

# **Problems of Growing Up in an Oppressive Environment: J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and Mark Behr's *The Smell of Apples***

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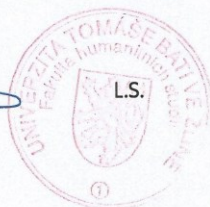
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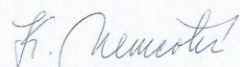
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## **ABSTRAKT**

Cílem této bakalářské práce je dokázat že hlavní postavy novel *Kdo chytá v žitě* a *The Smell of Apples* jsou ovlivněny represivním prostředím v němž žijí. První část práce popisuje trauma v historickém kontextu poválečné Ameriky a apartheidu. Druhá část obsahuje analýzu postav Holdena a Marnuse. Zaměřuje se na jednotlivé prvky jejich traumatu, které dohromady tvoří represivní prostředí. Analýza dokazuje že trauma obou postav obsahuje podobné prvky a dochází k závěru, že osud jedince je ovlivněn silou jeho mysli.

Klíčová slova: *Kdo chytá v žitě*, *The Smell of Apples*, trauma, represivní prostředí, rodina, společnost, poválečná Amerika, apartheid.

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this thesis is to prove that the main characters of the novels *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Smell of Apples* are influenced by an oppressive environment in which they live. The first part of the thesis describes trauma in the historical context of post-war America and apartheid. The second part consists of an analysis of the characters, Holden and Marnus. It deals with the individual features of their trauma which together form an oppressive environment. The analysis proves that the trauma of both characters shares similar features and concludes that the power of an individual's mind influences his fate.

Keywords: *The Catcher in the Rye*, *The Smell of Apples*, trauma, oppressive environment, family, society, post-war America, apartheid.

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I hereby declare that the print version of my bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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## INTRODUCTION

Society and trauma primarily represent an oppressive environment. Society creates oppression by pressuring an individual to comply with society's norms and conventions. Everyone should grow up adequately to become a responsible adult who creates values, which are unfortunately being forgotten, primarily by adults. There is an urgency to follow the rules and standards set by society. On the other hand, these rules are repeatedly ignored, which shows the hypocrisy of humanity. In the case of trauma, there are external and internal resources, and trauma can be caused by family, friends, events which have the negative influence on the mind of an individual. Trauma refers to the person's mind, the process of acceptance of the traumatic experience. It describes how an individual accepts society's oppression or trauma which he/she encounters.

*The Catcher in the Rye* represents an oppressive environment caused by society and family. Holden Caulfield is pressured by the public standards and rules which should be obeyed. Growing up, becoming a decent person is a triggering point for him. An essential part of an oppressive environment is trauma. Holden's trauma consists of the death of his younger brother Allie, which activates survivor's guilt. The term survivor's guilt describes Holden's state of mind, where he is continually blaming himself for the death of his brother Allie. *The Smell of Apples* is portraying an oppressive environment which is also shaped by society and family. There are fixed values created by the society in which Marnus Erasmus lives. An oppressive environment is formed by the father of Marnus and by society. The father's opinions together with the strict rules of society create an atmosphere where it is hard to breathe. Marnus suffers under the pressure and discipline. Later he witnesses the rape of the best friend Frikkie by his father. This traumatic event profoundly influences his character.

The state of becoming an adult who will create the values of society seems to be a triggering point for Holden. He is an adolescent, yet he thinks he does not deserve to live when his brother Allie dies. Holden does not see his potential or some motivation in life. He is surviving without a goal, caught up in the endless circle of guilt and grief. Marnus represents another type of person. His family and the apartheid state represent the oppressive environment. Marnus lives under the strict supervision of his parents. This parental care creates a suffocating climate for Marnus. He grows up surrounded by the ideals established by his father. All his life Marnus lives up to the expectations of this parental figure who spreads patriotic and racist beliefs in the family, not allowing any disagreement.

## 1 TRAUMATIZED SOCIETY

### 1.1 The Apartheid Regime

As Christopher J. Colvin pointed out, traumatic events were also an outcome of the political, moral and economic issues. Therefore, trauma was not strictly a psychological condition of individuals, but also the result of problematic society. Not only individual dealt with trauma, the but the entire nation dealt with trauma. The trauma of South Africa originated from the apartheid. The apartheid regime established structural violence, conditions under which people had to live. Ideology, racism, relocation had an immense impact on the whole nation. The forced segregation of population affected both black and white citizens. The separation of the people, propaganda and increasing violence in society produced stigma which was not easy to overcome. The apartheid regime built a wall between white and black population. The black citizens were humiliated by the government in which the white people lived under better conditions. The oppression mainly targeted the black community; those people were treated the worst.<sup>1</sup>

South African postmodern authors desired to describe the oppression of apartheid. The retelling of a traumatic story has a therapeutic effect on people, and this process transforms upsetting memories into a narrative. However, this truth which authors want to express is not suitable for a novel. Even though the author may be a direct witness of disturbing events, his novel will never be truly authentic. The authenticity always combines with fiction to be suitable for a novel. Thus, the authenticity of a novel cannot be absolute. Concerning the retelling of the past it is essential to mention the function of memory. The memory of a person works on the principle that this person delivers his story to the listener. The listener hears the story of the person and can relate to his suffering. There is a strong need to reconcile with the past, to close the door behind the past. However, this journey will be long and demanding, and South Africa must deal with the extreme oppression of the past and its economic and political issues.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Ewald Mengel and Michela Borzaga, introduction to *Trauma, Memory, and Narrative in the Contemporary South African Novel: Essays*. Eds. Ewald Mengel and Michela Borzaga (New York: Rodopi, 2012), xi.

<sup>2</sup> See Ewald Mengel and Michela Borzaga, eds, *Trauma, Memory, and Narrative in the Contemporary South African Novel: Essays* (New York: Rodopi, 2012), 144–46.

The narration should reveal the unknown crimes, traumas of the past. Literature gives the testimony of trauma which is firmly rooted in South African society. The testimony of actual events should help the whole nation to heal its wounds from the past. The reconstruction of the past crimes evokes flashbacks which help the public to deal with the past finally. Readers can feel the authenticity of the past events with the help of literature. All of them share the same past, and together they should confront the past of suffering and violence. However, still present is the injustice and unsolved crimes. Therefore, it is difficult to close the door behind the past, when there are still sensitive topics to discuss. People share their memories everybody can feel sorrow and connection with the past. Collective conscience creates an environment where everybody can relate to each other's experience. Memories of one become memories of all, as people collectively share a painful experience. Memories of apartheid are passed on from generation to generation. However, it is important to understand the history, for without understanding it the entire idea of sharing trauma falls apart.<sup>3</sup>

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established in 1996, to bring the separated nation together through forgiveness and reconciliation.<sup>4</sup> Archbishop Desmond Tutu in his speech on 16 December 1995 stated "every South African has to some extent or other been traumatised. We are a wounded people [...] we all stand in need of healing."<sup>5</sup> His speech was given at the opening of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission; nevertheless, the statement was slightly controversial concerning the South African past, where black and white people stand on the opposite sides. Therefore, black citizens could feel offended, or at least disappointed by this statement about unity.<sup>6</sup> During the apartheid regime the black population suffered the most; therefore, the degree of trauma vastly differs. Nevertheless, Tutu's statement ignores obvious historical evidence emerging from the past. His statement indicates reconciliation, unification of the nation, which unfortunately is not possible as many of the past crimes are not resolved. However, there is a valid aspect in his statement, and the South African nation, no matter how affected and traumatised, is still tied up

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<sup>3</sup> See Mengel and Borzaga, *Trauma, Memory, and Narrative in the Contemporary South African Novel: Essays*, 48–52.

<sup>4</sup> See *Ibid.*, 319.

<sup>5</sup> See Mengel and Borzaga, introduction, vii.

<sup>6</sup> See *Ibid.*

together. The South African population is sitting in the boat, regardless of confrontations or divergences. In the time of apartheid, the black and white citizens stand against each other, yet the collective trauma ties them together.

The thought of uniting the divided population proceeds from South African negotiations from the late 80s and early 90s, when the dialogue addressed unfairness and oppression of the apartheid. However, the perception of dominance and oppression of the white population completely changed. After 1994, the first democratic elections, the issue of white oppression or dominance was not debated anymore, discussed was rather the suffering of black and white people. Trauma, which affected both, unexpectedly brings them together even stronger, despite the well-known fact that they were on different sides and had different roles in society. What is significant here is trauma as such, because they both witnessed horrible events. Hurtful experience is part of their lives, their social status was undoubtedly different during apartheid, but the consequences of oppression are present on both sides.<sup>7</sup> Trauma emerging from the apartheid regime serves as a starting point for narration. By retelling the past through narration, the South African population can more easily settle with the trauma of the past. In this context, Archbishop Desmond Tutu claims that the truth should not be revealed to hunt down somebody, but to help people come to terms with the past.<sup>8</sup>

Benita Parry in her book *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (2004), criticises The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, also called TRC. She clarifies that the problem of the TRC lies in omitting the strategic topics of apartheid which are class, capitalism and matter of possession. The TRC ignores these significant issues and strictly addresses the individualistic subject of forgiveness and compassion.<sup>9</sup> Ignoring the fundamental parts of history helps more those who oppressed than those who were being oppressed. By establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, South Africa chose not to discuss or solve the crimes of the apartheid. The crimes which should be punished, or at least discussed by the public are being forgotten. Forgiveness does not resolve the crimes and injustice of colonisation and racism which happened in the past; the wrongdoings do not merely disappear by forgetting. Therefore, if South Africa cannot face its past, the shadow of apartheid cannot disappear. A different approach from that of the TRC was adopted in post-

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<sup>7</sup> See Mengel and Borzaga, introduction, vii–ix.

<sup>8</sup> See Mengel and Borzaga, *Trauma, Memory, and Narrative in the Contemporary South African Novel: Essays*, 48.

<sup>9</sup> See Mengel and Borzaga, introduction, ix.

war Germany.<sup>10</sup> In the course of the Nuremberg trials, many Nazis were imprisoned for lifetime or sentenced to death.<sup>11</sup> The Allies expressed the necessity to deal with the past as quickly as possible. Others, however, claimed that the past should be forgotten and never discussed again, so the nation can move on as quickly as possible. The idea of forgetting and reconciling with the Nazi regime is the reason that nowadays fascists dare to deny the existence of gas chambers. The urge to close the door behind the past supports people who want to deny the crimes of the past. When everybody forgets the crimes of the past, there is no moral lesson to be remembered by the public. Therefore, to reconcile with the past by forgetting its unfairness and cruelty is not always the appropriate way of how to deal with the oppression it brings. Rather than continually trying to forget, it is essential to address the past events and discuss them, and then face the consequences.<sup>12</sup>

## 1.2 Post-War America

In the 1950s, people tried to forget the traumatic past of the Second World War. A new era of American history expressed the desire to be positive, amicable and most importantly united. However, this concept of optimism and harmony did not resonate with the trauma of soldiers who with enormous difficulty tried to recover from the war. Many of them developed mental disorders while they suffered unimaginable anguish in the war. Hence, there was a demand for mental health centres which would be able to treat these patients accurately. Therefore, there were many complaints among the soldiers and public about the increase in mental problems. The Cold War brought patriotism together with constant worries about safety. People felt the urge to actively support their country against communism, which resulted in anti-communist behaviour.

The Holocaust demonstrated that there were no limits in the numbers of suffering people can cause each other. As the atomic bomb destroyed Hiroshima, there was another evidence that human cruelty indeed does not have any boundaries. People involved in these traumatic

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<sup>10</sup> See Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 183–184, <https://redblackwritings.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/parry-postcolonial-studies-materialist-critique.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Michael T. Kaufman, “William Denson Dies at 85; Helped in Convicting Nazis.” *New York Times*, December 16, 1998, accessed February 19, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/12/16/nyregion/william-denson-dies-at-85-helped-in-convicting-nazis.html>.

<sup>12</sup> See Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*, 183–184.

events of the second half of the twentieth century felt anxious, desperate and dreadful. These emotions were later transformed into novels covering the theme of trauma.<sup>13</sup>

After the Second World War ended, there was an urge to write in a new way, to spread knowledge about the horrific events of the war. The post-war society shared an opinion that a novel should portray the raw existence of human beings.<sup>14</sup> During this time a new character, that of the anti-hero was formed. An individual who is fighting against society, seeking the values of humanity which are abandoned or forgotten. An anti-hero is approaching his destiny which is usually tragic. This character appears in Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, in the form of Holden who rebels against society.<sup>15</sup>

Literature affected by World War II was vastly different from the literature of World War I. One of the significant differences was that the Second World War traumatised the entire population. Combatant or not everyone was exposed to the horrors of the war. Both sides of the conflict committed horrible crimes, so it was hard to blame each other. Everyone was to be blamed, collective guilt for the war crimes existed. Hence, the literature of the post-war period tended to be very critical towards America's position in the war conflict.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya and Ruzbeh Babae, "Salinger's Depiction of Trauma in The Catcher in the Rye," *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 4, no. 9 (2014): 1825–1826, accessed February 19, 2018, <http://www.academypublication.com/issues/past/tpls/vol04/09/09.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> See Morris Dickstein, "The Moment of the Novel and the Rise of Film Culture," *Raritan: A Quarterly Review* 33, no.1 (2013): 89, accessed February 19, 2018, <http://www.morrisdickstein.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Trilling-lecture.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> See Ihab Hassan, "The Character of Post-War Fiction in America." *The English Journal* 51, no. 1 (1962): 1–8, accessed February 19, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/810510>.

<sup>16</sup> See David Lundberg, "The American Literature of War: The Civil War, World War I, and World War II," *American Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1984): 385, accessed February 19, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2712739?sid=primo&origin=crossref&seq=1>.

## 2 INDIVIDUAL TRAUMA

### 2.1 *The Smell of Apples*

In the novel, *The Smell of Apples* by Mark Behr, the main character, Marnus Erasmus, is meant to be innocent. He has a close relationship with his father, and they do many activities together. The father has the prominent position of a general in the South African army. Marnus' best friend Frikkie is for some unknown reason scared of Marnus' father, but the reader does not know why until the end of the book. Marnus witnessed the rape of Frikkie by his father. Nevertheless, he never reveals the truth to his mother or sister but keeps this horrible secret to himself. At the end of a book, when his sister tries to confront him about the real state of things, he rejects the opportunity to reveal his secrets. This situation indicates the hypocrisy of the world in which Marnus and his family live. The honoured general with an orderly family can be in the end described as rapist. Marnus quickly loses the innocence which he as a child should maintain and is forced to face the horrifying reality. The loss of innocence is often used in South African society as a tool to stress the important message.<sup>17</sup>

The character of a child who witnesses some traumatic experience appears often in South African fiction. The child is seen as a source of light in the continent full of oppression. The contrast between the child and the corrupt and traumatised society is revealed. The child is not seen as immature but rather as someone bright, pure and truthful. The child's narration is an integral part of South African literature, and the child narrator provides straightforward testimony. The children are truthful, uncorrupted. They go strict to the point of what they want to deliver, and they are not able to hide the truth. However, the innocent narrator does not always perceive correctly what happens around him/her, and it is up to the reader to figure out the truth. In this context, it is interesting that society inclines to idealise childhood as a period of life when everything is pleasant and lovely. Nevertheless, based on the characters which South African fiction portrays it is not true.

As a publisher, Margaret Stead claimed in a *Guardian* review, that reconciliation of South Africa will be possible when white people will dare to confront their past. Themes of rape, paedophilia, murder appearing in literature point out the corruption of society. News delivers thousands of stories and horrific pictures of human suffering every day. The

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<sup>17</sup> See Mengel and Borzaga, *Trauma, Memory, and Narrative in the Contemporary South African Novel: Essays*, 338–341.

brutality and suffering are shown so often that people become apathetic towards this cruelty. That is the reason why South African writers often use the child narrator. Because the child should be protected, society tends to care about the children. The children are or should be innocent, protected from evil, and if they are not, it draws attention. Writers use the weak character of a child to highlight the importance of the message they want to deliver. Storytelling itself is one of the ways how South Africa reconciles with its tragic past. The child losing its innocence does not belittle the significance of this message, it instead strengthens it. By losing his/her innocence, the character emphasises an urgency of the message.<sup>18</sup>

## 2.2 *The Catcher in the Rye*

After the Second World War when society tries to overcome the traumatic experience of the war, Holden Caulfield battles with himself. Caught up in a conservative society tightened by rules he tries to figure out how to live.<sup>19</sup> Holden struggles with his own traumatic experience which is the loss of brother Allie. For him, it is as if living lost its purpose, as his brother is no longer here. He continually blames himself for Allie's death and shows signs of survivor's guilt. Holden is not able to process the loss of his beloved brother as his death comes too sudden to handle. Therefore, not able to deal with this sudden death, he starts to blame himself for the tragedy. After the death of his brother, Holden loses his interest in everything and living itself is suddenly painful. He continually asks himself why he should live when his brother is dead. He does not seem to understand his existence on this planet, besides he is continuously disgusted by the environment which surrounds him.<sup>20</sup>

America in the 1950s was deeply affected by the war. Society suffered an enormous loss and was trying to go back to regular life. Holden is supposed to accept these rules given by adults and become an adult himself. However, he does not want to give up his own beliefs to become someone he does not want to be. Holden does not want to be a pretentious, hypocritical individual who is preaching about the values which he does not obey. Holden

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<sup>18</sup> See Mengel and Borzaga, *Trauma, Memory, and Narrative in the Contemporary South African Novel: Essays*, 336–346.

<sup>19</sup> See Wan Yahya and Babae, "Salinger's Depiction of Trauma in *The Catcher in the Rye*," 1825.

<sup>20</sup> See Dale Jacquette, "Salinger's World of Adolescent Disillusion," *Philosophy and Literature* 39, no.1A (2015): 160–161, accessed October 18, 2017, <http://doi.org/10.1353/phl.2015.0031>.



rebels against the hypocrisy of society which he does not want to be part of. However, he still seeks somebody he can talk to, somebody who will finally listen to his story.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See Wan Yahya and Babae, "Salinger's Depiction of Trauma in The Catcher in the Rye," 1825–1827.

### 3 ANALYSIS: *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE*

#### 3.1 The Guardian of Innocent

In the beginning, Holden reveals that he is in the mental institution after he had a mental breakdown. He remarks that he does not want to talk about his problematic childhood or busy parents because his parents do not want him to mention these private matters. He quickly leaves the topic which indicates that he does not want to discuss their relationship anymore. It seems like Holden has a complicated relationship with his parents.<sup>22</sup> Even though he tries to sound respectful, he fails because he holds a grudge against his parents. His parents neglect him, and he makes it clear in his speech.<sup>23</sup> Holden mentions that he will talk about what happened to him last Christmas. He already told this story to his older brother D.B. who moved to Hollywood. Holden emphasises disagreement with his brother's decision to move, according to him, D.B. sold himself to Hollywood. He dislikes the fact that D.B. writes a movie scripts instead of books, that he wastes his talent to write some second-rate movie scripts.

Holden's story starts at Pencey Prep which he must leave because he failed his classes. He is not emotional or anxious about leaving the school because he expected this to happen due to his poor academic performance. Holden receives a letter from his history professor Mr Spencer who wants to see him before he leaves the school. There are very few people Holden respects, but Mr Spencer is one of them. Therefore, he decides to visit him at home.<sup>24</sup> Mr Spencer tells him that life is a game which should be played according to rules, therefore if he follows the rules he will succeed. However, success is only for those who are on the right side. Therefore, Holden does not believe that obedience of rules will bring him success because he knows that he is not on the right side. Mr Spencer asks Holden if he told his parents that he was excluded from school. Nevertheless, Holden does not want to disturb his parents since they are still mourning Allie. Mr Spencer wants to understand why Holden failed his classes. During the visit, Holden is forced to explain why he neglected his school tasks. However, it seems like he is not exactly sure why he did it. Mr Spencer shows him an

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<sup>22</sup> See J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 1.

<sup>23</sup> See Edwin Haviland Miller. "In Memoriam: Allie Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 15, no.1 (1982): 130–131, accessed February 19, 2018, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/24777753?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24777753?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).

<sup>24</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 1–4.

exam paper from history class. Holden wrote a short message at the bottom of the paper. In the message he apologised for his lack of knowledge and stated that he would understand if Mr Spencer failed him. Holden is mad at him for reading it aloud because he feels ashamed. The message indicates that he feels sorry for Mr Spencer who is genuinely concerned about him. Even though Holden realises that Mr Spencer cannot help him to solve his problems, he appreciates his concerns.<sup>25</sup>

When Mr Spencer asks him about his previous school, Holden admits that he voluntarily left Elkton Hills because it was full of pretentious people. He mentions headmaster Mr Haas who was arrogant and judged parents based on their financial status. Holden criticises the fact that Mr Haas pretended to be kind to everyone even though he was not. However, Holden is not honest with himself either when he hides his feelings deep inside of his mind and is not able to confront his parents about the school matters. Even though he frequently criticises people who are pretentious and arrogant, he does the same thing. Holden is not able to speak about the pressing matters of his life. Despite the fact that he suffers every day, he pretends to be all right. In the end, he is not disgusted by people, but rather by his inability to speak about his trauma. For him, it is easier to be quiet than tell his parents that he blames himself for Allie's death. It may seem like he is just a teenager who needs to rebel. However, his attitude has much more profound motives than just a simple need to rebel.<sup>26</sup> Mr Spencer does not know that Holden blames himself for the death of his younger brother. Therefore, he cannot understand why Holden is not able to concentrate on his studies. Mr Spencer does not understand that Holden needs his parents' love and care. Therefore, even though Mr Spencer offers help, Holden does not believe that he can help him with his issues. Holden is traumatised by the death of his younger brother Allie, and he blames himself for his death. He is not able to overcome Allie's death alone, but his parents are far away from his reach.<sup>27</sup>

When Holden comes back to the dorm at Pencey, he mentions he bought a red haunting red hat in New York. He puts the hat on his head and fools around saying he is blind and asking for a mother to guide him. Ackley the boy who lives next to Holden observes the situation and says he is crazy.<sup>28</sup> However, Ackley cannot understand that the red hat symbolises Allie's hair and blindness represents Holden's current state. Stradlater does not

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<sup>25</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 9–13.

<sup>26</sup> See *Ibid.*, 14–16

<sup>27</sup> See Miller, "In Memoriam: Allie Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*," 131.

<sup>28</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 18–23.

understand that Holden wants his mother to hold him, so he would not feel alone all the time.<sup>29</sup>

Holden's roommate Stradlater is busy, thus he asks him to write a composition. However, Holden says that if he will have the time he will write it. When Stradlater mentions that he has a date with Jane Gallagher it immediately attracts Holden's attention. Jane Gallagher is someone Holden knows very well. She used to live next to him and one summer they become quite close. Jane Gallagher had a problematic childhood because her mother divorced and married another man. The man her mother married was an alcoholic who did not care about Jane at all. As Holden felt sorry for Jane because she had a difficult life, he kept her company. By sympathising with Jane, he was able to create a bond. They spend their time talking to each other or playing checkers. Holden often thinks of Jane as she represents something good in his life. Even though he still suffers and blames himself, by the memory of her he can make himself feel a little bit better. As Stradlater is a well-known playboy, Holden feels anxious. He is worried that Stradlater will take advantage of Jane.<sup>30</sup>

The composition should be a description of something. Therefore, Holden decides to describe Allie's baseball mitt. Allie was left-handed, and he had the fielder's mitt covered with poems. The mitt represents an artefact which reminds Holden of his guilt. It reminds him that Allie was a good child, who did not deserve to die of leukaemia. While he describes Allie's baseball mitt, he reveals his trauma which he did not share with anybody. Through the composition, Holden reveals his traumatic past. He discloses that at the age of thirteen he was hospitalised because he broke the windows in the garage. Allie died that night when Holden decided to relieve his anger and broke the windows in the garage. While breaking the windows, he broke his hand. Nevertheless, Holden continued to break the windows as if the broken hand was not a real source of his pain. The attitude he demonstrated that night reflects his guilt and sorrow.<sup>31</sup> The broken windows of the garage signify how much pain Holden felt when Allie died.<sup>32</sup>

When Stradlater returns, Holden asks him what he did with Jane. Even though Stradlater does not want to answer he indicates that they had sex. Hearing this information, Holden explodes and attacks Stradlater. However, since the beginning of the fight, Holden is weaker,

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<sup>29</sup> See Miller, "In Memoriam: Allie Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*," 131.

<sup>30</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 29–36.

<sup>31</sup> See *Ibid.*, 40–41.

<sup>32</sup> See Miller, "In Memoriam: Allie Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*," 129.

and his hand is injured. Therefore Stradlater takes the lead in the fight and knocks him out. As Holden feels angry and jealous, he continually insults Stradlater until he punches him in the face. While Holden lies knocked out on the floor, he feels betrayed.<sup>33</sup> He trusted and cherished Jane so much that he told her about Allie, he even showed her his baseball mitt. Therefore, he shared his most profound, most aching concerns with her just to be betrayed.<sup>34</sup> After this incident, Holden decides to leave for New York. As he wants to feel protected he takes his hunting hat which reminds him of Allie.<sup>35</sup> Holden leaves the dormitory at night when everybody is asleep therefore he decides to wake everyone up by yelling “Sleep tight, ya morons!”<sup>36</sup> Even though Holden feels sad about leaving the school, he makes sure people will hate him.<sup>37</sup>

When he gets off at Penn Station, he feels unbearably alone.<sup>38</sup> He wants to talk with somebody to overcome his loneliness. All the blame and sadness he feels needs to be revealed to someone. As the negative thoughts continuously oppress Holden’s mind, he wants to share them with someone. However, he is anxious that if he reveals his honest thoughts everything will fall apart. He is worried that his somehow functioning life would be destroyed forever. If he reveals his true feelings, people will pity him, however, that is not what he wants. What Holden desires is to be punished for Allie’s death to receive a final punishment for his crimes. Therefore, even if he wants to share his trauma with others, he cannot because he would have to reveal the truth.<sup>39</sup> As he wants to have a shallow conversation with someone, he wonders if he should call Jane’s mother to ask about Jane, but it is late. Holden also wants to call Sally, but her mother knows Holden’s mother, therefore, she could tell her he is in New York.<sup>40</sup>

When Holden arrives at Edmont Hotel he feels horny. Thus, he decides to call a prostitute. However, the prostitute is more concerned about the guy who gave Holden her number. Therefore, Holden wants to call Phoebe, but he is afraid that his mother would pick up the phone and recognise him. As he is thinking about Phoebe, he starts to describe his

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<sup>33</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 44–48.

<sup>34</sup> See *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>35</sup> See Miller, “In Memoriam: Allie Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*,” 132.

<sup>36</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 56.

<sup>37</sup> See Miller, “In Memoriam: Allie Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*,” 132.

<sup>38</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 64.

<sup>39</sup> See Wan Yahya and Babae, “Salinger’s Depiction of Trauma in *The Catcher in the Rye*,” 1827–1828.

<sup>40</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 64.

siblings. He praises D.B. and Phoebe, but when he talks about himself, he says he is not intelligent like them. This comment shows that he perceives himself as a failure in comparison to them. He intentionally puts himself down in front of others. While Holden describes Phoebe, he mentions that she has kind of red hair just like Allie. This comment reflects the memory of the dead brother which never leaves his mind.<sup>41</sup> As Holden wants to distract himself, he visits a nightclub called Ernie's, where D.B. used to go before he started, as Holden emphasises, sell himself in Hollywood.<sup>42</sup> He meets D.B.'s former girlfriend; she wants to drink with him. However, Holden rejects her. He can see that she tries to be kind to him just to get some information about D.B.<sup>43</sup>

When Holden returns from the bar, the elevator guy named Maurice offers him a prostitute. Holden does not think about it too much and immediately agrees. However, when she appears, Holden realises that he is not ready to lose his virginity with someone he never met before. Her name is Sunny, and she seems to be the same age as Holden. Nevertheless, as Holden mentions, everything about her is depressing. Rather than feeling sexy, he thinks about her miserable life. Therefore, a desire he felt a while ago is gone. As he feels depressed, he is not in the mood to lose his virginity.<sup>44</sup> He asks Sunny if they could talk because he is not feeling well. His attitude shows that he is both depressed and innocent. He may pretend that he is all grown up, but the truth is that he is scared. His innocence and trauma do not allow him to do things like sleeping with a prostitute. As the trauma makes him feel depressed, he is not able to enjoy anything. Rather than satisfy his sexual desires, he wants to talk. However, Sunny does not want to talk, and she sits on Holden's lap. When she offers him sex, he feels uncomfortable and asks her to leave. Sunny is mad at Holden, so she asks him to pay her ten dollars instead of five. However, he pays her just five dollars because that was the original price.

When Sunny finally leaves Holden is left alone with his depression. He sits alone in his room thinking about Allie. Suddenly, he starts talking to him. He mentions that he does it when he feels depressed. He evokes the incident with Allie that happened years ago. It happened in Maine where he used to live. Holden had a friend, Bobby Fallon, with whom he used to play. One day Allie wanted to play with them. However, Holden refused to play

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<sup>41</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 66–73.

<sup>42</sup> See *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>43</sup> See *Ibid.*, 93–95.

<sup>44</sup> See *Ibid.*, 99–105.

with him because he was still a child. While thinking about this incident, Holden pictures how it would look like if he would not refuse him. Holden keeps talking to Allie, telling him to play with him. Even though the incident happened once, he feels guilty. Once he refused to play with Allie, and since then it haunts him. He keeps evoking these memories as if it would bring Allie back to life as if it would change anything. Allie's sudden and shocking death affected Holden's sensitive mind and caused him enormous suffering. When he feels miserable, he thinks about Allie and talks to him. Therefore, it is obvious how deeply Holden misses his younger brother. He feels personally responsible for Allie's death even though it was not his fault.<sup>45</sup>

When Maurice and Sunny return Holden is terrified. Even though he does not want them to enter his room, they manage to get inside. When Maurice gets inside of Holden's room, he demands another five dollars for service not provided.<sup>46</sup> In this situation, Holden proves his innocence as he is scared to death by Maurice. Sunny notices Holden's wallet and takes the money. Holden starts to insult Maurice as he feels betrayed, he is not able to deal with the situation otherwise than with crying. Since they got the money, Sunny rushes to leave, but Maurice does not. He wants to fight. When Holden insults him again, Maurice punches him in the stomach. Holden suddenly feels like he is drowning because he can hardly breathe. While he is stumbling towards the bathroom, he starts to pretend that he has a bullet in his stomach. He pictures how he would go downstairs and kill Maurice with six shots. Then he would call Jane, and she would bandage his wound. By insulting Maurice Holden shows that he has the desire to put himself in danger. He provokes the opponent and drives himself to the edge just to punish himself for Allie's death. Holden does not know how to escape from this endless circle of guilt which oppresses his mind.<sup>47</sup>

As was demonstrated before, innocence plays a significant role in Holden's life. Therefore, every time Holden faces the situation involving sex he is aware of his inexperience. When Sunny offers him sex, he refuses her due to his inexperience.<sup>48</sup> He calls himself "the biggest sex maniac."<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, it is not true. Innocence is an essential part of Holden's character as it holds him back from hazardous situations. There is no reason

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<sup>45</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 103–107.

<sup>46</sup> See Miller, "In Memoriam: Allie Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*," 133.

<sup>47</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 109–113.

<sup>48</sup> See Miller, "In Memoriam: Allie Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*," 133.

<sup>49</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 67.

why he should try to overcome his innocence as it is something natural for his age. Innocence may save him from harmful situations which could make his trauma even worse. It was demonstrated in the situation when Holden refused to sleep with Sunny because he was not prepared for sex. He does not want sex but love. Therefore, he would do something unnecessary and potentially traumatic. However, because he is still innocent, he did not do it. He was not ready for sex, and he did not do it. Thus, his innocence saved him from himself.<sup>50</sup>

To keep himself busy Holden decides to call Sally Hayes a girl he has known for years and sets up a meeting with her. Holden mentions that his mother's health has not been good since Allie died. Even though he realises how much she suffered when Allie died, he is angry because she refuses to give him the attention he needs. He hides his feelings not to disturb his parents who should be there for him.<sup>51</sup> Despite the fact that Holden usually acts terribly; sometimes he can be very compassionate. He can sympathise with problems of other people. He felt sorry for Sunny when she visited him in the hotel.<sup>52</sup> Moreover he showed his empathy when he hid his expensive suitcases, so his roommate Dick would not feel worthless.<sup>53</sup>

Holden has some free time, so he goes to Grand Central Station.<sup>54</sup> The nuns attract Holden's attention because they remind him of a mother figure. They are kind and warm-hearted precisely as a mother should be.<sup>55</sup> The two nuns are teachers therefore they start to discuss with Holden *Romeo and Juliet*. He reveals that he likes Mercutio and mentions that it is a pity that such a smart character had to die. The character of Mercutio represents Allie in Holden's mind because Allie was an intelligent and ambitious child who tragically died. Holden feels sorry that Allie had to die so young, because he could be a great person in the future, however he did not get a chance to prove it. Holden also blames Romeo for Mercutio's death. When he blames Romeo for Mercutio's death it is the same situation as when he is blaming himself for Allie's death. His inner guilt and pain reflect in the discussion. Holden states that he hates when somebody kind and entertaining dies by

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<sup>50</sup> See Miller, "In Memoriam: Allie Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*," 133.

<sup>51</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 114–116.

<sup>52</sup> See *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>53</sup> See *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>54</sup> See *Ibid.*, 115–116.

<sup>55</sup> See Miller, "In Memoriam: Allie Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*," 134.



someone else's fault. By this Holden refers to his brother Allie whom he could not save from death.

During his wandering around New York Holden again evokes the memory of Jane. He calls her, but her mother picks up the phone, therefore, he fails to hear from her. The time he spent with her seems to have immense influence on his life as he recalls their happy moments quite often during his travelling.<sup>56</sup> Since he has some time until he meets with Sally, Holden goes to the Museum of Natural History where he used to go as a little kid. Holden remembers how he would go there nearly every Saturday with his teacher Miss Aigletinger and other kids from his class. They would look at Indians and the pottery they made. He remembers how happy he was at that time when he could admire animals, Indians in the museum. The museum stayed the same, Indians and Eskimo which he saw when he was a child are where they were before. Everything in the museum stayed the same except him. Holden mentions that every time someone visits the museum he/she will be somehow different. It can be clothes or partner what will change, but change is determined. Holden also changed, last time when he visited the museum Allie was alive, and he was not tormenting himself with the guilt, last time when he visited he was happy. He suddenly thinks of Phoebe and how every time she visits the museum something about her will change. She will eventually change, and Holden is not happy about that. Some things should stay the same. If people and memories stayed the same, everything would not have to be so cruelly changed or forgotten. Holden's family would not have lost Allie if everything just stayed as it was. However, he realises that change is inevitable, and everyone and everything will eventually change.<sup>57</sup>

Holden meets with Sally, and they visit ice rink at Radio City. After skating, Holden all of a sudden asks Sally if she is sometimes scared that everything will end up badly if she does not do something about it. The reality is unbearable, and Holden is stuck in one place not sure what to do to change it. He feels overwhelmed with school and daily life, however, he is not exactly sure how to escape from this oppressing reality. Holden believes that he must act before it is too late to change the future. Furiously he talks about New York and everything that surrounds him, people and responsibilities. Everything is rotten and disgusting, people are pretentious, and nobody is real, they all play the roles which society

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<sup>56</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 120–125.

<sup>57</sup> See *Ibid.*, 129–132.

gave them. Society is creating future generations of these phonies and Holden desperately does not want to become one of them.<sup>58</sup>

Holden expresses a desire to leave immediately and suggests Sally that they could run away together. He suggests that they could go to Massachusetts and Vermont and when they would spend their money he would find a job. Sally represents the rational point of view as she points out that they are both children who would eventually run out of money. However, Holden is too frustrated with his current reality to care about unrealistic aspects of his plan. He wants to get out of New York far away from everyone who could bother him in any way. He realises that his current behaviour and state are not healthy, but he is not able to find a solution to his problems, which makes him even angrier. The trauma caused by his brother's death is tormenting him every day. Holden lives with the guilt that torments his mind. With endless rebelling, he tries to escape from his sadness and guilt. However, the guilt is just getting worse as he feels the dissatisfaction of his parents. Nevertheless, the more he rebels, the more significant a disappointment he is for his parents. His behaviour creates a vicious circle from which is Holden unable to escape. Sally consoles Holden that there will be plenty of opportunities for them to travel after they finish college and get married. Nevertheless, this statement infuriates Holden even more. He mentions that there will be no opportunity like that because they would be stuck in the stereotype like other people. Perhaps because he is scared to follow the expectations of others Holden realises that he should go to college and get married and do all these things which are expected of him, yet he does not want to. He is scared and angry at himself for not knowing what exactly he wants from life. The only thing he is sure of is that he wants to escape from his problems, even though it is not the solution to his problems. As Sally has no intention to run away with Holden, she refuses to follow his reckless plan. Her refusal makes Holden angry, and he pours all his anger and frustration on her. Blinded by his problems and self-pity Holden cannot see that Sally's rationality saves him from another irresponsible act. Incapable of overcoming rejection Holden tells Sally that she annoys him. His statement is the last drop for her, and she urgently leaves. Holden later mentions that he went too far and must be crazy. Considering this comment, it can be assumed that he is aware of his irresponsible behaviour.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 139–141.

<sup>59</sup> See *Ibid.*, 140–145.

To distract himself a little, Holden recalls how his family visited Radio City every year. With this happy memory, he wants to lift up his gloomy mood.<sup>60</sup> When Holden goes to meet Carl Luce, he briefly thinks about the war, his older brother D.B., who served in the army. D.B. for four years hated the war. When he was a soldier, he used to not talk with anybody and just lay on the bed. D.B.'s trauma is represented by his silence as he was not able to share his experience with his family. Holden briefly mentions Allie who asked D.B. if the war experience was not an inspiration for him. D.B. hated the war, but Holden sees the war as the opportunity to die. He remarks that he would volunteer to sit on the atomic bomb if he would have the opportunity which reflects his suicidal thoughts.<sup>61</sup>

Carl Luce was Holden's former adviser at Whooton, although all he talked about was sex. They meet at the Wicker Bar, the old bar where Holden used to come to. Even though Holden knows Carl from school they are not very close, therefore Holden tries to lift the mood by asking Carl about his sex life. Holden finds out that Carl is no longer with the girl he used to date when they were in Whooton. When Carl briefly talks about her he mentions that now she is probably a whore. The offensive comment enrages Holden, and he tells Carl that he should not talk like this about the girl he has once been with. He exhibits his considerate character as he cannot let the offensive comment slide. Carl mentions that he met a new woman a few months ago and he wants to go discover the east with her. Holden's innocence can be observed as he asks Carl how it is possible to sleep with someone he barely knows. Holden cannot understand why he would sleep with someone whom he does not know that well. Thus, it can be assumed that Holden thinks that trust is an essential part of the sexual relationship as he does not receive it from his family. During their talk, Carl brings out the topic of psychoanalysis as something that he would recommend to Holden. Carl's father is a psychoanalyst, so he seems to know a lot about the topic. What is important here is the fact is that Holden starts to think about Carl's suggestion to visit a psychoanalyst. He even asks Carl what psychoanalysis is about. Therefore, it seems that Holden wants to find a way how to deal with his trauma. Even though he is just thinking about the suggestion, it is still a signal that he wants to solve his issues. Holden demonstrates attempts to overcome his trauma.<sup>62</sup> After Carl leaves, Holden gets drunk, and pretends that he has a bullet in his

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<sup>60</sup> See Miller, "In Memoriam: Allie Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*," 134.

<sup>61</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 151–152.

<sup>62</sup> See *Ibid.*, 154–160.

stomach that he is slowly dying, and nobody is aware of that. Holden seems to enjoy the idea of dying because death may release him from his pain. He again thinks about calling Jane, but in the end, he dials Sally just to insult her again. When Holden is preparing to leave the bar, he suddenly starts crying as he cannot take his loneliness anymore. As he is drunk and tired, his true feelings are exposed, and he is not able to suppress them.<sup>63</sup>

When Holden wanders to the park, he suddenly drops the record which he bought for Phoebe. His sadness is visible as he mentions that he nearly cried because he destroyed something he should treasure for her. Holden sits on the bench, worried that he could get pneumonia and die. When he pictures his death, he recalls Allie's funeral. The whole family gathered to say goodbye to Allie, but Holden was in the hospital after he hurt his hand.<sup>64</sup> Because of his absence, he was not able to say goodbye to Allie. Due to his absence at the funeral he did not have a chance to complete his mourning.<sup>65</sup>

Holden feels sorry for his parents who still mourn Allie. He elaborates the idea of death with the declaration that if somebody dies, it does not matter that he had a fancy funeral as he is already dead. When Holden talks about his parents visiting Allie's grave, he emphasises how he dislikes the fact that they come back home but Allie will stay here forever. Holden thinks that nobody can truly understand his pain since nobody knew Allie that well. Suffering from guilt he is finally able to name the events which triggered his trauma. Holden's desire to live indicates his reference about Phoebe who would deeply miss him if he would die of pneumonia. Phoebe is the reason why Holden is trying to move on and solve his problems. She is someone who loves him and depends on him and his presence. Holden cannot leave her suddenly since he knows how it feels like to be left alone. He cannot let that happen to Phoebe. Therefore, he wants to visit her even if it is the last time they see each other.<sup>66</sup>

Later when Holden sobers up, he heads off home to visit Phoebe. Since his parents do not know that he is in New York, he has to be careful. He decides to sneak up into their apartment, so parents would not notice him. His attempt is successful as he enters D.B.'s room which Phoebe uses. He suddenly does not feel like dying anymore, he feels good. After Holden briefly observes the room he decides to wake her up. Phoebe tells him that their parents are at a party and would not be back for a while. This information takes the tension

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<sup>63</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 161–165.

<sup>64</sup> See *Ibid.*, 166–167.

<sup>65</sup> See Miller, "In Memoriam: Allie Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*," 130.

<sup>66</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 167–168.

from Holden's body, and he starts chatting with Phoebe. He tells her that he broke the record which he bought for her. Although the record is broken Phoebe tells him to give her the pieces so that she can save them. Her reaction proves how dearly she treasures Holden's existence as she is happy even with the broken pieces of record. Therefore, she is very mature for her age; sometimes it even seems like she is more mature than Holden. Since Phoebe knows Holden well she quickly realises that the reason for his sudden presence in New York is exclusion from school. As she is mad at Holden, she tells him that their father will kill him since it is not the first time. He argues that their father will not punish him since he plans to go to a ranch in Colorado. Holden's attitude demonstrates how crucial Phoebe's favour is for him as he tries to persuade her to talk to him. Phoebe points out that Holden cannot even ride a horse. Therefore, it is highly unrealistic for him to work on the ranch.<sup>67</sup> She exposes the foolishness of his plan as Sally did before.<sup>68</sup> Phoebe is disappointed and asks Holden why he failed his subjects. Her question makes him feel depressed since he can see that she is disappointed. He tells her that he has had enough of questions why he did it. However, he tries to justify himself by mentioning that the school was full of phonies and he was sick of that. Holden tries to explain why he did it since he knows that she is listening to him. Holden is sure that what he reveals will not be ignored because Phoebe always listens to his worries. Holden often indicates that people never listen, and they cannot be trusted but Phoebe is different, therefore he reveals her his inner struggles.<sup>69</sup> Phoebe is someone whom Holden needs to support him through his life and struggles.<sup>70</sup> Even though he mostly criticizes the schools he mentions that there were also good people like Mr Spencer and his wife. While Holden lists the things that bothered him at school Phoebe points out that he does not like anything. She indicates that Holden is so depressed that he is not able to enjoy what is happening in his life. Trauma oppresses his mind and he cannot enjoy a single thing since he always blames himself.

Holden is caught off guard since he does not expect her to be this honest. However, he is finally able to hear the truth from someone who cares about him and is concerned about his future. Even though he knows that Phoebe is right, he tries to deny the fact by telling her that there are undoubtedly things he likes. While he is denying the fact that he hates

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<sup>67</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 168–179.

<sup>68</sup> See *Ibid.*, 143–144.

<sup>69</sup> See *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>70</sup> See Jacquette, "Salinger's World of Adolescent Disillusion," 158.

everything, Phoebe asks him to name one thing he likes. When he tries to remember what he likes, he thinks of James Castle. James was a boy who also attended Elkton Hills with Holden. James once said that Phil Stabile is arrogant. Therefore, Stabile's friends bullied him to take his word back. Holden indicates that they did horrible things to him. However, rather than take his word back James committed suicide. With this evoked memory Holden reveals another trauma he experienced. He recalls that James borrowed a sweater from him, Holden remembers it since James wore that sweater when he died. He saw James lie in the puddle of blood. However, the bullies who forced him to commit suicide were not punished. Holden once again felt wronged by society as he saw them unpunished. They could continue to live, but James was dead. A society which should punish the bad ones failed to make justice, a society of which Holden should be part of failed him. He does not want to be part of this corrupt society where nobody is punished, and everyone pretends to care. The cause of his rebelling is a desire to punish himself for Allie's death and his wish not to be part of this society. By rebelling, he avoids school. Therefore, he is not a proper part of society; he does not fit in. He saw too much injustice, and he was abandoned by too many people he loved. Allie, his parents, D.B., Sally, Jane: they all left him alone but the only one who never left was Phoebe.<sup>71</sup>

After deep thinking, Holden tells Phoebe that he likes Allie. However, Phoebe argues that Allie is dead. Her comment angers Holden, and he states that it does not matter if a person is dead or not since he cannot be forgotten. He says that it is not possible to stop liking someone just because he is dead. Holden comments that he likes to spend time with Phoebe. However, she forces him to name at least one real thing he likes. Even though Phoebe argues with Holden, he appreciates that she is listening to him. If at least one person is listening to him, there is hope for him.<sup>72</sup> The thing he likes eventually comes into his mind as he misinterprets the verse of a poem by Robert Burns "If a body catch a body comin' through the rye."<sup>73</sup> Holden tells Phoebe that he pictures little children in the rye field who are coming to the cliff and he is the only one who can save them, he is the catcher in the rye. Even though he realizes his idea is crazy this is the only thing he would really like to do.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 181–183

<sup>72</sup> See *Ibid.*, 184–185.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>74</sup> See *Ibid.*

His idea is to be the saviour of the children who are mistreated by the adults just like the little boy he saw on the street.<sup>75</sup> He wants to protect the children and their innocence.<sup>76</sup>

Holden decides to spend the night with Mr Antolini, his former teacher from Pencey. Mr Antolini is one of the few people Holden truly respects since he saw him to carry the dead body of James away from a staring crowd. Before he leaves, Phoebe gives him some money, her kindness brings Holden to tears, however, he has to go since Mr Antolini is waiting for him. Holden mentions that Mr and Mrs Antolini are big fans of D.B.'s stories. Mr Antolini even called D.B. before he went to Hollywood and persuaded him not to come. When Holden arrives, he is welcomed by Mr Antolini and his wife.<sup>77</sup> Antolini as Phoebe did before also tries to find out the reason why Holden lacks the motivation to study but Holden does not give him any useful feedback.<sup>78</sup> Mr Antolini tells Holden that he met with his father who is deeply concerned about his future. Holden gets a warning that he is aiming for a big fall. Mr Antolini tells Holden that he may end up as a bitter person who hates everything and everyone. However, Holden argues that it is not true because even though he was fed up with his roommates Stradlater and Ackley at Pencey when he did not see them for a while, he started to miss them. Therefore, even though they were pretentious and selfish, they were still important in his life. Mr Antolini emphasises that Holden has too much potential to lose this battle and give up on his future. Therefore, he will have to soon find out what he wants. The future may be good if he is prepared to fight for it. Since Mr Antolini wants to convince Holden to deal with his problems and to pursue his future, he is honest with him. He tells Holden that eventually he will have to enrol in another school and study. They finish the talk and Holden goes to sleep, but when he wakes up, he finds Mr Antolini sitting on the floor next to him patting his head. Holden interprets Antolini's behaviour as sexual harassment and runs away.<sup>79</sup>

However, later he wonders if he did not misinterpret the whole situation and starts to regret that he left. He feels terrible since it was Mr Antolini who offered him a place to stay and carried James Castle's body away. Holden spends the night at Grand Central station sleeping on the bench. When Holden walks down Fifth Avenue, he suddenly starts to feel

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<sup>75</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 125.

<sup>76</sup> See J. P. Steed, *The Catcher in the Rye: New Essays* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 25.

<sup>77</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 188–196.

<sup>78</sup> See Miller, "In Memoriam: Allie Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*," 137.

<sup>79</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 200–208.

like if he if should never reach the other side of the street. He feels like he should disappear. Scared to death Holden starts begging Allie to save him not to let him disappear. Whenever he safely reaches the end of the block, he pleads Allie to not let him disappear. When he finally reaches the other side of the street, he is thankful to Allie. Shaken by the incident, he finally decides to leave.<sup>80</sup> However, this time he will go to the west, not to Massachusetts or Vermont which are in the same direction as Maine where Allie died. His choice indicates that he is finally prepared to remove the burden of guilt. He wants to leave his past and pursue his future in the west where everything is sunny, and people do not know him. Prepared to be free again Holden wants to start a new chapter of his life.<sup>81</sup>

Before he leaves, he goes to Phoebe's school to return her Christmas money. However, when he enters the school, he spots 'fuck you' written on the wall which makes him angry. He is angry that when innocent children like Phoebe will see that their purity will be lost. The innocence of others must be sacrificed just because some naughty child thought the sign was funny. Holden writes Phoebe a note that they should meet up in the museum of art so that he can say goodbye. He leaves the note at Principal's office and decides to go to the museum. In the museum he meets two children who ask him where mummies are. Holden leads them to the tomb where he tells them about Egyptians and their mummification procedures. The children get scared and leave, and Holden stays alone in the tomb close to death which is always too present in his life. Suddenly he sees another 'fuck you' written on the wall. As he sees the sign, he points out that he will never be at peace even when he dies, on his tomb will be written 'fuck you'. Then he faints, however he immediately recovers. Even though, it is obvious he is mentally and physically exhausted.<sup>82</sup>

When Phoebe comes to the museum with her bag, Holden asks her why she brought it, and she tells him that she is coming with him. Holden is overwhelmed by her sudden confession and nearly passes out. Phoebe proves him once again that he is an essential person for her and she cannot let him go. Phoebe starts to cry when Holden refuses her, so he starts to give her logical reasons why she cannot go, and for the first time in his life, he is acting like an adult. Instead of being reckless like many times before Holden takes responsibility for his younger sister almost like a parent would. He is not an irresponsible teenager

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<sup>80</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 209–213.

<sup>81</sup> See Miller, "In Memoriam: Allie Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*," 138.

<sup>82</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 214–220.



anymore, but he becomes a responsible person who does not need pity from others. Holden tries to cheer her up, so he takes her to the Zoo. Later Phoebe mentions that she thought carousels were closed during winter. Therefore, Holden takes her to ride on a carousel. However, Phoebe wants to know that Holden will not go away. Thus, he promises her he will go home. When he watches Phoebe riding the carousel, he suddenly feels so happy just looking at her.<sup>83</sup>

Holden's story finishes in the mental institution. He talks about school and how he does not know what will happen in the future. D.B. who lives nearby is visiting him. Holden says that D.B. asked him about all these things which he just talked about. Holden mentions that he regrets he told his story to so many people. Because now he misses everybody, even Stradlater and Ackley, who were always too arrogant and selfish for him. There is no grudge in his speech anymore as he talks about them. By telling his story, he is able to finish his mourning over Allie and let the guilt go. Holden finally accepts that Allie is dead and now he can finally be free.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> See Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 221–229.

<sup>84</sup> See *Ibid.*, 230.

## 4 ANALYSIS: *THE SMELL OF APPLES*

### 4.1 The Father's Beloved Son

At the beginning Marnus mentions that, since Grade one, his best friend is Frikkie Delport. They are always together. However, once they were separated, when Frikkie was shifted to the B-class because his grades fell. Other people used to say that Frikkie is a disobedient child because he would go home during breaks and he used to bully other children at school. Despite the fact that Frikkie has a bad reputation they become the best friends during the second term of the grade one. Marnus mentions that they got to know each other because of his big ears. Frikkie used to pick someone as a victim and give him unwanted attention. A lot of children suffered because of him, even those who were older because Frikkie was so strong. Marnus remembers that one day he and other children were spinning their tops and Frikkie came to see them. As Frikkie watched others, he decided to try it too. However, he was not able to spin his top. Therefore, he would say that spinning of the tops was dumb. When Frikkie was struggling with the top, he noticed that Marnus is observing him from the distance. He shouted at Marnus asking him what he was looking at and he started to make fun of Marnus' ears saying he looks like Jumbo. Marnus instead of answering to his teasing helped him to spin the top. He explained Frikkie how he should hold his top, so he would spin. Since that time, they knew each other, and Frikkie did not tease him again.<sup>85</sup>

The next year Frikkie comes back to Two A, and they spent all of their free time together. Marnus mentions that they wander on the streets even though they should be watched by Gloria who is a maid of Frikkie's family. She can speak Afrikaans without an accent. However, his mother claims that Gloria does it because she pretends to be white. Marnus says that at school they started to do fractions, but Frikkie is struggling with them. Even though Marnus tries to explain the fractions to Frikkie, he is not very successful. He feels sorry for Frikkie because Miss Engelbrecht who teaches them fractions will scold him. Therefore, Frikkie asks him if he can copy his homework. As Marnus is exhausted from the endless explaining, he agrees. However, Miss Engelbrecht finds out that they both have the same mistakes in their homework. Marnus saves the situation, saying that they have the same mistakes because he explained fractions to Frikkie. Even though he saved himself from punishment, he feels guilty because he lied.

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<sup>85</sup> See Mark Behr, *The Smell of Apples* (London: Abacus, 1996), 1–4.

Marnus mentions that once they went to the National Museum to see uniforms and dinosaurs. When he saw the picture of a whaling station, he remembered Jan Bandjies who told him stories about whales. When he asked his mother if he could take Jan to the museum, she was not sure whatever the Coloureds are allowed to go to the museum.<sup>86</sup> From her comment is obvious how divided South Africa during apartheid was, as the black people were prohibited to go to the public places like museums. Therefore, racism was part of their daily lives.<sup>87</sup>

The memories of an adult Marnus show how he is barely surviving the war. Southern Angola becomes the place of misery. He mentions that the messages from the South African border were contradictory and that they were ordered to prepare for the battle of Africa. Marnus could see fear and enthusiasm in the eyes of other soldiers. After weeks of waiting they can finally move. To be in the war they make a choice between life and death. As they obviously chose to die they are not sure what is ahead of them, they are completely dependent on the orders from above.

Marnus says that his father thinks that president Nixon will resign until Christmas and Americans will lose the war in Vietnam. The father comments that Americans lecture others how to lead the country, but their president is awful. As he listens to his father's comments, it is evident that Marnus is strongly influenced as he also thinks that South Africa is hated by everybody. He believes the father's biased views of America. As the father's words influence him, he also feels the hate towards other nations who could possibly endanger South Africa. Everything what is wrong is happening because the world hates South Africa.<sup>88</sup> Marnus' sister Ilse is six years older. She goes to Standard Ten. She received a Golden diploma for singing and piano playing, and she also got a scholarship from the Dutch Foundation to study in Holland. Marnus mentions that because she is so great at everything she treats him as a child because he is in primary school. It makes him mad that she is acting like an adult even though she is not. He is proud because his father became the youngest major-general of South Africa. Therefore, his parents are preparing for father's promotional dinner. When he watches his father to shave he wishes to be older, so he could do it too.

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<sup>86</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 4–9.

<sup>87</sup> See Mengel and Borzaga, introduction, xi.

<sup>88</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 11–13.

They are both in the bathroom, and Marnus mentions that they often take a shower together. By this statement, he indicates that they have a very close relationship.<sup>89</sup>

Marnus lies on the ground and listens to the radio. However, all he can hear are grains rubbing against the metal. He remarks that they are waiting for food and the command to move. Soon they could send food and mail. As he mentions mail, he remembers the last letter from his mother which he has in his pocket. He is waiting for death, unsure when it will happen, with the letter from his beloved mother, the death which will rescue him from this misery.

The father of Marnus invites a visitor from South America. However, they are not allowed to talk about him and his presence in their house. Father tells them to call him Mr Smith. If anyone asks they should say that Mr Smith came from New York for business. His father emphasises that it should stay secret that Mr Smith will visit them. Marnus' mother mentions that their garden is not looking nice. It is because nobody takes care of the garden since Chrisjan left. Chrisjan worked here since the times when his Oupa was still alive. When Chrisjan left Marnus could not find a fishing tackle. His mother assumed that it was Chrisjan who took the fishing tackle. She said that the Coloureds could not be trusted. Even though someone will give them a job, they will eventually betray them. From his mother's comments, it can be assumed that she has racist beliefs as she automatically assumes that it was a black person who stole the fishing tackle. When she claims that the black people cannot be trusted, that they are all corrupted it is obvious that she perceives the whites as a superior race in comparison to the black population. As Marnus interprets his mother statements, he is also being influenced by her opinions.<sup>90</sup>

Marnus says that there used to be one spacious room, but father separated it into two rooms because his mother wanted a guest room. Marnus' room is up-stairs, and the guest room is downstairs. The father separated it after Ouma died. Oupa built the house himself when they came from the Union. They came from Tanganyika after the war started. His Oupa sold his property in East Africa. When the war came, they left Dar es Salaam for Kenya and then they sailed from Mombasa to Cape Town. His Oupa was wise therefore he sold all his land before they left. But not everybody was that lucky because his uncle lost everything. The black people took over the country and changed its name to Tanzania. Oupa had money

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<sup>89</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 13–15.

<sup>90</sup> See *Ibid.*, 18–20.

from his sold property. He and Ouma also had gold which they prospected. Ouma could not have more children after Marnus' father was born. It was due to the difficult birth of his father. His father was already born when they came to Cape Town and Oupa bought land in St James. He and the father built the house with the help of the Coloureds. When his father was going to Van Riebeeck school, Doreen started to work for their family. In the beginning, Ouma did not like Doreen because she always had male servants. However, she got used to Doreen and accepted her. When Marnus was four years old, his Oupa drowned. Even though his father and uncle Samuel searched for Oupa, they never found him. Therefore, the funeral was not held as people believed Oupa is still alive.<sup>91</sup>

After Oupa died, Marnus' family moved to Grabouw to live with Ouma. Ouma always complained about her back pain, so his mother took her to the hospital. In the hospital, the X-ray found out that she had scissors inside her stomach. Marnus' father was mad nevertheless he could not go back to Tanzania where he was born to find the people who did it to her. Tanzania was under the black government which would not care about it. Marnus' Ouma went to the operation, but she died. He assumes that she died because she did not want to live without Oupa anymore. She had a big funeral, and everyone from East Africa came because she was an important member of the East African community.<sup>92</sup>

As Marnus' war memories appear again, it is revealed that nothing happens, and they have to wait. He says that he started to notice that the attitude of other soldiers changed. When the eighteen-year-old boys join the war nowadays, they are already cynical. Despite the commitment they have they are different. They are not so different from himself when he joined the army. However, something is missing in their characters. The passion which he and others shared when they joined the army is gone. Marnus mentions that back then even those who were negative accepted the two years of military service as something unavoidable. They believed that they had to work hard. However, the new boys are different. They are ironic and not passionate, not motivated to fight like Marnus and others used to be. The enthusiasm to fight in the war is gone. Marnus remembers that during their patrol they passed a village called Chitado. The village was destroyed by the war. Chitado could also be a silent place like Grabouw the place where he used to live. Nevertheless, thirteen years of war had an enormous impact on the country as everything is destroyed and is nothing left.

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<sup>91</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 20–23.

<sup>92</sup> See *Ibid.*, 23–26.

People run away from the war with their babies tighten to their backs. They take everything they can bear and runaway. Marnus observes the black man who walks ahead and warns others about the landmines which are along the way. The black girls with missing limbs are walking in the crowd hooked in the branches which they use instead of crutches. He is a witness of the war horrors; he can see the crimes of the war, the suffering of the people. People die every day in the war that destroyed joy and beauty of life. Thus, as he silently watches them die, he is waiting for his own death.<sup>93</sup>

Doreen asks Marnus' mother for permission to leave early because her son Little-Neville will come by train tomorrow. Doreen's son is clever therefore she sends him to the school in Touwsrivier. Moreover, she wants to protect him from the drinking Coloureds who live in the Cape Flats. Marnus comments that his mother thinks that Doreen made a good decision because at University on the Flats are always protests. Even though his mother does not like it, she permits Doreen to leave early. His mother praises Doreen as she is the complete opposite of Gloria. When Marnus asks his mother about the visitor they are waiting for, he finds out that the visitor is from Chile. Moreover, the visitor is also a general like his father. However, his mother orders him to tell others that the visitor is Mister Smith from New York.<sup>94</sup> Manus does not realise that his father wants to cooperate with the Chilean authoritarian regime. The regime which feeds from the ignorance and trust of the public. Marnus is not aware of this information therefore he does not understand what his father is doing.<sup>95</sup>

When Mister Smith arrives, he tells Marnus that he is "a carbon copy"<sup>96</sup> of his father. Marnus asks his sister what he meant by that, and she gives him the answer. However, when he wants to ask another question, she refuses to answer. He remembers that when he read *Moby Dick*, he told her about the story because she was always attracted to the topic of whales. Nevertheless, after he told her his opinions on the book, she told him that he read the children edition. Once again, she let him know that he is just a little child. Marnus

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<sup>93</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 28–30.

<sup>94</sup> See *Ibid.*, 31–33.

<sup>95</sup> See David Medalie, "Old Scars, Old Bones, and Old Secrets: Three Recent South African Novels," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 23, no. 3 (1997): 513, accessed February 19, 2018, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/2637514?pq-origsite=summon&seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2637514?pq-origsite=summon&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).

<sup>96</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 35.

concludes that since then he tries to ignore her. Therefore, their relationship is quite complicated, and he does not feel the urge to share anything with Ilse.<sup>97</sup>

The father tells the story how his parents come to South Africa to the general. He says that his parents were lucky to leave Tanganyika before the other white farmers lost their land. Later when Marnus uncle Samuel left the farmhouses were already destroyed. The father claims that it was because the communists from Peking influenced the blacks who took over Tanganyika and Kenya. He declares that “the blacks prefer to live in shacks right next to the once beautiful farmhouses.”<sup>98</sup> This statement declares he assumes that the black people are not able to live in the houses as the white people do. The new government did not care about the consequences. The paradise he once called his home was gone, and it was a fault of the new black government. From this statement can be assumed that the father blames the new black government for the destruction of his home. Thus, this incident is reflected in his opinions on the black population. Furthermore, the father emphasises that he will never forget what the communists and the blacks did. As he states, it is important to remember and teach children about these events.<sup>99</sup>

Marnus continues by saying the blacks want to take over South Africa. The blacks destroy everything they touch. “Of all the nations in the world, those with black skins across their butts also have the smallest brains.”<sup>100</sup> As this Marnus’ statement is racist, it is evident that he is influenced by the opinions of his parents. He assumes that the black population is less intelligent by nature. Therefore, he is strongly affected by the propaganda his father spreads.<sup>101</sup> He adds that uncle Samuel said that the Coloureds deserve just a minimum, so they will cause less damage. Marnus also thinks that they are all criminals who cannot go to the haven. However, he assumes that Doreen who is kind to everyone could be an exception. Therefore, he ignores the apartheid believes for a while as he acknowledges that she could go to heaven. Marnus perceives the black population as an inferior race. His whole family assumes that the black population is worse and deserves the minimum. Thus, he does not realise what a cruel society surrounds him separating the black and white population. Even

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<sup>97</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 35–36.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>99</sup> See *Ibid.*, 35–38.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 38–39.

<sup>101</sup> See Jay Rajiva, “The Seduction of Narration in Mark Behr’s *The Smell of Apples*.” *Research in African Literatures* 44, no. 4 (2013): 87, accessed October 18, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2979/reseafritelite.44.4.82>.

if he can see that the whites are in the better position, he thinks it is because the blacks are worse or misbehave.<sup>102</sup>

As the memories of the adult Marnus appear again, he says that they are waiting for the information from above. As they are waiting, not sure what will happen, Marnus comments that in the war it does not matter who is black or white because the death does not discriminate between anyone. Facing death, he realises that even though he believed all his life the black people are worse, in front of death they are equal.<sup>103</sup>

Marnus' mother used to be a singer when she was younger.<sup>104</sup> He mentions that sometimes the mother sings when his father is not home. As she only sings when the father is not home it can be assumed that she is used to following orders. The mother is used to follow the orders of the father whose opinion is the most important one. She is entirely under his influence.<sup>105</sup> The father is gone with the general. Therefore, Marnus is sad that he will miss the Friday afternoon, which they would otherwise spend together. He mentions that they always go to Muizenberg beach. They take off all of their clothes and go swimming in the sea. A few times they took Frikkie with them. At the beginning Frikkie was scared to go into the water but, after a few times he gathered the courage and went into the sea.<sup>106</sup>

Marnus decides to call Frikkie if he wants to come for the weekend. Frikkie calls back to Marnus saying he is allowed to come but must go back home at Sunday because his family will visit grandmother. The last time when Frikkie stayed over was the night when Marnus had his birthday, but he got into trouble for breaking the leaves of the aloes. Moreover, he put the aloe into the mouth of Zelda Kemp. Thus, it is obvious that Frikkie is a bully, he gets into trouble easily and picks on people. Marnus mentions that Frikkie was beaten by his father because he broke the leaves.<sup>107</sup> However, the only time someone in the Erasmus family was beaten was when Ilse called a Bantu "ugly black kaffir."<sup>108</sup> The father punished her for it; he said that the Bantus should be treated equally. He stated this despite the fact that he is blaming the blacks for the destruction of his home and does not believe they are equal to the

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<sup>102</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 39.

<sup>103</sup> See *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>104</sup> See *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>105</sup> See Medalie, "Old Scars, Old Bones, and Old Secrets: Three Recent South African Novels," 513.

<sup>106</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 49–51.

<sup>107</sup> See *Ibid.*, 51–53.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.



white people.<sup>109</sup> The word ‘kaffir’ means spit. Marnus says that even Frikkie used this term for Gloria. He is afraid to tell his parents because he might not be allowed to play with him. Therefore, even though Marnus understands that Frikkie’s behaviour might be wrong, he chooses to ignore it for the sake of friendship. Moreover, he also ignores Frikkie’s aggressiveness as long as he is not the victim of his bullying. Even though he does not always agree with Frikkie’s behaviour or opinions, he chooses to be a quiet observer of the situation who does not express his opinions.<sup>110</sup>

On their way to Kalk Bay, Marnus and Frikkie meet Zelda Kemp. She is a poor girl who lives next to the council flats near to the bay. Marnus’ mother pities Zelda, so she sends her Ilse’s old clothes. The mother claims that she has no future because her family is poor. Moreover, she is disgusted that Zelda lives next to the Coloureds. As the boys do not want to talk with Zelda, they decide to run away from her, but she follows them. Frikkie wants to scare her a little. When she comes, Frikkie suggests they could try to escape from the waves which hit the quay. Zelda does not want to so Frikkie takes her hat and forces her to play the game. Zelda is desperate and begs Marnus for help. As she starts crying, Marnus who initially thought it would be funny to tease her is concerned. Nevertheless, before he does anything, the big wave splashes against the quay and covers Zelda completely. When they find her, she lies lifeless on the quay. Marnus is afraid that Zelda might be hurt. Fortunately, she wakes up after a while. When she recovers, Marnus returns the hat and apologises. As people start to gather around her, Frikkie tries to cover up the situation by saying she cries because her dress is wet. Marnus feels bad for Zelda, but Frikkie does not seem to reflect on his behaviour. He even gets mad at Zelda for crying and leaves. Marnus does not agree with Frikkie’s behaviour, but he does nothing. Marnus realises that Frikkie is a bully who enjoys torturing others and who gets into trouble quickly. Despite the fact, he hangs out with him ignoring these facts. Instead of voicing his opinion, he is quiet once again.<sup>111</sup>

The father introduces the general to Frikkie before dinner. The whole family is gathered around the table eating dinner. The father voices his opinion that the entire world is against South Africa. They blame them for the way they treat the Bantus. The father elaborates the topic by saying that at least they did not kill all the blacks like America killed Indians and

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<sup>109</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 37–38.

<sup>110</sup> See *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>111</sup> See *Ibid.*, 55–61.

Australia Aborigines. Thus, at least they are honest and do not hide their opinions in South Africa. He continues by claiming that the worse blacks stayed in South Africa. The good ones were taken away by slave merchants.<sup>112</sup> “Have you ever heard about a Bantu inventing something like a telephone or a wheel or an engine?”<sup>113</sup> He asks this rhetorical question to prove his point about worse blacks being left in South Africa. The intelligent blacks are in America, and the father assumes that they would like to claim South Africa as their land. The father concludes with the statement that their strength is in the army and in the bond with Portuguese colonies who are not against them.<sup>114</sup>

The father reflects the views of apartheid and its beliefs which he spreads among his family. As he mentions, there are better blacks and worse blacks. Therefore, apartheid is choosing between the people. They are creating barriers between the people by stating that the white population is superior to the black population.<sup>115</sup> The statement about the army indicates that the father feels threatened by the blacks who could take his country like they took Tanganyika in the past. He does not want this to happen again, as he is actively defining himself against the blacks who could endanger his country. He does not see what is wrong with segregation of people based on their race, as he is too frightened to lose his home again. Since the time he lost his home in Tanganyika, he is paranoid. Those who live in America have an education. Therefore, they could try to take away his second home. The other nations endanger South Africa. Thus, since the father is voicing these opinions openly also, Marnus cannot help to be influenced by them. As he is just a child, he blindly believes that what his father claims is automatically correct. The general who is respected by the public cannot be wrong. Marnus cannot see the offensive side of the regime where people are treated like dirt because of their race. He does not see this aspect since he is in the superior position as the white boy whose father is involved in the army.<sup>116</sup> Thus, for him, it is a normal situation when someone cannot visit the museum because his skin is black.<sup>117</sup>

In Angola Marnus and other soldiers listen to the radio. It is Marnus' father whom they hear denying the presence of the African soldiers in Angola. The father who would do

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<sup>112</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 65–66.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>114</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> See Mengel and Borzaga, introduction, xi.

<sup>116</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 65–66.

<sup>117</sup> See Ibid., 9.

anything for his family just publicly denied that his son is fighting in Angola. The parental figure Marnus depended on left him in the midst of the war. Even though he always followed father's orders like a puppet, this is what he gets in the end. One of the soldiers is angry because he had to go into the war unless he would end up the prison.<sup>118</sup> Marnus argues that he still had a choice, he made the easier one. All of them choose the easier way.<sup>119</sup>

The escalating fear from the black population is manifested in another memory of Marnus. As his mother scolded him about his studies, she told him that he needs to study to be successful because when the blacks and Coloureds will be able to study everything will be much harder. Thus, she is again scared that the blacks will come and destroy their peaceful homes, putting herself and the entire white nation into a position of victims even though those who are oppressed are the black people. The white nation oppresses the black population to be in the end scared of their retribution. Marnus is in the position of an innocent child who does not understand what is happening. However, he is living in the environment where he continually hears that the blacks will come and destroy everything that they hold dear. As he hears those remarks from his parents and family, he feels the need to protect the republic before the enemy. In a way, he becomes an echo of his parent's opinions unaware of the danger it may bring.<sup>120</sup>

Tannie Karla, the mother's sister, used to visit the Erasmus family every holiday. She was funny and often went fishing with Marnus and Ilse. However, she changed when she started to work at the *Cape Times*. Marnus points out she got involved with the Liberals. Marnus' father did not like the opinions she voiced, and after some quarrels, he told her to not come into their house ever again. Even though the mother still secretly visited Tannie Karla before she went abroad. Marnus mentions that he was forbidden to tell dad that they visited Tannie Karla. His father used to say that she is in contact with the blacks and she also criticises the government. Thus, he obviously does not agree with her opinions. Marnus, with Ilse and mother, visit Tannie Karla until the day when everything changed. That day his mother and Tannie Karla were discussing Chrisjan who used to work for Marnus' family. The mother said that the Coloureds are not loyal anymore and all they do is wander around. She compared them to the Bantus who were prohibited from working in South Africa.

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<sup>118</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 82–83.

<sup>119</sup> See Rajiva, "The Seduction of Narration in Mark Behr's *The Smell of Apples*," 93.

<sup>120</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 88–89.

Therefore, she showed her stereotypical view of the black people once again as she mentioned that they are not trustworthy and even compared who is worse. Tannie Karla was disappointed with mother's opinions and mentioned that her employees are not like other blacks. However, Marnus' mother said that Chrisjan stole the fishing tackle and run away. Tannie Karla frustrated by her sister's stubbornness said that she would never get married because some women can give up everything for their husbands even their minds. After this statement, they left, and the sisters never spoke to each other again. The mother blamed her sister's opinions on communism. However, Ilse protested by saying that Tannie Karla is a Liberal. By this comment, Ilse proved that she does not agree with her mother's opinions. Marnus felt sorry that they did not speak to each other again, but he did not understand the situation. As a child, Marnus is not able to understand that his aunt became an enemy of his father and his propagandistic opinions. She becomes unwelcomed in their house as she criticises the apartheid regime which segregated the population. Tannie Karla was able to see through the lies and racist beliefs of apartheid in which Marnus' mother got lost.<sup>121</sup>

Marnus' war memories reflect that he is wondering about his father, asking himself if the father is worried about him since they got lost and were not able to contact anyone. Suddenly Marnus asks the black section leader why he is fighting in Angola. He answers that because it is up to men to fight in the war.<sup>122</sup> Marnus is surprised by his answer, and he says to him "you blacks could end up being the same as the bloody whites."<sup>123</sup> By this statement, Marnus admits that the blacks may be on the same level as the whites. He admits that they may not be the subordinate race about which his father always talked. At that moment he realises that the black people are the same as him and that what he was taught all his life may not be true.<sup>124</sup>

As he is sitting under the burning sun, he reads a letter from his mother. She writes him that the war should end soon. As she claims in the letter, the blacks are protesting, and they want to sanction the whites. The last time when Marnus was at home, she asked him to not go to into the war. However, he did not listen to her. Therefore, she is begging him again to

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<sup>121</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 105–108.

<sup>122</sup> See *Ibid.*, 119–120.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>124</sup> See *Ibid.*

come back home as she misses him dearly. When he finishes reading the letter, he notices that someone is near and starts to run.<sup>125</sup>

As was later found out Little-Neville was burned for stealing the charcoal. Marnus asks his mother if it were the white people who burned him. She admits it but mentions that Little-Neville should not steal. Even though Marnus lives in the environment where he is continuously exposed to the racist beliefs of his parents, he can acknowledge that hurting a child is wrong. Therefore, he can see that it is a wrong and horrible crime. This time he can see beyond the racist opinions and admit that the white people did wrong. He even emphasises to his mother how immense a pain Little-Neville must have felt. The mother blames the lower-class whites as if they should be the only whites capable of hurting a child. Marnus is disappointed in his people. Suddenly he can see that the white people can be also cruel.<sup>126</sup>

After Ilse's prize-giving ceremony at school, she and the mother start to argue. Mother points out that Ilse changed since she came back from Holland. She lectures Ilse that it is crucial to maintain the leader position. Ilse disagrees and mentions Tannie Karla. As the mentioning of her sister angers the mother, she states that Ilse could end up like her. Ilse asks if it means that she will also be banned from the family. By this comment, Ilse shows that she does not agree with her mother's opinions and teachings. She instead sympathises with the opinions of Tannie Karla. It seems that she is the only one who can see through the propagandistic beliefs of her parents. Marnus is not able to understand the situation clearly as he is young. However, he realises that not everything the parents say is right, but he is somewhat passive in voicing his views.<sup>127</sup>

After the father shows the slides of Tanganyika and the war in Rhodesia to the general, both Frikkie and Marnus fall asleep. In the middle of the night, Marnus wakes up in the lounge. As he is searching for Frikkie, the door of the guest room is closed, and he wonders if the general did not leave. He goes to his room but finds out that Frikkie is not here. As Marnus is scared that Frikkie tells everyone that he knows about the general's identity, he decides to look through the hole in the floor to the guest room to know if somebody is there. However, what he sees is different from what he expected. He sees the general who starts

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<sup>125</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 132–136.

<sup>126</sup> See *Ibid.*, 138–139.

<sup>127</sup> See *Ibid.*, 148–149.

kissing Frikkie. Horrified Marnus wants to bring the father so he would stop it however he does not find him in his bed. Therefore, Marnus quietly comes back and witnesses the rape of Frikkie. As the pyjama is moved from the general's back Marnus mentions that the scar he had is gone.<sup>128</sup> This statement indicates how traumatised he is as he is not able to realise that it is his father who rapes Frikkie and not the general. He is not able to process that his perfect, good father would be able to do such a thing.<sup>129</sup>

The next day Frikkie, clearly traumatized, wants to go home. Marnus is aware of what happened and asks Frikkie if he has something to say to him. However, Frikkie says that he has not. By asking Frikkie about the rape Marnus tries to help his best friend to find peace. As he feels guilty because he was watching the whole thing unable to do anything. However, Frikkie is too ashamed to be able to share his trauma with anyone.<sup>130</sup>

Later the family is opening the gifts they received from the general. As Marnus opens his present from the general he feels mad. He is mad that the general came into their house and everything had to change so radically after his visit. Marnus is disgusted and furious because of what happened to Frikkie. He is disgusted by his father for doing such a horrendous thing to his best friend. The trust he had in his father is shattered to the pieces and he feels desperate. The father who he adored and idolized all his life is in the end just a disgusting human being who raped innocent child. Marnus is angry at himself that he could not do anything to help Frikkie. Once again, he stayed quiet and passive. The rape which he just witnessed traumatizes him, and he does not know how to process the situation. His innocent mind suffers immense shock as he saw the rape. The assurance which he found in his family is gone and he cannot trust anyone. The parent figure whom he loved and relied on disappointed him in the worst way possible. Marnus starts to panic as the father approaches him to fit him the epaulettes which he got as a present. The father is suddenly a different person, someone Marnus no longer recognises. As he is panicking, he feels like this is God's punishment for his sins. He should never search for Frikkie if he just stayed in his bed everything would be fine. He would never find out that his father is a monster. The father picks him up and takes him to the bathroom where they cry together.<sup>131</sup> When Marnus calms

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<sup>128</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 167–177.

<sup>129</sup> See Rajiva, "The Seduction of Narration in Mark Behr's *The Smell of Apples*," 96.

<sup>130</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 180–182.

<sup>131</sup> See *Ibid.*, 196–197.

down, his father says to him that “bulls don’t cry.”<sup>132</sup> The father indicates that he should be more masculine, he should not show his emotions.<sup>133</sup>

Marnus, fighting in the war, is wounded. The section leader tells him that it will be all right and he will get better. However, Marnus knows that this is the end of his journey as he feels his father’s hands around him. He is calm nevertheless, not because of the father’s embrace but because death is near, the death which will rescue him from the miserable life he has been living so far. Waiting for his death, he mentions that the dead people should pity the living ones because they cannot escape from the past.<sup>134</sup> The past hunts these people their whole lives. As Marnus cannot escape his traumatic past, he is ready to die. By fighting in the war, he finds a way to die, to escape from the oppressive thoughts about Frikkie and his father. The peace he was looking for is finally here.<sup>135</sup>

Marnus with his mother and sister visit Little-Neville in the hospital. The mother promises, Doreen, that they will pray for Little-Neville as if it would justify that Little-Neville is dying because of the apartheid regime which discriminates against the black population.<sup>136</sup> Nevertheless, for Marnus’ family, it is that simple, they will pray to avoid the responsibility.<sup>137</sup>

Little Marnus packs the bags with this father before they leave for vacation. Nevertheless, he is not angry anymore; he is calm.<sup>138</sup> He gave up the fight to escape from his father’s propagandistic opinions and the suffocating reality. Marnus chose to stay, as he listens to his father to pray, he is again just the voice of his father opinions. The puppet which lets the father lead him to death.<sup>139</sup> However, death is not a negative thing anymore; death is something he seeks. As he could not process the trauma he experienced, he chose to give up. In the end, Marnus decides to accept the harsh reality of his life. He chooses to stay and wait for death to finally rescue him from the suffocating environment and the traumatic past which changed his fate forever.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 197.

<sup>133</sup> See Rajiva, “The Seduction of Narration in Mark Behr’s *The Smell of Apples*,” 85.

<sup>134</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 198.

<sup>135</sup> See Medalie, “Old Scars, Old Bones, and Old Secrets: Three Recent South African Novels,” 514.

<sup>136</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 190.

<sup>137</sup> See Rajiva, “The Seduction of Narration in Mark Behr’s *The Smell of Apples*,” 94.

<sup>138</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 94.

<sup>139</sup> See *Ibid.*, 199–200.

<sup>140</sup> See Rajiva, “The Seduction of Narration in Mark Behr’s *The Smell of Apples*,” 95.

<sup>140</sup> See Behr, *The Smell of Apples*, 200.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to describe how profoundly an oppressive environment can influence the life of an individual. The characters Holden Caulfield and Marnus Erasmus are both exposed to the severe traumatic experiences. As oppression is the common theme of the novels *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Smell of Apples*, there are features of trauma which both characters share.

Holden lives in post-war America where are people dealing with the consequence of the war. Society tries to move on and forget about the past. Marnus lives in South Africa during apartheid. The regime supports the segregation of the people and discriminates against the black population. Therefore, both are living in societies where it is hard to cope. Holden observes the results of the destruction which humanity can commit. Similarly, Marnus witnesses the segregation of the black population and growing aggression between the two races. The characters are both innocent spectators of the historical events which happen around them. Moreover, they narrate their personal life experiences.

The family is an essential feature of the trauma of both characters. Holden seeks love and understanding from his parents who, however, are not able to give it to him. As he is traumatised by Allie's death, he wants someone to embrace him. However, because parents are neglecting him, he feels unworthy and alone. Marnus receives enough attention from his parents. Nevertheless, the parent's ideological opinions are strongly influencing him. Under their influence, Marnus becomes apathetic towards the crimes of apartheid. The father who influences him the most implements his thoughts into son's mind. Marnus becomes an echo of his father beliefs without noticing that he is being manipulated.

Both characters also experience their major trauma which influences them. After Holden's brother Allie died, he started to blame himself for his death. As he is not able to process his tragic death, he suffers. The guilt and sorrow become part of his reality. Marnus witnesses the rape of his best friend Frikkie by his father. The person whom he trusted the most betrays him and destroys his innocence. As he is traumatised, Marnus is not able to process this trauma, similarly as Holden. They both struggle to overcome the traumatic experience and find peace in their lives.

An oppressive environment of the two characters consists of family, society and their trauma. Moreover, their lives and fates rapidly change as they are exposed to the oppression. However, what eventually changes their life paths are the different personalities they possess. Going through numerous breakdowns and sufferings Holden, in the end, accepts the



fact that Allie died. The final acceptance of Allie's death sets him free. Moreover, he receives the moral support from his sister Phoebe. Marnus is never able to accept the fact that his father raped his best friend. Instead, he proceeds to give up on life and joins the war where he dies in the end. As the trauma is too appalling, he submits to the system. Moreover, he does not have the mental support from the family.

To conclude, the power of an individual's mind is fundamental to accepting and overcoming the trauma he/she experiences. The motivation to live and accept trauma everybody must find within themselves. Therefore, as the characters process the trauma differently only Holden overcomes his oppressive environment and finds the urge to live.

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