on words. The person who understands non-dualism – “the ‘absolute oneness’ of things” (Fouts 2004: 103) – reaches satori the state of enlightenment (Fouts 2004: 103).

Compare Ramona’s calm stasis with the women’s, especially Eloise’s, anxious energy. They get drunk, spill drinks, bellow, lie and chatter. They never sit still for very long. Salinger writes that “Eloise lunged suddenly to her feet” (41). When she sees one of Ramona’s galoshes: “Eloise picked it up and threw it, with as much force as possible, over the side of the banister; it struck the foyer floor with a violent thump” (53). At the climax of the story, as discussed earlier, Eloise tries to force Ramona to sleep in the center of the bed by shouting at her, but the girl remains motionless. “Ramona, extremely frightened, just looked up at Eloise” (54). Eloise grabs her daughter and physically moves her to the center of the bed, but Ramona never loses her peaceful, quiet, desireless attitude. “Ramona neither struggled nor cried; she let herself be moved without actually submitting to it” (55). This description shows that she lives in harmony with the material world while also remaining detached from it, in keeping with *wu wei*. Ostensibly satisfied, Eloise begins to leave her daughter’s bedroom, but the climax is still pending: “Then, suddenly, she rushed, in the dark, over to the night table, banging her knee against the foot of the bed” (55). This is when she mysteriously and violently presses Ramona’s glasses against her face. Salinger is careful with his language and imagery. While Ramona rarely speaks or moves, Eloise, who has not learned the art of *wu wei*, *lunges*, *bangs*, *pulls*, *lifts*, *rushes* and *throws*.

Although Eloise, throughout most of the story, projects qualities that are contrary to Zen, there is strong evidence that she understands *wu wei*. This becomes clear when Mary Jane asks if Eloise has ever told her husband about Walt. Eloise answers: ““Listen to me, career girl. If you ever get married again, don’t tell your husband *anything*”” (45). Eloise explains her idea in more detail, but Mary Jane doesn’t understand her point so Eloise gives up: ““Oh...what’s the use of talking?”” (46). Nonetheless, they keep debating the point and Eloise reiterates: ““The last thing I’d do would be to tell him”” (48).⁸ Eloise understands that words, and therefore reason, have limited value; non-doing—in this case, silence—can be more effective than doing. In this scene, and nowhere else, we get a glimpse behind the façade and begin to understand how Eloise became the person she is. Walt represents an alternative life for her, a life in which she might have been happier and her character might have grown closer to Salinger’s Zen ideal. Walt was her model of non-dualism, *siddha* and *wu wei*; without him, this part of her is dead.

Ramona is the hero of 'Uncle Wiggily', but Salinger undoubtedly identified with Eloise as well. He'd had a nervous breakdown during the war, and his marriage to a French doctor was quite brief and disillusioning. Without Zen, he might have become Eloise. According to Ian Hamilton (1989), Salinger became interested in Buddhism at a time when he was feeling particularly lost, restless and alone (125–30). He met the Buddhist scholar D.T. Suzuki around this time, and even distributed Buddhist reading lists to his dates (Skow 1961: 26), which sounds like the peculiar and self-defeating romantic gambit of Holden Caulfield. He was dissatisfied with the glitz of Manhattan and its artistic circles, bourgeois America, modern society and western values. His religious studies had a profound impact on his burgeoning fiction, as we have seen in 'Uncle Wiggily'. Although it is a rather unassuming story⁹ that has been overlooked by scholars, 'Uncle Wiggily' should be seen as a pivotal work in the Salinger canon not only because it's an early example of his Buddhist-inflected writing, but also because it is such a profound example. The central concerns of his fiction – authority, reason, individuality, conformity, Zen, childish wisdom, silence, etc. – are all found in this text, they are embedded deeply and widely in the narrative, and they are crucial to the story and its meaning.

Notes

- ¹ The film was a critical disaster that bore little resemblance to Salinger's story. This disappointment may have played a significant role in his increasingly litigious and hypersensitive relationship to the media, the reading public, and anyone who attempted to comment on, republish, or in any way appropriate his work.
- ² The centrality and enlightened depiction of children is especially prominent in 'For Esmé – With Love and Squalor', 'Teddy', 'De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period' (the title characters), *The Catcher in the Rye* (Allie, Phoebe) and 'Hapworth 16, 1924' (Seymour Glass).
- ³ He is a "bodhisattva," from a Buddhist perspective, exhibiting "desirelessness" and "the cessation from all hankerings," which is "the only thing that counts in the religious life" ('Roof Beam' 196). Buddha himself is often portrayed as quiet, smiling, playful and wisely-foolish. In literary terms, he's a "fool-saint" or "holy fool," like Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin, Robertson Davies's Mary Dempster, Charles Bukowski's Henry Chinaski or Kerouac's little Saint Teresa bum.
- ⁴ Eloise's treatment of her maid and daughter, because Salinger handles it with such realism and poignancy, is difficult to read without wincing. Eloise has enough money to afford a maid, which means, in essence, that she does not have to raise her daughter. Indeed, she ignores her when she is not criticizing her. Salinger is critiquing materialism as well as rationalism and showing the connection between the two.
- ⁵ Examples include: Tiresias, Oedipus, Aniruddha, Neo (*The Matrix*), Master Izo from Marvel Comics, Tommy from The Who's rock opera, Paul Atreides (*Dune*), Sybill Trelawny (*Harry Potter*), Zatoichi the Blind Swordsman, Odin, Phineas. The title character in Salinger's 'Teddy', who is portrayed as a bodhisattva, is cross-eyed (255).
- ⁶ Her response, inordinate and violent though it is, can be explained if we assume that, at some level, Eloise understands that Ramona's imaginary world is an escape from the "real" world of her family, which is to say, Ramona is indirectly expressing her disdain for Eloise.
- ⁷ Presumably Walter Glass who, in other Salinger works, is also a soldier killed in Japan.
- ⁸ Holden Caulfield had the same idea. The penultimate line of *Catcher* is: "Don't ever tell

anybody anything” (214). He shows further affinity for *wu wei* in that he admired Sally Hayes because she did not try to win the game of checkers: “[W]hen she’d get a king, she wouldn’t move it. She’d just leave it in the back row” (31–2). She was interested in the process rather than the goal. (For a thorough analysis of Holden and Zen, see ‘The Zen Archery of Holden Caulfield’ by Takeuchi Yasuhiro.)

- ⁹ There is not much action. Most of the important events are not events at all, but internal processes: the story itself is a model of *wu wei*.

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ANDREW MADIGAN lives in Al Ain, UAE with his wife and three daughters. He teaches English and Creative Writing at United Arab Emirates University, writes fiction, is the co-founder and associate editor of *Arabia Review*, and plays rugby. He has been working his way around the world for the past 15 years, with stops in the UK, Korea, Tokyo, The US, Okinawa and Dubai. His research interests are varied, but tend toward modernist and postmodernist American and English literature. He has an article on Graham Greene coming out in *Heythrop Journal* and an article on Jack Kerouac and J.D. Salinger will be appearing in *Comparative American Studies*.

Address: Andrew Madigan, United Arab Emirates University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Box 17771, Al Ain UAE. [email: andrewjmadigan@hotmail.com]