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**Teen Angst: Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and Brooks'
Grow Up.**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to compare the two main characters in the novels *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger and *Grow Up* by Ben Brooks, having the trauma that the two characters suffered earlier in their lives as the starting point for this discussion. This paper will work on the effects of trauma in different aspects of the characters' lives and their process of growth towards adulthood, as well as the way in which the two characters perceive the adult world, and the autobiographical nature of the two novels. I hope this paper will contribute to the existing research on Holden Caulfield by comparing him to a contemporary character that has not been an object of academic analysis before, as well as provide a good base for the future research that might be done on Ben Brooks' work, and more specifically on *Grow Up*.

KEY WORDS: adolescence, trauma, maturity, acceptance, autobiography.

RESUM

La finalitat d'aquest treball és comparar els dos personatges principals de les novel·les *The Catcher in the Rye* de J.D. Salinger i *Grow Up* de Ben Brooks, tenint com a punt de partida d'aquest debat les situacions traumàtiques que van patir els dos personatges. Aquest treball es centrarà en les conseqüències del trauma en diferents aspectes de les vides dels personatges, així com la manera en la que els dos personatges perceben el món adult i, també, el component autobiogràfic de les dues novel·les. Espero que aquest treball contribueixi a la recerca existent sobre Holden Caulfield al comparar-lo amb un personatge contemporani que no ha sigut objecte d'anàlisi acadèmica fins al moment, a la vegada que proporcioni una bona base per la futura recerca que es pugui realitzar sobre l'obra de Ben Brooks, i més concretament sobre *Grow Up*.

PARAULES CLAU: adolescència, trauma, maduresa, acceptació, autobiografia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

J.D. Salinger published his novel *The Catcher in the Rye* in 1951 and it quickly became a bestseller. Holden Caulfield, its main character, became a hero to all the readers, who deeply identified with him and his struggles. The text gives an account of Holden's internal conflict with himself and the world, and we see how the trauma caused by the death of his younger brother Allie three years earlier and the fact that he lacks an adult role model affect the way he perceives himself and others. The novel is set in New York City and presents Holden Caulfield's escape from Pencey Prep and how he spends a few days wandering around the city so that his parents will not know that he has been expelled again from another school and will be subsequently upset with him. During these few days that he spends in New York City on his own, Holden will see the corruption that there is in the adult world and he will feel deeply saddened about it. At the same time, he will attempt to save children from the inevitable consequences of growing up by becoming their *catcher* and avoiding their fall into corruption. The novel reaches its climax when Holden finally acknowledges that phoniness and corruption are also part of life and that he has to let children grow and follow the natural process of maturity. Not only that, but his emotional instability will lead him to check into a mental institution at the end of the novel so he can deal with trauma and all the emotions he feels that were triggered from it.

In a similar way, *Grow Up* (2011) by Ben Brooks is a book that he wrote when he was seventeen, the same age as Jasper, the main character, and presents an emotionally confused character in Southern England that also struggles with his journey towards adulthood and who is scared of the world that he sees around him. We find a very honest and emotional character who is not afraid to share his feelings with the audience, and who masks his pain for not having an adult figure that he can identify with. In addition, the novel explores the disorientation caused by not knowing what the protagonist wants to do in the future through the use of drugs and alcohol. On the other hand, he, like Holden, struggles with his mental health and that is why he visits a therapist regularly, to whom he lies compulsively. What is more, Jasper dislikes the fact that he lives in a corrupted world and dislikes seeing signs of it; however, he will have to acknowledge this corruption in himself in order to evolve and finally grow up and mature, as it is expected in someone at his age. We do not find an adolescent that is on his own, like we do in *The Catcher in the Rye*, but a boy who belongs to a community and still feels lonely.

The body of this work will be split into six different parts that will work through the consequences of growing up when one has been affected by trauma. The first part will deal with the direct consequences of trauma in the two novels, meaning the more significant traits that the two characters have developed as a consequence of having experienced a traumatic event. The second section will describe the two characters' relationship with affection and their perception of love, not only in themselves but also in others, and how their perception is also influenced by trauma. In the third section, I will mainly discuss perception, which will present the way in which the two characters perceive themselves and also others. In the fourth part there will be a discussion on the preservation of innocence and especially on the very frequent idealisation of the world of the two characters. The fifth section will deal with the characters' view of the adult world as corrupted as well as their realisation of their own corruption towards the end of the novels. Finally, the sixth section will deal with the texts as autobiographical and that as the reason why they are so relatable.

Other studies have discussed Holden's sadness about his brother's death and how that lead to his emotional instability, but there is not an academic source that has mentioned trauma and PTSD in *The Catcher in the Rye* before. Further, no one has linked Salinger's trauma after the war with the appearance of Holden as a traumatised character in the story through the autobiographical quality of the novel, and, thus, I want to work on these topics in order to give the novel a new point of view. On top of that, I will compare Holden Caulfield to a contemporary character with whom he shares many aspects in common and has not been compared to before, Jasper from *Grow Up*. By doing that I will provide the first academic source on any of Ben Brooks' novels, which will hopefully lead to further research on Brooks' work and will also give a different perspective on the character of Holden Caulfield. Not only that, but I will link the many aspects that the characters have in common despite being from different times and different countries with the fact that the texts are autobiographical in order to give the two novels a new dimension. I will also contribute to research by including an exclusive interview I conducted with Ben Brooks that deals with some of the topics that I will discuss in this paper.

This dissertation will attempt to do a comparative study on the main characters in the two novels. It will have trauma as its starting point and will describe different aspects that appear to be affected by trauma in the two characters by trying to find the several aspects that they have in common. This paper will work on the struggles of adolescence and

growing up when they are affected by traumatic events, and will mainly focus on emotions and perception. Another point that is going to be discussed is the autobiographical nature of the novels and how this affects the way in which they are perceived by readers. What this work is trying to demonstrate is the universality of feelings when one is growing up and becoming an adult no matter the time and location, and the fact that the novels connect better with the audience when they are based on real-life events that happened to the author. This is because they feel much more pure and real to the subject reading them and it feels easier for them to identify with the text.

2. THE AFTERMATH OF TRAUMA IN THE TWO NOVELS

Among other things that Holden and Jasper have in common, there is the fact that both characters have been through a traumatic experience by having lost a close family member. This traumatic experience has had an impact on several aspects of the characters' lives and personalities. According to Herman, trauma, in itself, leaves the individual with a 'crisis of faith' (55), and this affects personal relationships and social interactions due to a feeling of 'shame, guilt, and inferiority' (56) that might eventually lead to social isolation due to one's incapability to deal with the situation. In Nanni et al.'s paper, the concept of demoralisation is introduced, in which, as they claim, there is a presence of 'cognitive attitudes of pessimism, helplessness, sense of being trapped, personal failure; (...) associated features of social alienation or isolation and lack of support' (15). This process of isolation might be justified by the individual's wish to avoid situations that might trigger the aftermath of trauma (Scaer, 76). Correspondingly, negative attitudes are present in both characters, who show inability to cope with their feelings. To illustrate that, in *Grow Up* there are lines such as: 'Tenaya's parents think it is a planet-saving light bulb. I think it is too late to save the planet' (Brooks, 58) and 'Perhaps I will achieve four As and write a Booker winner and have sex with Georgia Treely. Except these things will not happen because I lack motivation, talent and charm' (Brooks, 86). Additionally, in *The Catcher in the Rye* negativity is illustrated through sentences like 'He said *he* talked to Jesus all the time. Even when he was in the car. That killed me. I can just see the big phony bastard shifting into first gear and asking Jesus to send him a few more stiffs' (Salinger, 18) and 'It was pretty quiet, though, because Ernie was playing the piano. It was supposed to be something *holly*, for God's sake, when he

sat down at the piano. Nobody's *that* good.' (Salinger, 91). Furthermore, Holden is physically and emotionally isolated as he wanders through the streets of New York City, which is illustrated, for instance, with Holden's fantasy of becoming a deaf-mute and how then he 'wouldn't have to have any goddam stupid useless conversations with anybody' (Salinger, 213-214). On the other hand, Jasper is emotionally isolated even if, as Ben Brooks puts it, he is 'part of some friendship group and has some kind of network, even if sometimes he feels like he hasn't'¹. Furthermore, according to Alford, 'trauma is an existential crisis; trauma destroys meaning' (66), which is very clear in the character of Holden, who cannot make sense of his existence after his brother Allie's death, and will have to re-arrange his frame of mind as his family structure has been shattered.

On top of the sequelae of trauma, Holden and Jasper are aware that they are approaching the end line of their adolescence and will soon have to face the adult world. The idea of growing up appears to boost the emotional stress caused by trauma leading to a feeling of great fear towards the future. Holden, as a result of trauma, seems to have difficulties enjoying the things he does (Priest, 213) and, therefore, seems to have blocked his feelings in order to be able to deal with his existence. Once he faces them, at the end of the novel, he goes through a breakdown due to his inability to control his overflowing emotions, but he is one step closer to coming to terms with them (Privitera, 205). It is then, at the end of chapter 26, when he phrases the words 'Don't ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody' (Salinger, 230). Jasper, on the other hand, is given the choice to deal with his feelings with the help of his therapist, though he chooses to lie to her instead. His feelings of loneliness and of fear about the future keep accumulating. Some instances of this are: when he is listening to an Avril Lavigne album and says 'I am not gay. I am young and a bit scared' (Brooks, 144), when he is wearing the balaclava and says, 'it's a metaphor, (...) it shows how I can be surrounded by people and still feel alone and anonymous' (Brooks, 174), and when he says 'because neither Mum nor Keith are available, the responsibility of answering doors and telephones falls to me. Sometimes, when swimming in ponds of loneliness, this duty becomes therapeutic' (Brooks, 83). It is not until he talks to his friend Jonah about the future that he realises that that fear is a universal feeling and he finally verbalises it by saying 'I am scared,' I say. I am being honest.' (Brooks, 231). Thus, both novels deal with teenagers

¹ Ben Brooks, interview by Clàudia Martori, April 22, 2018, transcript.

that feel anxious about the unknown and therefore intimidating situation that is adulthood.

In the same way, trauma raises in these two adolescents some sort of fascination combined with the fear of death. Having experienced a death so close to them, they are bound to question what death is and what its implications are. Death is, therefore, very present in the novels through the recurring appearance of the idea of death and words related to it. Some instances in the case of *The Catcher in the Rye* of that are: 'it killed me' (Salinger, 2), 'you were supposed to commit suicide or something if old Pencey didn't win' (Salinger, 2), 'It made me sound dead or something' (Salinger, 15), 'She was *killing* herself. It was brutal. I really felt sorry for her' (Salinger, 140), 'I started thinking how old Phoebe would feel if I got pneumonia and died' (Salinger, 168), 'that kills me' (Salinger, 171), 'Old Spencer'd practically kill himself chuckling and smiling and all' (Salinger, 181), 'Not that they would've *killed* me or anything' (Salinger, 192). In *Grow Up*, on the other hand, we have Jasper's reiterations about his stepfather Keith being a murderer: 'Keith is a murderer' (Brooks, 6), 'In a marriage that does not end in murder, one partner will get the liquid assets and one partner will get the illiquid assets. Keith could only get both by murdering Margaret Clamwell. Which he definitely did.' (Brooks, 9), and 'Did you kill anyone in Cornwall?' (Brooks, 47). Further, there is a correlation between trauma derived from the emotional stress caused by the death of a close relative and the development of mental illnesses and suicidal thoughts (Nanni et al., 15). In the two texts, mental disorders are present through the need for the characters to obtain psychological help with Jasper's regular visits to his art therapist Julia and Holden's stay in a mental ward after his breakdown at the end of the novel. On top of that, Holden announces several times his wish to be dead ('I got up and went over and looked out the window. I felt so lonesome, all of a sudden. I almost wished I was dead' (Salinger, 51), 'I was feeling sort of lousy. Depressed and all. I almost wished I was dead' (Salinger, 98), 'Every time I thought about it, I felt like jumping out the window (Salinger, 51), 'what I really felt like, though, was committing suicide' (Salinger, 113)), and goes even as far as going to see Phoebe one last time in case he dies, possibly implying that he might commit suicide, when he says, 'I figured I'd better sneak home and see her, in case I died and all' (Salinger, 168). Jasper, too, wonders about suicide at times, for instance when he says 'It is strange thinking how easy it is to end yourself. It is maybe the biggest decision possible to make and it takes so little effort' (Brooks, 73). So, it is through the telling of their stories and the fact of having an audience that will care about what they have to say, that

they will eventually learn how to 'deal, if imperfectly, not only with death but more generally with loss and absence. Death after all is simply one of the most striking forms of loss.' (Seelye, 50).

Another aspect shared by the two characters related to trauma is the fact that both characters lack an adult individual that portrays the figure of the teenager's role model and that they can identify themselves with. As reported by Van der Kolk, there is an innate component that makes children want to find an adult to create a strong bond with and that will help them to learn necessary resources for interaction such as empathy (113). This adult figure will nourish their feeling of care and comfort and, in the absence of it, the child will feel unprotected and deserted, and this situation will disable them of trust (Herman, 52). With this in mind, the character of Jasper has lost his role model, portrayed by his father, as he claims by saying 'you should not have favourites. Dad was my favourite' (Brooks, 6), and does not seem to have found a replacement as he is not very fond of his stepfather and does not seem to identify much with his very controlling, schedule-making mother. Therefore, we get a character that appears to experience this loneliness and lack of trust that is characteristic of adolescents lacking a mentor. Holden, on the other hand, keeps actively trying to find the adult role-model that will guide him through his journey towards adulthood. His parents have failed to become the role model he needs, his father being very uptight and absent most of the time, and his mother being unable to provide him with love since she became severely depressed after Allie's death, from which neither she nor Holden have recovered yet. He explains this when he says 'I felt sorry as hell for my mother and father. Especially my mother because she still isn't over my bother Allie yet' (Salinger, 167). Holden's view of his mother illustrates very well an idea in Bessel Van der Kolk's paper that explains the children's incapability to fathom the fact that adults might be mentally incapable of looking after them as a consequence of a painful experience (135). Consequently, Holden has had to try to find other people who will take this role of the carer; he has tried to find this figure in several teachers of his, although we only see Mr. Spencer and Mr. Antolini, and even his roommate Stradlater; but these men who seemed promising at first, will sooner or later disappoint Holden (Priest, 219). As Baumbach claims, 'Antolini represents Holden's last chance to find a catcher-father' (60), and Holden describes him subjectively by saying that 'He was about the best teacher I ever had, Mr Antolini' (Salinger, 188) before he deceives Holden and he starts to see Mr Antolini as a pervert (Salinger, 208). Every time someone fails to adopt this role, Holden feels deeply upset, desolated, and goes into a

depressive episode, but after Mr. Antolini fails him, Holden hits his breaking point (Baumbach, 60).

Undoubtedly, it is all the elements mentioned above that make these two characters' journey through adolescence such a difficult one. We have to bear in mind that different people have different reactions towards similar situations (Nanni et al., 14), yet going through adolescence with added difficulties such as trauma, its consequences, and the lack of a role model, leaves the two characters in a vulnerable position to confront the adult world, understand it, and become a part of it. Moreover, as a consequence of that, both characters show a sense of being stuck after their traumatic experience. Holden, for instance, says 'I act like I'm about thirteen' (Salinger, 9), because even if he is sixteen at the time of the narration, thirteen was the age when his brother died (Mendelsohn, 126), which is what caused his state of trauma and his subsequent inability to emotionally evolve (Miller, 132), and he will stay frozen in time and unable to mature until he recovers from his grief at his brother's death (Shaw, 101). For Jasper, however, this feeling is more of an issue of perception than something directly related to trauma. Jasper still views himself as a child (or a 'semi-man' (Brooks, 94)) although people around him view him as a near-adult. An example of how Jasper views himself is when he goes to the supermarket with Tenaya and says, 'We are two seventeen-year-old children alone in a supermarket and you are buying fucking prunes. You should be buying huge bags of chicken nuggets and Polish beers and cigarettes' (Brooks, 134). Thus, this leads to conflicting ideas, as more mature people expect him to understand certain things that he still finds complex to comprehend, such as Tenaya's self-harming, to which he says, 'I don't know what to say. I am being confronted with real human emotions. I should do something. I want to do something.' (Brooks, 59), Keith's divorce, when we find Jasper talking about 'retirement plans and brokerage accounts' like he knows what he is talking about and then adds, between brackets, 'what are these?' (Brooks, 9) and, more evidently, when he says, 'I don't understand people very well' (Brooks, 137). Thereupon, both characters find themselves in a sort of *middle passage*² between childhood and adulthood, struggling with how they feel together with what people expect from them. For Jasper, this *middle passage* becomes a countdown to adulthood, as we see in the text with a clear fixation with time. This is exemplified with Jasper's constant need to inform the reader

² Defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as 'the forced voyage of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas'. In this paper I am going to refer to it as the journey from childhood to adulthood, from maturity to immaturity, and from innocence to corruption.

of the exact time, his restlessness when he does not have access to the time ('It is approximately eight o'clock. I do not know the exact time because I have left my phone at home. I feel anxious when I do not know the exact time' (Brooks, 34) and 'I don't know where my phone is. I feel anxious when I don't know what time it is' (Brooks, 115)), and even the personification of it at one point in the novel when he says, 'Because Time has been around for a long time, it often gets bored' (Brooks, 196). So, although both characters are stuck in this *middle passage* between adolescence and adulthood, their situation is somewhat different as for Holden it is a direct consequence of trauma while for Jasper it is not, but it leads to an unnatural obsession with time for him.

3. NEED AND REFUSAL OF AFFECTION AND LOVE

In the two novels, the main characters are very emotional and sensitive adolescents but they are unable to express how they really feel. This leaves the two characters with a feeling of frustration and insecurity, given that if they do not share how they feel this will eventually lead to them feeling misunderstood. Jasper, for instance, lets the audience know about his sensitivity and emotional instability in instances like: 'I am not emotionally equipped to deal with severe fluctuations in mood' (Brooks, 104), 'I am sometimes extremely sensitive' (Brooks, 36), 'I paw at my eyes then smile up at her. I want to cry but I don't' (Brooks, 176), and 'He is talking to Keith. About how Keith isn't really a murderer and I got it wrong because sometimes I think too much and too hard and for too long' (Brooks, 254). What is more, external things affect Jasper with added intensity compared to the other characters as exemplified in the sentence 'Because I am stressed about the possible repercussions of implicating Keith in the disappearance of the girl, I am suffering insomnia.' (Brooks, 183). On top of that, he appears to feel ashamed about his feelings when he is asked 'Why didn't you say anything?', to which he replies, 'I don't know, I didn't want to think about it.' (Brooks, 237) when talking about Abby Hall being pregnant. This seems to be caused by his inability to share his feelings, which triggers insecurity about his emotional responses. Holden, compared to the diverse range of emotions that Jasper has, presents only two polarised emotions, which are depression and happiness. Thus, while happiness only appears at specific moments like when Holden buys Phoebe the record, when he thinks about the museum, and in the carousel scene, depression certainly predominates throughout the whole text. There are many instances,

after situations that break with Holden's expectations, where he uses the words 'depressed' and 'depressing', such as 'It was even more depressing out in the street. You couldn't even hear any cars any more. I got feeling so lonesome and rotten' (Salinger, 53) after he is upset with Stradlater for potentially having had sex with Jane, and 'Boy, I felt miserable. I felt so depressed, you can't imagine. What I did, I started talking, sort of out loud, to Allie. I do that sometimes when I get very depressed.' (Salinger, 107) after he gets the prostitute and feels overwhelmed by the situation. In addition, Holden also avoids facing his feelings, like Jasper does, as seen with the example of Abby Hall's pregnancy. An example of this is when Holden says, 'I didn't feel much like going into it. I was still feeling sort of dizzy or something, and I had a helluva headache all of a sudden' (Salinger, 197) about having been dismissed from school. Moreover, this reinforces Duane Edwards's idea that Holden's sentimentality 'is a symptom of his inability to express his feelings easily and naturally' (563).

As regards the two adolescents' view of affection, they both show a sort of negative perception of it. This is made more obvious in *The Catcher in the Rye*, with instances of rejection of affection such as 'She wouldn't get off my goddam lap' (Salinger, 105). Furthermore, the only cases in which he accepts affection are when it comes from his sister Phoebe, such as at the end of the novel in instances like 'Then all of a sudden she gave me a kiss' and 'she reached in my coat pocket and took out my red hunting hat and put it on my head' (Salinger, 228), where he does not seem to mind the affection. In *Grow Up*, on the other hand, Jasper finds affection to be sickening as he says 'They kiss. It is disgusting.' (Brooks, 122) about her mother and Keith. In Jasper's case, the only instances where he does not mind people being affectionate to one another is either when he is drunk or on drugs, as those are, also, the moments when he is most certainly also going to get affection from someone³. Thus, with this general rejection of affection, both characters seem disconnected from others. As Edwards says when he talks about *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden always keeps at a distance from people, he does not have any very close relationships (559), and also, he 'longs to feel accepted yet feels he cannot make a connection.' (Privitera, 205). Although these two references refer exclusively to Holden Caulfield, the latter can also be applied to Jasper and still makes a lot of sense. The former, nevertheless, is not applicable to Jasper because, as mentioned before, Jasper has close friends while Holden is mostly on his own. In this manner,

³ In these cases, affection seems to come in the form of sex.

Holden and Jasper seem to have issues accepting affection, which leads to their subsequent emotional alienation from others.

What is more, although there is an active rejection of whatever kind of affection is shown, both characters, at the same time, seek attention as a way of asking for help. Holden narrates some instances of this, such as 'Then I'd crawl back to my room and call up Jane and have her come over and bandage up my guts. I pictured her holding a cigarette for me to smoke while I was bleeding and all' (Salinger, 113) in which he has a fantasy of Jane looking after him. Also, after he has said he does not like Ackley and how he annoys him, Holden invites him to sit down by saying, 'I don't know, and I don't give a damn. How 'bout sitting *down* or something, Ackley kid?' (Salinger, 22), which shows Holden's need for affection and company but also his inability to express that feeling. And, lastly, there is a clear case of Holden wanting attention when he says, 'He didn't even look around to see where I was at' (Salinger, 52). Further, this paradoxical idea of wanting attention but then rejecting it seems to come from the fact that he feels like he does not deserve this attention. Miller explains this rather well by saying 'Ashamed of his need – a sixteen-year-old crying for emotional support – and unable to accept kindness since in his guilt he feels he does not deserve it' (133). There is a passage in *The Catcher in the Rye* where this guilt and this feeling of worthlessness are shown:

One thing about packing depressed me a little. I had to pack these brand-new ice skates my mother had practically sent me the day before. That depressed me. I could see my mother going in Spaulding's and asking the salesman a million dopey questions – and here I was getting the ax again. It made me feel pretty sad. She bought me the wrong kind of skates – I wanted racing skates and she bought hockey – but it made me sad anyway. Almost every time somebody gives me a present, it ends up making me sad. (Salinger, 55).

In *Grow Up*, however, Jasper is upset with Julia for not replying to his cries for help when he says, 'Every time Julia fails to spot my lies or to dissuade me from engaging in hate crimes, I feel a sinking disappointment in the year 2010⁴' (Brooks, 31). Also, Jasper seems to seek help when a Jehovah witness knocks on his door and asks him if he is 'in a relationship with God' and he replies, 'I suffer from anxiety disorders, which means that maintaining stable relationships is difficult' (Brooks, 83), which, although he is most certainly mocking the Jehovah witness, seems to be a cry for help for he mentions his

⁴ 2010 is the year when the book is set.

anxiety disorders. So, for the two characters, affection appears to be necessary for them to cope but distasteful at the same time, as they feel like they might not deserve people to be affectionate to them, which makes the situation confusing for others and discouraging for them.

Notwithstanding, each of the *semi-men*⁵ has a single character who they fully trust, and in both cases, it is a female one; for Holden it is his younger sister Phoebe, while for Jasper it is his best friend Tenaya. The two females offset, by being rational at all times, the emotional view on the world that Holden and Jasper have. On the one hand, ten-year-old Phoebe is described by critics as Holden's catcher (Baumbach, 67), the one 'in touch with the real world' (Foran, 978), the only one who has not failed Holden (Privitera, 204), and an 'undersized mother figure' for him (Miller, 139). On the other hand, we find seventeen-year-old Tenaya also becomes a caregiver and compensates Jasper's moments of 'insanity' by being balanced and realistic. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Phoebe's role is much more striking than Tenaya's, considering that she is only ten years old when she has to play the role of the carer and be more mature and rational than his adolescent older brother. To make this clearer, this relationship is present in *The Catcher in the Rye* when Phoebe acts as if she was Holden's mother when she says, "I suppose you failed in every single subject again' she said – very snotty. It was sort of funny, too, in a way. She sounds like a goddam schoolteacher sometimes, and she's only a little child." (Salinger, 180), and also when she says, 'Don't swear so much' (Salinger, 181), which is something a mother would say. Also, this is present in *Grow Up* in instances like when Jasper and Tenaya are in the supermarket: 'Tenaya puts a fat bottle of green-top milk into the trolley. I put a chocolate milkshake in. She takes it out and asks me if I am eight years old. She suggests I buy an Actimel instead. I tell her that I would rather give money to a heroin addict.' (Brooks, 134). So, as the two adolescents are lacking a mentor, who would typically be one of their parents, they try to find this figure in someone else that is close to them. Holden has been left down by everyone but his sister Phoebe, so she is the only one left who can become his 'catcher'. Jasper finds this figure in his closest friend, Tenaya, as she is the person whom he trusts the most.

⁵ As used to refer to Jasper in Brooks 94.

4. THE CHARACTERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEMSELVES AND OF OTHERS

Both Holden and Jasper show a very negative view of the world and of people. Peter Shaw claims that his negative view of the world comes from Holden's inhibition of sexual desire (109), like when Holden says, 'In my *mind*, I'm probably the biggest sex maniac you ever saw' (Salinger, 67). This example depicts Holden's opinion about his sexual desire as one that is excessive, while, for an outsider, it clearly is something natural for adolescents to feel and does not feel unusual or disproportionate whatsoever. Going back to the idea of negativity, Holden evidences it with sentences such as 'The kind of luck I have, I'd probably join one with all the wrong kinds of monks in it. All stupid bastards. Or just bastards.' (Salinger, 53) when he considers joining a monastery. Also, when he goes to the theatre with Sally and says, 'The show wasn't as bad as some I've seen.' but then goes on to say that 'It was on the crappy side, though. It was about five hundred thousand years in the life of this old couple' (Salinger, 135). And then, when he dances with the three girls in the bar he says 'they were too ignorant. (...) The one ugly one, Laverne, wasn't too bad a dancer, but the other one, old Marty, was murder. Old Marty was like dragging the statue of liberty around the floor.' (Salinger, 79). Thus, Holden has, permanently, a negative perception of everything that surrounds him. In the same way, Jasper often makes negative comments about the world around him. Some examples of this are: when he is talking about his therapist Julia and says 'Sugar is pouring out of her lips. Sugar is only good when it is in tea. It is not good when it is coming out of the mouths of overpaid women in suits who think that they are emotionally shampooing me.' (Brooks, 29). Also, during Jasper's house party he points that 'The room is littered with embracing couples who think that they are happy.' (Brooks, 38). Lastly, when he is talking to the Jehovah witness, he thinks that 'In two days' time I will forget about him, like everyone forgot about Tabitha Mowai, like everyone forgets about everything, eventually.' (Brooks, 85). So, with the examples above, it is clear that both characters perceive the world as bad and tragic.

On a different note, in *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden becomes an unreliable narrator not only because he narrates in the first person and says things like 'Some things are hard to remember' (Salinger, 42), but also because of his exaggerated descriptions and his subjectivity in the narrations. Holden, who views himself as crazy, 'does succeed in making us perceive that the world is crazy, but his vision is also a function of his own

adolescent instability.' (Hassan, 77). Further, Holden feels filthy and worthless and thus he views the world the same way he views himself (Miller, 133). This is made rather clear with his descriptions of the people around him. He describes his mother, Mrs Caulfield, by saying, 'You can hit my father over the head with a chair and he won't wake up, but my mother, all you have to do to my mother is cough somewhere in Siberia and she'll hear you. She's nervous as hell. Half the time she's up all night smoking cigarettes. (Salinger, 170). Moreover, when he is talking about his brother D.B. he says:

He just got a jaguar. One of those little English jobs that can do around two hundred miles per hour. It cost him damn near four thousand bucks. He's got a lot of dough, now. He didn't *use* to. He used to be a regular writer, when he was home. (...) Now he's out in Hollywood, D.B., being a prostitute. If there's one thing I hate, it's the movies. Don't even mention them to me. (Salinger, 2).

This partiality is not only present when he describes family members, but also when talking about teachers, like Mr. Spencer, as he says, 'if you thought about him *too* much, you wondered what the heck he was still living for. (...) You take somebody old as hell, like old Spencer, and they can get a big bang out of buying a blanket.' (Salinger, 7). What is more, he also presents this distorted view about other students at Pencey. He describes Ernest Morrow by saying '[He] was doubtless the biggest bastard that ever went to Pencey, in the whole crumby history of the school. He was always going down the corridor, after he'd had a shower, snapping his soggy old wet towel at people's asses. That's exactly the kind of a guy he was' (Salinger, 58) and then goes on by saying, 'Sensitive. That killed me. That guy Morrow was about as sensitive as a goddam toilet seat' (Salinger, 59). Further, when discussing Robert Ackley, he says:

He was a very peculiar guy. (...) He was one of these very, very tall, round-shouldered guys – he was about six four – with lousy teeth. (...) I never even once saw him brush his teeth. They always looked mossy and awful. (...) Besides that, he had a lot of pimples. (...) And not only that, he had a terrible personality. He was also sort of a nasty guy. (Salinger, 20).

These are only a few examples of Holden as an unreliable narrator in the novel, however there are many more instances, all throughout the book, of Holden's exaggeration and distortion of characters and reality.

In *Grow Up*, there are also examples where Jasper distorts and exaggerates reality, and so he is, like Holden, an unreliable narrator. Some examples of his undoubtedly subjective descriptions include how he talks about his mum by saying 'Mum constructs

hugely detailed schedules and then suffers panic attacks when they are delayed because she needs the toilet or receives a phone call' (Brooks, 16). Also, when he describes his therapist Julia Hawthorn with the words 'She has green eyes and cropped blonde hair, the kind of cut that middle-aged women ask for when they want to look like Victoria Beckham. Julia does not look like Victoria Beckham. Julia looks like Susan Boyle.' (Brooks, 29). Georgia Treely, whom he has a crush on, is introduced with the words 'she believes in Jesus and her mum shops at Waitrose' (Brooks, 8), and Tom, Tenaya's boyfriend, is described with the words 'He wears knitted jumpers ironically and has oversized black plastic glasses. Sometimes, when Tom speaks I can empathise with Keith and begin to believe that he may have had a valid reason for murdering Margaret Clamwell with his trombone. Tenaya only likes him because she has cheekbones like protractor edges.' (Brooks, 19). Thus, Jasper gives entirely biased descriptions, which are completely influenced by his emotional instability, as Hassan claims about Holden (77). Furthermore, Jasper's descriptions tend to be negative and, in some cases, he tries to find emotional weaknesses in other people, like Holden. In the examples above, Holden does it with his mother and with Mr. Spencer, while Jasper does it with his mum and with Georgia Treely.

Having seen the perception that the two characters have of the people around them, I think it is interesting to examine the way in which they view themselves. As an outsider, I think the fact that they are struggling with the confusion associated with growing up together with the flawed perception they have of themselves, makes them embody the figure of an anti-hero. On the one hand, Jasper very openly presents himself as self-conscious to his audience and often puts himself down. Some examples of this stance are: 'He did this because he knows that I am selfish' (Brooks, 156), 'I always let people down. I am very selfish' (Brooks, 158), 'I am insensitive and cruel.' (Brooks, 192), 'I try my best to smile. It probably looks retarded.' (Brooks, 215), 'The party will be good,' I repeat dumbly. I am stupid. I should probably pretend to be asleep throughout this entire journey.' (Brooks, 215), 'I do not understand occurrences like this. I think I am a broken human being. I am emotionally paraplegic and the entire school is playing football.' (Brooks, 78), and when he is writing a dream scene for his book, someone says to him in the dream 'You're fucking mental' (Brooks, 173), which is his subconscious saying what he thinks of himself. On the other hand, Holden is ashamed of showing his true self and his true feelings towards things and people, so it is not until he acknowledges his true emotions when he says, 'What I really felt like, though, was committing suicide'

(Salinger, 113) that he is honest with the audience for the first time (Mendelsohn, 127). But, this is not the only instance where we see Holden's struggle with admitting failure. In fact, the driving force behind Holden's adventure is the fact that he is scared to admit to his parents that he has been expelled from Pencey Prep (Privitera, 204). During this first period of denial of his emotional state, Holden hides behind a false sense of security where he will present himself as amazing and flawless or, as Edwards suggests, 'he has virtually no self-awareness' and does not plan on gaining it, as 'he's too busy repressing the truth' (554). There are some examples of this in the novel, like when he loses the fencing equipment and says 'It wasn't my fault. I had to keep getting up to look at this map, so we'd know where to get off' (Salinger, 3), and when he tells Phoebe 'I *know* it's a poem by Robert Burns' and then tells the audience 'I didn't know it then, though' (Salinger, 186). At the same time, there are instances where Holden accepts his weaknesses, like when he is talking to Mr. Antolini and says 'I know. I'm very hard to talk to. I realize that' (Salinger, 201). So, both adolescents appear to be very insecure and self-conscious, although Jasper seems to be more honest and accepting about his feelings than Holden, who avoids accepting them and tries to mask them.

5. LOSS OF INNOCENCE

Holden and Jasper expect the world to be this idealistic concept that they have created in their minds. With respect to Holden, 'Holden is trying to find (...) idealism in the world. He seeks (...) ideals of truth, beauty, and goodness.' (Kinnick, 440). Thus, the fact that life does not meet his expectations makes him feel deeply upset. Holden's ultimate wish, then, is 'to escape from an adult world with which Holden feels he cannot cope.' (Seng, 107) and he will have to learn how accept the world and failure in order to grow up. Holden's ideal world is transmitted to his audience through the telling of his fantasies. Some of those are: When he thinks he is going to die of pneumonia and says 'I kept picturing [my mother] not knowing what to do with all my suits and athletic equipment and all. The only good thing, I knew she wouldn't let old Phoebe come to my goddam funeral (...) Then I thought about the whole bunch of them sticking me in a goddam cemetery and all, with my name on this tombstone and all.' (Salinger, 167). Another example of this is when he feels sad and alone and says 'Every time I'd get to the end of a block I'd make believe I was talking to my brother Allie. I'd say to him,

'Allie, don't let me disappear. Allie, don't let me disappear. Allie, don't let me disappear. Please, Allie.' And then when I'd reach the other side of the street without disappearing, I'd *thank* him.' (Salinger, 213). Another instance of that is his fantasy of killing Maurice:

I pictured myself coming out of the goddam bathroom, dressed and all, with my automatic in my pocket, and staggering around a little bit. Then I'd walk downstairs, instead of using the elevator. I'd hold onto the banister and all, with this blood trickling out of the side of my mouth a little at a time. What I'd do, I'd walk down a few floors—holding onto my guts, blood leaking all over the place—and then I'd ring the elevator bell. As soon as old Maurice opened the doors, he'd see me with the automatic in my hand and he'd start screaming at me, in this very high-pitched, yellow-belly voice, to leave him alone. But I'd plug him anyway. Six shots right through his fat hairy belly. Then I'd throw my automatic down the elevator shaft—after I'd wiped off all the finger prints and all. Then I'd crawl back to my room and call up Jane and have her come over and bandage up my guts. I pictured her holding a cigarette for me to smoke while I was bleeding and all. (Salinger, 112-113).

And then he goes on to say 'The goddam movies. They can ruin you. I'm not kidding.' (Salinger, 113), as if he is trying to justify his fantasies with having watched films instead of identifying them as a way to cope with trauma and a world that has failed his expectations.

Sticking to the topic of idealisation, Jasper does not have such idealistic expectations of the world, even if he does not like seeing how rotten it is, like when he realises that everyone has forgotten about Tabitha Mowai and that 'the world moves on from everything' (Brooks, 82). Nevertheless, he, like Holden, has fantasies where the world goes according to his idealised version of it. Some of those instances are: 'Perhaps I will rescue her from poverty in Thailand and we will marry.' (Brooks, 6) about Sexythai from *girlsoncam.com*, 'Tenaya is very supportive about my ambitions. I have promised her that when I win the Booker Prize we will move to Eastern Europe and live off tea and toast.' (Brooks, 25), 'I am going to be an award-winning novelist,' I say. 'I am going to buy a house on the Costa Del Sol. I am going to sleep all day and fuck all night.' (Brooks, 141), he says 'I hope she does very well. She will definitely do very well. Eventually we will own a converted barn in an area of the Midlands where teenage girls put posters of David Cameron on their walls.' (Brooks, 208) about Georgia Treely, and he says 'Fuck the army, let's move to France. We can steal food and fuck girls from villages. Or we can

go to Canada and find a log cabin by a lake and fill it with wine and sluts' (Brooks, 231-232) to Jonah. Interestingly, though, all of these examples, apart from being idealised fantasies, contain Jasper's desire to move away from the place where he lives, presenting, thus, a feeling of discontent with his current life. In any case, both characters show this inability to accept life and find that their fantasies work as a coping mechanism.

Additionally, both characters do not like seeing the bad things that the world offers. Thus, Holden idealises Allie's death for he died uncorrupted (Cowan, 49) and, as Salzman says, death is a preserver of time (102) and, thus, allows things to remain unchanged. What is more, Holden has an idealised perception of childhood and innocence, which is exemplified with the following passage:

But while I was sitting down, I saw something that drove me crazy. Somebody'd written 'Fuck you' on the wall. It drove me near damn crazy. I thought how Phoebe and all the other little kids would see it, and how they'd wonder what the hell it meant, and then finally some dirty kid would tell them – all cockeyed, naturally – what it meant, and how they'd all *think* about it and maybe even *worry* about it for a couple of days. (Salinger, 216).

Holden, as his name suggests, tries to 'hold on' to the past and the things he wants to remain unchanged (Cowan, 36), and that is why he likes the museum so much, because in museums things always look exactly the same. The way he expresses this is by saying 'The best thing, though, in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody'd move. (...) Nobody'd be different. The only thing that would be different would be *you*.' (Salinger, 131). On the other hand, Jasper feels emotionally damaged by the corruption of the world when he says 'I think I feel bored and cynical, because we are listening to bad people who have done bad things and I would rather listen to good people who have done good things' (Brooks, 87). He would feel much more comfortable and calm in an environment that did not threaten innocence, and the fact that it does, makes him feel cynical and awakens the much dreaded corruption in him.

Further, Holden is obsessed with the idea of preserving innocence. As mentioned before, he does not want to accept the corruption of the world. However, that is shown in two different contexts; first, he wants to preserve innocence in himself, even though he is not completely pure by the time he becomes aware of it. He tries to do that by isolating himself (Privitera, 205) as, this way, he avoids being influenced and lead to even more corruption by those around him. What is more, he feels like by becoming mature he will lose all the traits he had as a child and will become someone completely different: a phony

(Priest, 216). Further, the question 'where do the ducks go in the winter?', which he phrases several times throughout the novel, appears as a parallelism for 'where does childhood go when we grow up?', as he certainly feels uncertain about it. On the other hand, he wants to preserve innocence in children, stop them from becoming corrupted like adults are, given that innocence was forcefully taken from him when his brother Allie died, he does not want the same to happen to other children (Privitera, 204), and that is the reason why he wants to become the catcher in the rye. This is very clear when he tells Phoebe that he wants to become a catcher:

Anyway, I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around—nobody big, I mean—except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff—I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be. I know it's crazy. (Salinger, 186)

Thus, Holden's obsession with preserving innocence seems a consequence of the trauma he suffered after Allie's death, and the fact that seeing corruption brings his thoughts to this traumatic experience seems to confirm Caruth's statement that 'The repetition of the traumatic experience in the flashback can itself be retraumatizing' (63), which is why corruption feels so painful for him and preserving innocence becomes so important. Thus, Holden feels like it is his duty to become a saviour of innocence, or as Castronovo phrases it, his 'mission' (108). By doing that, he thinks he will be able to erase all the bad from the world, or at least hide it from the children he wants to save. This, although it is phrased out loud, is just another of the many fantasies that Holden has throughout the story, but possibly the most relevant one as what it contains is his real, true desire in life: to save children from phoniness. Furthermore, although he feels like he must erase all the 'fuck you' scribbles from different surfaces in the school and the museum in order to avoid the kids from becoming corrupted, he is 'no doubt more upset than the kids who share neither his naïve ideas of purity, despite his verbal profanities, nor his fears of sexuality.' (Miller, 141).

6. PHONINESS AND CORRUPTION

Another aspect that Holden and Jasper have in common is the fact that they feel fascinated by some aspects of the adult world, like sex and alcohol, but also see it as phony and corrupted and that leads to a feeling of fear towards growing up (Priest, 212). Holden sees adult human behaviour as 'offensive, disgusting, and repulsing to him' (Lundquist, 115), and most of the people he encounters in the story have already been corrupted and do not realize that themselves (Glasser, 92). The irony in that is that although Holden tries to avoid becoming a phony at all costs, he does behave like one at times and does not realise either, so even if he thinks of himself as different to everyone else, he behaves in a similar way to all the people he encounters along his journey and that he criticises so much. On top of that, Holden believes that he is 'a bearer of a permanent truth', and he does not only consider all the people he encounters, except for the children, as being phony, but there is also the fact that he believes that life without affection is a life without happiness (Castronovo, 113). Here we see an overgeneralisation of his own situation, in which he reflects on the fact that he has rejected affection as a consequence of having been through trauma and associates this to his unhappiness. Not only that, but he also assumes that all human beings are the same by assuming that disaffection brings unhappiness, while, paradoxically, he considers himself to be different to other people due to the fact that he is aware of the corruption in the world, and sort of sees himself as 'the chosen one' for having his fantasy about being the catcher in the rye. What is more, there is further evidence of disaffection causing Holden sadness, which is the fact that he gets wrong Robert Burns' verse 'Gin a body kiss a body, / Comin tho' the rye'⁶ and changes it for 'If a body catch a body comin' through the rye' (Salinger, 186). This simple switching of words evidences the idea that *kissing*, as a sexual expression, is seen as corrupted, and that is what he wants to save children from. In addition, with this idea and Holden's substitution of words we can also see that displays of affection make him uncomfortable; thus, as the poem follows with 'Gis a body kiss a body, / Need a body cry?', Holden's answer to it would most probably be 'yes' (Shaw, 105).

However, although Holden thinks he holds the truth, he does not realise that phoniness is 'part of the truth which Holden does not see' (Kinnick, 441), and the people he considers to be phony are just people wanting to acknowledge some qualities about themselves that they think are positive (Priest, 214), like the fact that J.D. goes to

⁶ "Comin Thro' the Rye, Poor Body" by Robert Burns (1782).

Hollywood and becomes 'a prostitute' (Salinger, 2). This idea is also discussed by Ben Brooks on his character Jasper when he says, 'Jasper sees all the adults as phony, and then later on he kind of realises that, actually, they're all just people trying to live their lives and whatever falseness he perceives about them is just them trying to kind of model through with their lives, rather than any sinister corruption happening.'⁷ In *Grow Up*, we find this idea that Brooks expresses in the interview when, after having misjudged Keith for so long and saying how much he dislikes the way Keith talks to him, he realises this idea that adults are just trying to live their lives, which Holden does not, and says, 'I will have to work hard to regain his trust, so that he calls me buddy again.' (Brooks, 258). So, here we find a reconciliation not only with himself, but also with others, who he viewed as enemies before. He goes on to acknowledge that despite having become aware that adults are more than just phonies, he is still 'trying to work out what he is supposed to do and how he is supposed to do it', as he says about the autobiographical novel that he is writing, and then claims that 'I don't know what lesson it is yet, but there is definitely going to be one.' (Brooks, 258). Thus, Jasper finds a reconciliation with phoniness that Holden seems to struggle with, and, although he is still learning about the adult world and its corruption, he seems to show a positive attitude towards the future as he talks about the lesson that his novel is going to contain.

Moreover, the two characters find themselves in a *middle passage* from innocence to corruption, and although they still view the world as children sometimes, they also act somewhat corrupted most of the time. One of the things that makes them corrupted is the fact that both characters lie fairly often, which appears as a defence mechanism in order to cope with their uncomfortable reality ruled by their traumatic experiences, for they create an alternative reality in which these problems do not exist. Holden is aware of his frequent use of lies when he says, 'I'm the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life. It's awful. If I'm on my way to the store to buy a magazine, even, and somebody asks me where I'm going, I'm liable to say I'm going to the opera. It's terrible.' (Salinger, 17). So, later on, when he is asked by Mrs Morrow why he is going home early, he says, 'It's me. I have this operation. (...) It isn't very serious. I have this tiny tumor on the brain.' (Salinger, 62), which is just another example of Holden's corruption through his lying. Jasper also lies often, and the clearest example of this is the relationship he has with his therapist Julia, in which his discourse is entirely built on lies. Some examples of this are

⁷ Ben Brooks, interview by Clàudia Martori, April 22, 2018, transcript.

that he is queer, that he writes for an erotic magazine, that he is part of the Ku Klux Klan, and that he is a Buddhist (Brooks, 29). But it is the fact that he eventually stops lying that Julia views as having matured. So, when Jasper tells her, 'I'm not really a racist. Sorry.', and she replies that she knows, that 'What counts (...) is that you are growing out of it' and that 'this will be the last time we need to see each other' (Brooks, 197-198) implying that acknowledging his mistakes is part of maturing and growing up. Thus, in the two novels, lying appears as the middle step between innocence and maturity. On the other hand, sexuality is another aspect that is considered to be a component of adulthood; Jasper seems to feel relatively comfortable with it, although he still appears a bit uncomfortable in his interactions with women when he is sober, as reflected in his awkwardness when flirting with comments like 'Christ, what am I doing, I am going to need drugs.' (Brooks, 220) and 'Jenna smiles at me and I try to smile back but I can't think of anything to say. She looks expectant.' (Brooks, 221). Yet, Holden seems to be further back in the process of accepting his sexuality, as his sex drive is quite high but he does not like admitting it and will not allow himself to fulfil his sexual desire as he sees it as something that is too corrupted for him to handle (Wells, 54). For instance, when Sunny, the prostitute, undresses herself, Holden says, 'I know you're supposed to feel pretty sexy when somebody gets up and pulls their dress over their head, but I didn't. Sexy was about the *last* thing I was feeling. I felt much more depressed than sexy.' (Salinger, 103), which opposes to other things he says like 'In my *mind*, I'm probably the biggest sex maniac you ever saw. Sometimes I can think of *very* crumbly stuff I wouldn't mind doing if the opportunity came up.' (Salinger, 67). So, with these two examples it is made clear that Holden does not feel comfortable with the things he feels and desires, yet. Nonetheless, even if the two adolescents do act corrupted at times, Holden and Jasper do not allow themselves to completely mature as they are still afraid of what becoming an adult involves in terms of corruption, and they are still not completely comfortable with that.

Additionally, the two characters act like phonies sometimes and do the things that they claim they hate, although that is something they both dislike seeing in adults. This is particularly evident in Holden, as he often complains about the things that he dislikes and so it becomes more unexpected when he does said things. Some examples of this are: he says, 'If there's one thing I hate, it's the movies.' (Salinger, 2) but then he acts like he is going blind as if he was in a film (Salinger, 22-23), and when he acts like he has been shot in the stomach and then says, 'The goddam movies. They can ruin you.' (Salinger, 112-113). He also says that he hates phony conversations but then has them with his

teachers and other adults he encounters, where 'he wants to appear older than he is, and his rough language fits in with his concept of the corrupt adult world' (Lundquist, 123). What is more, he also says how much he dislikes Ackley and Stradlater but he will miss them when he leaves Pencey (Edwards, 556). On the other hand, Jasper pretends to be the son her mother wants him to be by making the daily schedules she asks him to do and going to therapy because she tells him to, among other things. Nevertheless, he does not have the ability to engage in phony conversations with adults that Holden has, and which he points out in Tenaya when he says, 'When she speaks to my mum, Tenaya uses a voice she has stolen from a young girl in the television adaptation of a Dickens novel.' (Brooks, 15). However, that does not mean he is completely unable to do so; when the Jehovah witness knocks on his door and with Sexythai, for instance, he does engage in sort of phony conversations with them. Notwithstanding, he, like Holden, does not seem to be able to fully connect with other people and there is always a point in which the conversation becomes awkward and the other person leaves. In these two cases it is when he asks the exact amount of people that fit in heaven to the Jehovah witness (Brooks, 84) and 'How many baht to the pound?' to Sexythai (Brooks, 4). Moreover, faking adult behaviours is a necessary part of growing up, which consists in a trial and error to find out who one really is and who one wants to become (Priest, 214); thus, growing up involves, in some degree, phoniness. We see this very clearly in Sally, who 'is playing at being a young woman about town' (Priest, 214), and who Holden names 'the queen of phonies' (Salinger, 126) because she is 'busy rubbering and being charming.' (Salinger, 137). Also, when he calls her home, he says, 'She was quite a little phony. I'd already told her father who it was.' (Salinger, 115) simply because she gets the phone and asks who it is. Jasper, on the other hand, learns that phoniness is a mechanism of self-discovery and of survival in society, as seen earlier with Ben Brooks' quote about people 'just trying to live their lives'⁸. So, the behaviour in the two characters appears somewhat contradictory at times as they do things they say they despise.

It is also important to point out that there are temporal differences, as well as regional ones, in terms of the way in which the two adolescents rebel and become corrupted. We have to bear in mind that there are cultural differences between the United States of America and the United Kingdom, but also the societies they live in are very different as there is a sixty-year gap between the two. Although smoking and drinking is

⁸ Ben Brooks, interview by Clàudia Martori, April 22, 2018, transcript.

common in the two novels, the relationship that the two characters have with sex and with drugs is different. Jasper has relatively more access to alcohol, while Holden has more access to tobacco, but both are in contact with the two throughout the novels. On the other hand, sex is more accepted in young people in the English 21st century society Jasper lives in, while it is still a taboo topic for young people in Holden's American mid-19th century society. In fact, while for Jasper and his friends what is expected is to be sexually active at their age and they find surprising that Abby Hall was not until she had her sexual encounter with Jasper, Holden and the people at Pencey Prep do feel more overwhelmed by sexuality. So, when Stradlater tells him that he has been intimate with Jane (Salinger, 45), Holden appears surprised and angry, and it sounds like that is what was unusual for the boys at that time. Not only that, but sex is not a topic that adolescents seem to discuss in the novel, and the only instances where it appears in the text are with Stradlater and when Holden gets the prostitute, so sex is something that only appears in adult and corrupted contexts. On top of that, drugs are not even mentioned in *The Catcher in the Rye*, while they are certainly common in *Grow Up*. Thus, these are clear cultural differences between the two novels in terms of the time when they are set and also the country.

Despite the differences between the characters, in both novels there is a point in which the adolescents have the realisation that they are corrupted, that they have lost their purity, and that the world is unchangeable. For Holden, it is acceptance that finally makes him happy; he says, 'I felt so damn happy all of a sudden' (Salinger, 229) after he has the revelation that he has to let children grow up as it is part of everyone's process of growth. When he realises that, he says, 'The thing with kids is, if they want to grab for the gold ring, you have to let them do it, and not say anything. If they fall off, they fall off, but it's bad if you say anything to them.' (Salinger, 227). His revelation, however, is not only that he has to let children grow up, but also recognising that there is more than just Holden's truth marks the end of childhood (Mendelsohn, 127). For Jasper, however, it is after he has sex with Tenaya when she is feeling vulnerable and he knows he should not have done it, and he says:

And there are tears in my eyes because, I don't know why. I can feel my hands quivering. My heart is going fast. Her face is still buried in my chest.

And I realise I have done it.

I have chewed my fingernails until they have bled.

I have hanged myself with a rugby sock.

I have murdered my ex-wife. (Brooks, 242)

With this excerpt we see that he has become everything that he despised and feared, and although he is upset about being corrupted, it is an unavoidable part of growing up and maturing. Nonetheless, even if they achieve acceptance of the world, that does not mean that they are fully healed. As we will find at the end of *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden still is checked into a mental institution in order to deal with the aftermath of trauma. Jasper, on the other hand, acknowledges that he still has to learn a lot in his process of growth, before he goes on to compare himself with Holden Caulfield (Brooks, 258), which presents a parallelism created by Ben Brooks between Jasper's and Holden's processes of growth and the struggles that they find along the way.

7. THE CATCHER IN THE RYE AND GROW UP AS RELATABLE TEXTS

The two novels have proven to be relatable books for its audience, and the reason for that appears to be linked with the fact that both texts are somewhat autobiographical. On the one hand, both novels portray the authentic experience of being a teenager; as Castronovo claims, the texts are perpetual because they deal with the innermost doubts, feelings, and thoughts of a teenager based on real experiences (112). Not only that but, as Anna Freud claims, 'Holden Caulfield says what is forbidden us to say.' (Coles, 217). There is an example of how readers feel deeply identified with the texts in the film *The Rebel in the Rye*, where a reader wearing a red hunting hat and holding *The Catcher in the Rye* tells J.D. Salinger 'I feel like I'm Holden Caulfield. (...) How do you know so much about me?' (Strong, 01:20:12 – 01:21:35). On top of that, 'Salinger invents a mode of his own: a managed incoherence, an attractive breakdown of logic that appeals to the confused adolescent in all of us.' (Castronovo, 106), which is the same way in which Brooks narrates. Thus, we do not find that these two novels are based on clichés, like most mainstream novels nowadays, but they contain pure and real feelings based on real-life experiences of the two authors, which is what makes the novels more appealing for its readers, especially those experiencing the feelings narrated in the two texts at the time they are reading them. On the other hand, Ben Brooks' novel is certainly autobiographical, as he claims that 'pretty much everything was stuff that happened, even

things that seem weird was stuff that happened'⁹, and also, when asked in an interview if the text was autobiographical, Salinger claimed that 'Sort of, I was much relieved when I finished it. My boyhood was very much the same as that of the boy in the book, and it was a great relief telling people about it.' (Blaney in Dromm and Salter, 191). So, both texts clearly fit into the category of the autobiography given the authors' words when interviewed. Not only that, but surely for Salinger the traumatic experience that dominates the novel, is certainly based on his traumatic experiences that he suffered during the World War II (Bryfonski, 11-12). Notwithstanding, there are stories in which his trauma of the war is developed explicitly, like in 'A Perfect Day for Bananafish'¹⁰, while in *The Catcher in the Rye* trauma is present although not in the form of post-war trauma but as a consequence of a death close to him. As for Ben Brooks, given that he has claimed that the novel is inspired by his own experiences, we could guess that he probably had some issues with his father and lacked an adult role model, but we cannot know that for certain. Be that as it may, both novels are certainly inspired by real-life events that the two authors experienced and that appears to be a factor influencing the reader's identification with the two novels as they appear more genuine and honest than other novels for that reason.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has attempted to prove that despite the temporal and cultural differences between the two novels, *Grow Up* and *The Catcher in the Rye* hold many aspects in common. Trauma has worked as the backbone of this study, which has affected many different parts of the process of maturity for Holden and Jasper. Trauma, for these two characters, is the consequence of a death close to them, and thus death becomes an obsession for the two adolescents throughout the novels, although it takes different forms for each of them: Holden sees death in himself while Jasper attributes death to his stepfather. However, trauma also brings issues with the way in which the two characters perceive the world and also the way in which they perceive themselves, which, in both cases, is in a rather negative way. The two novels are shadowed by this negative perception that the two characters have, given that we find first person narrators, and thus they become unreliable narrators for the biased narrative view that they offer. On top of

⁹ Ben Brooks, interview by Clàudia Martori, April 22, 2018, transcript.

¹⁰ Contained in *Nine Stories* (1953) by J.D. Salinger.

that, their perception of love is also affected by trauma and we find two characters that reject affection at all costs although they show some signs in their behaviour that hint that their true desire is to feel accepted and to receive affection from others, but they show incapability in communicating that to other people. Holden and Jasper appear as very emotional characters, so, on the one hand, Holden has very polarised feelings, which are either happiness or sadness, while Jasper presents a wider variety of feelings, which make the process of growing up somewhat more confusing for him. In order to balance their emotions, given that the two boys lack a role model that will guide them through life, they have a female figure close by that helps them understand the world slightly better by being rational; in *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden's younger sister Phoebe plays this mother role, while in *Grow Up* it is Jasper's best friend Tenaya that helps to keep him mentally safer than he would otherwise. That does not mean that these two female characters save them from the struggles of growing up, they just lower their emotional stress and keep them balanced.

Furthermore, the two characters feel overwhelmed by the adult world, which seems to be ruled by a corruption that they do not feel ready to embrace yet. Not only that, but Holden will take a step further and attempt to save children from the unavoidable fall towards corruption. We find that Holden focuses his worries in others that are uncorrupted while Jasper appears as a more self-centred character that worries more about his own corruption than that of others. Their journey will be one towards the recognition of their own corruption and the acceptance of the inevitable consequences of growing up and becoming an adult. Nonetheless, during the time when they do not feel ready to embrace this truth, the two characters will be stuck in a *middle passage* between childhood and adulthood that will affect their mental health greatly, for they will have to seek psychological help at a given point during the story. In addition to that, the two novels provide very realistic portrayals of adolescence inasmuch as the audience feels deeply identified with the characters and their experiences. This is due to the autobiographical nature of the novels, which involves including situations and feelings that were real for the authors as adolescents, which makes the texts more relatable and easier for the audience to identify themselves with the characters and the situations that they go through. Thus, the two novels share many aspects in common, which mainly have to do with the feelings that adolescents experience growing up and having been through a traumatic event.

As a suggestion to approach further research, I think it could be interesting to analyse how homosexuality is viewed in the two novels and provide a queer reading of the novels. In *The Catcher in the Rye* there are instances in which Holden appears to be afraid of his sexuality, which could be associated to him being queer, and also the fact that he leaves Mr Antolini's house when he is showing possible signs of homosexual attraction to him might convey this fear of queerness too. Further, in *Grow Up* Jasper seems to insist on the fact that he is not gay and tries to justify some behaviours of his that he thinks might be perceived as homosexual attitudes. What is more, he feels the need to let the audience know that this is not the case, indicating that he, too, is afraid of queerness. Thus, I think it would be rather interesting to do a queer study of these two novels as there are aspects of homosexuality present in the two.

In conclusion, there are many aspects that might shape adolescents in one way or another and that might change their views of themselves and of what surrounds them while growing up, and in these two novels it is trauma that does this for the two main characters. However, there are aspects of growing up that all adolescents have in common and that is why we find that the novels are so appealing for their readers and also why readers identify with the characters so much. Moreover, what is for sure is that one cannot move forward without accepting the things that are keeping one from evolving and growing, and we find that it is precisely becoming aware of what is keeping the characters stuck and accepting it that marks the climax in the two novels and that makes the two characters finally evolve and mature. Thus, growth is an inevitable part of life, so, even if there are obstacles along the way, one cannot escape the unavoidable.

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11. ANNEX:

**Transcript of my interview with Ben Brooks,
at the Libertine bar in Casa Bonay, Barcelona
on April 22nd, 2018**

Claudia: Where does Jasper's obsession with death and murder come from?

Ben: That seems like a thing that seems common for young people of this certain age, just because they have so much access to... like everybody that I know, even from a young age, spent lots of time watching documentaries about like murderers and stuff, just because you can choose what you watch on your computer instead of having to watch whatever's on TV. I think it just stands for how we access certain things. You become interested in... It's not unusual, is it? It's fairly common for adolescent boys to be interested in this...

Claudia: Did you think about it when you were growing up?

Ben: Yes, like that was... When I was growing up I really liked reading, like, the biographies of, like, murderers and this kind of things, and documentaries about that. So, in that sense it was fairly similar, and I was always interested in kind of snuff videos like what he watches on the internet, like videos of people dying and stuff. Not anymore! This sounds creepy now!

Claudia: Why is Jasper so obsessed with time and where does this obsession come from?

Ben: With time?

Claudia: Yes, he's always saying what time it is.

Ben: Is he always saying the time?

Claudia: Yes, and there's a point where he says: 'I don't really like it when I don't know what time it is' or something like that.

Ben: I think the time thing is also a thing of... we kind of always know the exact time now, right? Because you're always looking at a screen which has the time in a corner, so maybe it's just a fact that he always knew what time it was. I don't know, it's a little difficult to answer the questions because it's so long ago.

Claudia: You hadn't read *The Catcher in the Rye* when you wrote *Grow Up*, right?

Ben: No.

Claudia: So, although you hadn't read it at the time, do you think *Grow Up* is similar to it in any way?

Ben: I think the differences are that Holden Caulfield feels and is, in a way, just completely on his own, and Jasper's kind of a part of some friendship group and has some kind of network, even if sometimes he feels like he hasn't.

Claudia: As teenagers, do you think they have something in common?

Ben: Well, they have the kind of weird anger combined with disaffection, and general uncertainty, and moral dubiousness, and recklessness I suppose. And... God, it's been a while since I read *Catcher in the Rye* too so I'm trying to...

Claudia: Why do you think the characters are similar?

Ben: Well, I think most people of that age are similar, right? Because it's like testing the limits of your emotions, sort of. Trying to work out how happy you can be and how sad you can be. That seems what adolescence is, because once you've mastered talking and walking and reading and writing, then at some point you get to this.

Claudia: At one point in the book you say: 'I'm like Holden Caulfield only less reckless and more attractive'.

Ben: (Laughs)

Claudia: How do you think Holden is more reckless than Jasper?

Ben: Well, because he ran away, didn't he? And did the prostitute thing, or tried to do the prostitute thing, and Jasper... didn't run away. Maybe it was as simple as that, I'm not sure.

Claudia: How did you know about Holden if you hadn't read *The Catcher in the Rye*?

Ben: I think I probably read the Wikipedia of *Catcher in the Rye*, maybe. I'm not sure, it could have been that. I always... even from that age, I felt, like, worried if out of my depth if people spoke about books I hadn't read, but I didn't want to read the books, so I just read the Wikipedias and pretend that I'd read the books. So, it could have just been that.

Claudia: But you had heard about *The Catcher in the Rye*?

Ben: Yes, yes.

Claudia: Where?

Ben: I think from an English teacher. I think I had an English teacher that kept trying to make me read it, and I kept saying like 'no, I don't want to read that'.

Claudia: What does growing up involve for you and for Jasper in the novel? Because the feeling is quite similar, right? For Holden growing up means becoming a phony or becoming corrupted, so what do you think it involved for you?

Ben: I think in that one it seems fairly similar but it's implicit, like you have... But I think the difference is that Jasper sees all the adults as phony, and then later on he kind of realises that, actually, they're all just people trying to live their lives and whatever falseness he perceives about them is just them trying to kind of model through with their lives, rather than any sinister corruption happening.

Claudia: Would you describe this book as an honest book in terms of the feelings that Jasper feels as a teenager growing up?

Ben: I think it's probably honest but in the emotional sense, not so honest in the sense he's quite terrible and quite openly misogynistic and doesn't think about other people, and in that sense, it's honest because I think I was that selfish and that thoughtless and that unkind to people.

Claudia: Did you have the same worries as him?

Ben: I'm trying to remember what his worries were...

Claudia: Growing up and the future, mostly.

Ben: I suppose so, but I had more maybe in common with Etgar in *Lolito*, I was more anxious than he is, I think, about a lot of things. Like, I'd always be... if I was in the street playing and I was on my own, even if it was in the middle of the day, and I could see a man walking down towards me, I'd always hide in a bush or something until the man walked past. Just, I'd be really afraid of everything.

Claudia: Was Jasper inspired by your experiences?

Ben: Yes, pretty much everything was stuff that happened, even things that seem weird was stuff that happened, yes.

Claudia: How do you feel different to him now?

Ben: Well, I hope I'm kinder but I think I'm probably not.

Claudia: Do you feel like there's been some kind of evolution? Do you feel adult now?

Ben: No, as you were asking me that I was thinking in my head: have I changed, really? And I think possibly no. Like, I think I'm better at putting on the appearance of having changed but I don't think I have. Like, I just think I've just learned now to pay a bit more attention to other people and listen when they speak and ask them questions and try to be a bit less selfish and a bit kinder. But I think also I am terrible still.

Claudia: Do you have the same worries now?

Ben: Mm... Yes, but I feel increasingly... I try not to worry now, because I always think of free wellbeing and elusion and doesn't matter what happens, everything that is going to happen, is going to happen, blah blah blah. I can't change it.