



Universidad
del País Vasco

Euskal Herriko
Unibertsitatea

FACULTY
OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY
OF THE BASQUE
COUNTRY

**“We don’t have to go through this alone”:
facing trauma through human connection in
Alire Sáenz’s
*Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the
Universe* and Chbosky’s
*The Perks of Being a Wallflower***

21st-Century American Children’s Literature

Jude Munarriz Barandiaran

Tutora: Iraide Talavera Burgos

Grado en Estudios Ingleses

2021-2022

Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana y Traducción e Interpretación

Vitoria-Gasteiz

Septiembre 2022

Abstract

In countries such as the United States, thousands of people have to face traumatic experiences throughout their lives. If we look at the statistics, a portion of that population develops Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder from those experiences, and young adults are no exception among those that have to battle this disorder. Young Adult novels have portrayed these struggling adolescents, but few of these books have delved into the details of the protagonists' mental health and into how they could overcome their struggles. Two of the books that focus on the mental health of the protagonists are those analyzed in this paper, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* (2012) by Benjamin Alire Sáenz and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999) by Stephen Chbosky. This paper aims to prove how the connection with others can foster the facing and the latter overcoming of the trauma of the protagonists of these two coming-of-age Young Adult novels. Besides, this paper will take into account that the healing process of the protagonists will be influenced by other factors such as their sexuality, race or the level of trauma they have endured. The first section of the paper explores the family relationships of the protagonists and shows how those families have contributed to their growth. The second section will deal with the protagonists establishing new friendships and overcoming their loneliness. Finally, the last section will delve into the protagonists' romantic relationships, which are of vital importance for them to face their traumatic experiences.

Keywords: Young-Adult literature, coming-of-age, trauma, PTSD, loneliness, relationships.

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Theoretical background	6
2.1. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	6
2.2. Young Adult Literature and Coming-of-age novels.....	6
3. Analysis of the novels	7
3.1. Inside the family: generational trauma and the effects of abuse.....	8
3.2. The first friendships: overcoming loneliness.....	13
3.3. Romantic relationships: fighting internalized homophobia and confronting past trauma	17
4. Conclusions.....	25
Works Cited	27

1. Introduction

According to research, half of all adults in the U.S. will at least once experience a traumatic situation during their lives. However, most of them will not develop a disorder such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (“Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)”). Even so, the reality of the people living with this mental disorder is scary nowadays, especially if we focus on how it affects the teenage population. According to the National Comorbidity Survey Adolescent Supplement (NCS-A), 5% of 13- to 18-year-old adolescents had PTSD, and the rates were higher among girls than among boys (“Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder”).

If we look at the representation of adolescents who have PTSD in the media, we can see it is scarce. One of the few places where we can find stories about adolescents who deal with trauma is young adult literature, more commonly known as YA literature. Immensely successful series such as *Harry Potter*, *Divergent*, or *The Hunger Games*¹ have hooked thousands of adolescents into stories dealing with teenage protagonists who face traumatic situations. This success proves how necessary it is for complex stories like these to be told to adolescents.

Nevertheless, few of these books delve into the details of the protagonists’ trauma or even outright name terms such as PTSD. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999) by Stephen Chbosky is the young adult book that, unlike the previously mentioned novels, became the blueprint for stories that deeply explore how traumatic experiences affect adolescents. Stephen Chbosky portrays a traumatized adolescent without falling into the stereotypes of how society often sees people with mental disorders. Following Chbosky, more and more authors are beginning to diversify their characters and stories to fit the traumatic experiences 21st-century teenagers may be experiencing in their lives.

For this paper, I have chosen to analyze two books that faithfully represent PTSD in young adult literature: *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* (2012), by Benjamin Alire Sáenz, and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999), by Stephen Chbosky. The key feature that unites Aristotle – also referred to as Ari – and Charlie, the protagonists of these novels, is that they both develop PTSD due to their traumatic

¹ Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter Series*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 1997-2007.
Roth, Veronica. *Divergent Trilogy*. Katherine Tegen Books, 2011-2013.
Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games Trilogy*. Scholastic Press, 2008-2010.

experiences. Besides, both protagonists have introverted personalities and are prone to having internal monologues. These monologues are filled with questions about their crippling loneliness and their inability to connect to the world around them. This inability to communicate with others hinders the development of their identity. Irwin (5) describes the importance of identity in adolescence and stresses how survivors of childhood trauma need to process their trauma to form a positive identity in their later years. For that reason, both characters need to make amends with their past to come of age and integrate themselves into society. This paper aims to prove that the relationship with other people is what helps both protagonists face and process their traumatic experiences and, therefore, come of age. Despite their differences in terms of their sexual orientation and race, factors that make the process of facing trauma unique for each protagonist, both Ari and Charlie will face and overcome their traumatic past by connecting with others.

The analysis of the novels is divided into three main sections: family relationships, friendships and romantic relationships. In order to follow a chronological order, each section will deal firstly with *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, which is set in the late 80s and then finish with *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, set in the early 90s. In the first section, we will dive into the protagonists' relationship with their families and into how those families have contributed to their coming of age. The second section will analyze how the protagonists make new friends, as throughout their lives, both Ari and Charlie have been characterized by their loneliness. Finally, the last section will analyze Ari's and Charlie's romantic relationships, as those are the ones that have helped the protagonists the most when having to face their own traumatic experiences.

Throughout this paper, the 9th version of MLA will be used as a guideline for citations.

2. Theoretical background

In this segment, terms such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Young Adult literature and coming-of-age novels will be defined, as they are essential for a better understanding of this paper.

2.1. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

According to the American Psychiatric Association, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is:

[a] psychiatric disorder that may occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, or rape or who have been threatened with death, sexual violence or serious injury. (Torres)

Symptoms may vary between people who experience PTSD. The most common ones would be being more easily startled, feeling detached from reality or having trouble sleeping due to recurring flashbacks and dreadful thoughts about their traumatic experience. If the events that caused PTSD are particularly hard, it is likely that the person who experienced them will not be able to function correctly in any area of their life (“Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder”).

In the case of children and teenagers, approaches such as “trauma systems therapy” ensure that the children or adolescents with PTSD have ongoing relationships and a nurturing social context to overcome traumatic life events, as positive connections are key to their recovery (Zatzick 914).

2.2. Young Adult Literature and Coming-of-age novels

In America, the Young Adult Library Services Association introduced the term “young adult” in the 1960s to describe the literature addressed to 12- to 18-year-old readers (Strickland).

Regarding the importance of Young Adult literature for teenagers, Hendrickson (7) highlights that the factor of relatability in these books becomes a means for adolescents to connect to contemporary issues in a much more accessible way. When teenagers see themselves in the characters, it is often easier for them to understand those issues. In

addition, young adult literature nowadays is catered for the needs of the young adults of this time, which also connects this genre with its audience. Among these needs, there is a remarkable increase of diversity, as we are encountering far more stories about people of color, disabled teens or about members of the LGBTQ+ community.

On the other hand, the coming-of-age process, or the transition from adolescence into adulthood has been celebrated as a rite of passage for a long time in many different cultures. Nowadays, that shift is marked by celebrations such as the “quinceañera” or by legal changes like being able to vote (“Types and Kinds of Feasts and Festivals”). In literature, there was a need to tell stories about this transformation; thus, the German term “bildungsroman”, which means “novel of formation”, was coined. These novels are what we now would call coming-of-age stories and were said to portray the protagonist’s moral and psychological growth (Britannica). Some titles that are often highlighted within this genre, and that are targeted towards young adults, are *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger, *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton², or one of the novels to be analyzed in this paper, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky.

3. Analysis of the novels

Benjamin Alire Sáenz is a Mexican-American author who writes for children, teens and adults in the form of poetry books and novels. Although he has published many books during his lifetime, he leapt to fame with his book *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, which he published in 2012. This book granted him a Printz Honor Book, the Stonewall Award and the Lambda Literary Award, among other prizes. In addition, he was the first Hispanic winner of the PEN/Faulkner Award and also received the American Book Award for his adult novels (“Benjamin Alire Sáenz”).

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe, one of the two books analyzed in this research paper, focuses on the coming of age of Ari Mendoza, an introverted Mexican-American teenager living in El Paso, Texas, in the late 1980s. His teenage years seem to be going miserably, as he has to battle with a mother who suffocates him, his distant father and a brother whom he has not seen or talked about since he went to prison.

² Hinton, S.E. *The Outsiders*. Viking Books for Young Readers, 1967.
Salinger, J.D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. Little, Brown & Company, 1951.

However, the summer he meets Dante, an extroverted and carefree gay boy, Ari's life changes. When Dante enters Ari's life, the protagonist will not only begin to question his sexual orientation, but he will also find ways to deal with his past trauma.

As to Stephen Chbosky, he is an American novelist who, in addition to writing books, has made a name for himself as a screenwriter, film producer, film director, television writer, and television producer. His most famous work has been *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, published in 1999, which he adapted into a film released in 2012 under the same name (Thompson). The book was successful, but it was the release of the film that helped the author get nominated for the Best Adapted Screenplay category for the 2013 Writers Guild Awards. Besides, Chbosky won the 2013 Independent Spirit Awards for Best First Feature and the 2013 People's Choice Award for Best Dramatic Movie ("The Perks of Being a Wallflower.").

The Perks of Being a Wallflower takes place during the 1990s. It is narrated through the letters that Charlie, the protagonist, and narrator, sends to an anonymous source throughout his first year of high school. Charlie begins his journey through high school feeling incredibly lonely, as his best friend Michael has committed suicide during the previous term and their group of friends has dissipated because of it. However, despite the protagonist's poor social skills and introverted tendencies, he will stumble upon Sam and Patrick, two high school seniors that will quickly include him in their friend group. While he deals with all these novel experiences, our protagonist will also have to deal with his trauma and discover why thinking about his aunt Helen, who died when he was a child, is so disturbing for him.

3.1. Inside the family: generational trauma and the effects of abuse

At the beginning of *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* (2012), the author presents a teenage protagonist with a problematic family.

To begin with, his brother, Bernardo, is in jail. Ari's relationship with his brother has been non-existent for the last decade due to his brother's circumstances, and the reader is constantly made aware of how distressing the situation is for our protagonist. This distress is reinforced by the fact that Ari's parents have decided to erase Bernardo from their lives completely. Thus, the deafening silence around his brother's existence drives Ari to spend most of the book thinking about him and wanting his parents to talk about him, with no

success. This decision of completely separating him from his brother will profoundly affect Ari, as it is known that a separation of this kind can be traumatic, even more so if several other separations occur to the person in question (Planellas 7). In addition, the silence around his brother has created a well of bitterness inside Ari, which has contributed to his complicated relationship with his parents.

Ari's father's mental state also adds to the formation of the protagonist's trauma. This man is presented as a war veteran with a complicated relationship with himself and his family because of his Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Dealing with his own nightmares, flashbacks and regret about the war has made him become an absent father to his son. It is proven that trauma of this kind can be inherited through generations along with disorders such as depression and anxiety (Bachem et al. 746), or even lead to the development of the child's own symptoms of PTSD, often presented in subtler ways of behavior, such as having a perception of the world similar to their parents' – a perception of the world being menacing – and mirroring their feelings of social isolation, guilt and detachment (Dekel and Goldblatt 284). Having this in mind, we can infer that Ari feels lonely and isolated from the world not only because of his own experiences, but also because he is obliged to deal with his father's trauma. His father's mental state has even made Ari suffer symptoms of PTSD, such as constant nightmares about his father and feelings of detachment that have made him unable to function in society as an average teenager. Ari's mother even references their similarities in these terms: “You and your father, you're fighting your own private wars” (Alire Sáenz 170). At the same time, if we consider Ari's feelings towards separation and abandonment, we can find parallelisms between the more explicit abandonment of his brother and Ari's complicated relationship with his mentally absent father. This excerpt shows the damaging effect his father's attitude has on the protagonist: “Once, when I was about six or seven, I was really mad at my father because I wanted him to play with me and he just seemed so far away. It was like I wasn't even there” (Alire Sáenz 11). Unlike Ari's brother, Ari's father lives with him in the same house. However, the consequences of PTSD have turned him into an almost invisible parental figure. While he keeps on reliving the war, he keeps on distancing himself from his son.

In contrast, Ari's mother does not seem to bring any more trauma to his son's life, even though we can also perceive a complicated relationship between them. Ari frequently states his contradictory feelings towards everything his mother does. We can take the

following quote as an example: "I could feel my mom listening to me. She was always there. I hated her for that. And loved her" (Alire Sáenz 170). It is with his mother with whom he interacts and communicates the most throughout the book, although each interaction seems to come from a place of frustration. We learn one of the reasons for this situation in one of Ari's internal conversations with himself. In that conversation, he pretends to be telling his father how he feels about their relationship with his mother and with him: "You know what I've learned from you and Mom? I've learned not to talk. I've learned how to keep everything I feel buried deep inside of me. And I hate you for it" (Alire Sáenz 260). Thus, Ari feels that he cannot communicate his feelings and worries with his mother because, although she is seemingly available, she avoids talking about difficult topics.

Even so, these issues are strengthened by Ari's internal struggle with his sexuality, which might contribute to our protagonist's feelings of isolation and loneliness and make his life at home far from peaceful. His family is within the Catholic Church, and Ari even comments on his mother's church friends and how suffocated they make him feel when they visit his home (Alire Saéñz 8-9). Diaz (34) states that, along with other factors, being committed to a fundamentalist religion or any religion can lead to a stronger sense of internalized homophobia. Considering these facts, we can only assume that Ari's fearful perception of coming out as gay is influenced by the possible reaction it may generate in his family.

Nevertheless, Ari's family's dynamics change after his aunt's – his mother's sister's – sudden death. This event, which occurs nearly the end of the story, forces Ari's parents to get in touch with their vulnerability due to their emotional bond with Ari's aunt, Ophelia. On their way to the funeral, Ari's father confesses to his son that Ophelia was a huge help at the time of Ari's brother's arrest and breaks into tears when talking about how much his wife suffered when the incident happened. Our protagonist then decides to comfort his father, and he realizes that not only does he finally feel connected to him, but also that it was the first time in a long time that his father was talking about Bernardo, Ari's brother, and about his feelings about the situation. Besides, Ari becomes aware of how painful their separation from Bernardo had been for his parents:

I left him alone for a while. But then, I decided I wanted to be with him. I decided that maybe we left each other alone too much. Leaving each other alone was killing us.

"Dad, sometimes I hated you and mom for pretending he [Bernardo] was dead."

"I know. I'm sorry, Ari. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry." (Alire Sáenz 283)

In the case of Ari's mother, it is also after her sister's death that she decides to open up to his son. After an emotional moment between the two at the funeral, she shows pictures of Ari's brother and decides to talk to Ari about him. When both his mother and father decide to bring their own personal issues to light, Ari begins to see them in a completely different way. He now understands them more than ever, which helps him become aware of how far they were driving each other apart (Alire Sáenz 324).

Connecting with his parents plays a vital role in healing Ari's loneliness. Besides, Ari finds the safe space he needs in his parents to openly talk about his romantic feelings for Dante. At the end of the book, Ari is hurting about said feelings for Dante, and both his mother and father help him open up about them, telling him that he does not need to "fight that war" alone (Alire Sáenz 319). His feelings of abandonment had made Ari identify as a loner who could not communicate with other people. This uncomfortable feeling was prevalent in every relationship he maintained. As Duke and Van Buskirk (156) state, it has been proven that issues inside the family help increase inner feelings of loneliness and make it more difficult for the young person to look for friendships. What Ari always needed from his parents was communication and connection. The silence around his brother and his father's estrangement only made him feel lonelier and more depressed over the years. Therefore, when his father and his mother finally open up about their trauma and his brother's figure, Ari can reciprocate that and even start seeing himself differently.

In *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999), Charlie and his family have a seemingly good relationship. However, there is an evident lack of connection. This lack of connection stems from a primary source: Charlie's past trauma. On the one hand, the death of his best friend had led him to lose contact with the people around him. Even if his parents had been available for him, he only mentions them caring about more superficial elements such as his grades, instead of his feelings and thoughts. On the other hand, Charlie's repressed traumatic memories regarding his aunt Helen, which neither Charlie nor his family know about until the end of the novel, has also hindered the family dynamic without them knowing about it.

Throughout the story, Charlie's parents are shown to be altogether ordinary people. His father is described as caring but pragmatic. He seems to be a good father to Charlie in general terms. As to Charlie's mother, she is described as sensible and calm. However, she is not as emotionally ready to deal with his son as he would like her to be, as she seems to be dealing with the abuse she suffered as a child. What at first appears to be a typical family hides many issues underneath its foundations.

Secondly, Charlie's older sister and brother must also be mentioned as part of the family dynamic. His brother is not as present as his sister because he is in his first year of college and out of their house. However, Charlie's sister, Candace, still goes to high school with him, so their dynamic as siblings is much more noticeable during the novel. She and Charlie have a good relationship with minimal issues that can appear in any fraternal relationship like theirs. However, a significant event affects their union: the moment when Charlie discovers that her sister's boyfriend is abusive towards her. This event triggers Charlie because of the abuse he himself suffered, even if he does not remember it, and it sets the two characters apart.

Thus, we can affirm that his experience of sexual abuse at the hands of his aunt turns out to be the most traumatic situation Charlie faces and what makes it difficult for him to connect with his family, even if he does not remember the traumatizing experience. Charlie's experience of loneliness and disconnection could be highly linked to his family's lack of protection when the abuse happened. Having to deal with a situation as traumatizing as sexual abuse without proper aid to process it seems to have greatly impacted how Charlie views the world as a genuinely lonely place. Besides, it has caused him to live with intense PTSD, which is a direct consequence of sexual abuse (Hébert et al. 686), even if Charlie is unaware of this event and its implications in his life until the end of the book. In those terms, when Charlie realizes what his favorite person in the world, as he called his aunt, did to him, the amount of damage the revelation provokes becomes incredibly hard for him to process.

Even if discovering the abuse he has suffered is painful for Charlie, this discovery will help him reunite with his family after he is interned in a mental hospital because of a severe manic episode that is caused by the flashbacks he has about his aunt Helen's abuse. In the hospital, Charlie finally gets the psychological help he needs and manages to acknowledge the abuse he suffered from his aunt Helen. His family also discovers what

happened and begins to understand Charlie's lonely stance during the past years and realizes they need to be there to help him heal. After all, Aunt Helen was Charlie's mother's sister, and Charlie's mother decided to let her stay in their house, where the abuse happened. According to Tyler (580), research has found that parental and familial support can lower the adverse outcomes that can derive from being abused. Throughout Charlie's stay at the psychiatric hospital, the reader can see how Charlie's mental state improves thanks to the relationship with his family: "The thing that helped me the most, though, was the time I could have visitors. My family, including my brother and sister, always came for those days until my brother had to go back to school to play football" (Chbosky 226). Having his parents, sister and brother with him in such a vulnerable and triggering moment of his life is what Charlie finally needs to grow and come of age without the constraints of his past trauma. Recovering his traumatic memories and being able to reconnect with his family were the pieces he needed to solve his inner puzzle.

Throughout this section, we have seen how the relationships with their families have affected both Ari and Charlie. In the case of Ari, he has had to deal with the feelings of abandonment he had developed because of his brother's absence and his father's trauma. In the case of Charlie, he and his family were distanced due to a situation of abuse Charlie's memory had repressed. Nevertheless, they both needed the emotional support their parents and siblings had not been able to give to them to overcome their respective traumas and begin living lives that were not surrounded by loneliness and internal suffering.

3.2. The first friendships: overcoming loneliness

From the beginning of *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, the reader can notice the protagonist's non-existent social life. The very first page introduces Ari listening to a song called "Alone", which is a direct way of telling us how the protagonist feels. In addition, Ari's lack of social life is visible to those around him, as is shown when some neighbors his age make fun of him for not having any friends or when Ari's mother seems surprised by the fact that her son has made a friend. These situations seem to lead to a crucial element of Ari's identity: he is a loner, and that causes him to feel unhappy. In a conversation he holds with his mother at the beginning of the book, Ari expresses his thoughts about his gloomy personality and him being alone most of the time.

She started to say something, but she changed her mind. “Ari, I just want you to be happy.”
I wanted to tell her that happy was hard for me. But I think she already knew that. “Well,”
I said, “I’m at that phase where I’m supposed to be miserable.” (Alire Sáenz 70)

Ari is aware of how sad he feels about having no friends, but he does not do anything to change his situation. Duke and Van Buskirk describe this kind of behavior as “sad passivity” (147), a state in which lonely adolescents feel sorry for themselves without doing anything about it. This behavior then deteriorates their already low self-esteem. Thus, instead of connecting with people who could make him happier, Ari prefers to stay in his comfort zone, even if it makes him miserable.

Ari’s tendency to isolate himself starts to change when he meets Dante in the pool one day. Throughout the book’s first half, both become friends, but Ari is quite unwilling to deepen their bond. Ari’s belief of being fine alone and not needing any friends is repeatedly mentioned in his inner monologue and does not seem to let him open up to the people around him. While Dante enters his life in the summer and appears to be the only person in his life, Ari interacts with other people as well. Two of those people are Ari’s peers Gina and Susie, who are presented to the readers when the summer ends and Ari begins the new school year. Ari mentions that, in the past year, these two girls in his class have constantly been trying to talk to him. Until then, he has found it bothersome because he, due to his traumatic experiences, has interpreted it as an intrusion in his personal life. However, the reality is that they are just two people trying to get to know Ari in order to become his friends.

After spending all summer with Dante, Ari begins the school year without his new best friend because Dante has moved to Boston with his parents. Instead of returning to his chronic loneliness, Ari tries to expand his social circle this time. The impact of having met someone like Dante, who, unlike him, is all innocence and zest for life, has altered our protagonist’s needs. This school year, he will resort to Gina and Susie’s company, even if he had previously found them intrusive: although he often tends to shut himself down when he is with them, he little by little opens up to them. When the school year ends and a new summer begins, Ari invites Gina and Susie to go to the desert in his new pickup truck. That day, Ari decides to be vulnerable with them instead of putting up his mask again. They get drunk and talk under the stars about being in love, and Ari answers their questions about his thoughts on the matter. The scene ends with them admitting that

they do not want that moment to end, revealing that they feel truly comfortable in each other's presence (Alire Sáenz 231-32). We finally understand that, in reality, Ari did not hate Gina and Susie; he hated the uncomfortable feeling of someone wanting to get to know him and his inner secrets.

Along with the bond he builds with Dante, Ari also builds a close friendship with Dante's parents. Their friendly way of loving Ari, so different from how Ari's parents manifest their affection, impacts his view on relationships and helps him lower his emotional barriers. Of Dante's parents, Mrs. Quintana, Dante's mother, is the person with whom Ari connects the most, as they have resembling personalities. Therefore, when Dante and his family return from their year living in Boston and Mrs. Quintana confesses that she has missed Ari, he feels elated. The fact that Mrs. Quintana and himself are so similar make her kind words much more special, even if receiving and accepting love is not easy for him because of his trauma (Alire Sáenz 244). Even though Ari admits that it is difficult for him to feel other people's love, he is now willing to see that there are no requirements for people to be able to love him. Furthermore, due to Mrs. Quintana's straightforward personality, Ari knows that her demonstration of love is honest and genuine.

Mrs. Quintana's honesty leads Ari to be open about his need for friendships (Alire Sáenz 307), a necessity he had never confessed to anyone but himself when he realized how much he missed Dante (Alire Sáenz 259). At the novel's beginning, his response would have been apathetic, whereas his present self has finally admitted that he, too, needs a connection as human as friendship. In fact, Berndt indicates that for lonely adolescents and children, true friendships have several positive effects, such as an increase in their self-esteem or an improvement in their strength when leading with stressors (qtd. in Margalit 139). While having friends is an entirely new experience for Ari, he welcomes it for the first time in his life. These friendships help him overcome his reluctance to connect with other people and realize how much he needs others to grow as a person.

At the beginning of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, the protagonist is also alone. However, in Charlie's case, the trauma and life experiences that have led him to be alone and feel lonely are different from Ari's. The summer before entering high school, Charlie's best friend Michael kills himself. The traumatic nature of this event leads Charlie and the friends he and Michael shared to distance themselves from one another. Consequently, Charlie is alone in his first year of high school and, as a result, he feels

extremely lonely (Chbosky 21). If we also consider Michael's suicide, we can understand how traumatic that experience must have been for Charlie. Research shows that friends of suicide victims are more likely to experience a type of depression that is not outwardly manifested and thus may be seen as normal behavior; therefore, schools and families should keep an eye on these adolescents' well-being (Brent et al. 638). His friend Michael's suicide has turned Charlie into an introspective child who passively observes others' actions. This attitude makes him have trouble establishing relationships by himself and isolates him from others. According to Margalit (52), lonely children tend to be skeptical about their social competence, which can add to what Charlie is going through. Another feature of Charlie's personality at the beginning of the book is his lack of a strong sense of identity. This lack is evidenced by the fact that he does not present himself as someone who enjoys anything in particular; instead, he copies what others do. For example, when he enters high school, his teacher will lend him books, and those are the only books he will choose to read throughout the novel. Besides, instead of developing his own taste in music, he only listens to the mix-tapes his sister's boyfriend creates. Even when he meets Patrick and Sam, who will become his true friends throughout the story, he starts to listen to the music they recommend or mention to become closer to them and gain their approval. Charlie, whose identity is not yet developed, tries to find inspiration in the tastes of those around him to the point that he almost ignores what makes him unique and what he can offer in his relationships.

As the book progresses, we see Charlie's evolution in his friendships. One of those relationships is the one he forms with his English teacher, with whom he shares his love for literature. Charlie's teacher becomes his friend and mentor, a person he resorts to when he needs advice and conversation. Before meeting Sam, Patrick and the rest of their friends, we can see how Charlie's bond with his teacher makes him feel less lonely at school, where he does not feel comfortable. At the end of the book, he even goes to his teacher's house to have lunch with him and his wife before they leave for New York City. A student-teacher relationship of this kind has proven beneficial for adolescents. In addition, these caring relations make students enjoy attending class (Margalit 118).

However, it is not the relationship with his teacher, but the close relationship Charlie builds with Patrick, Sam, and the rest of their friend group that will help Charlie heal his emotional wounds most deeply. When he meets them, he seems almost starstruck by the

possibility of interacting with high school seniors who seem to be such extraordinary people. Therefore, he follows their lead and attends every event they bring him to. In this manner, Charlie will create new bonds with several people and deepen his connection with Patrick and Sam.

Both Patrick and Sam have a positive impact on Charlie. In the case of Sam, his friendship turns into a romantic relationship, but in the case of Patrick, it remains a friendship that grows deeper as they get to know each other. Their relationship grows when Patrick breaks up with a boy he was secretly meeting and resorts to Charlie for comfort. Even though Charlie is not gay and cannot understand Patrick's experience in detail, it is during the times when just the two of them hang out, driving in Patrick's car, that they both find in each other a confidant, a friend they can trust. Patrick, from whom he has seen a new and more honest side, allows him to enter his inner world, thus, showing Charlie that it is okay to be vulnerable. By the end of the book, Charlie is surrounded by friends who genuinely love and support him. For victims of sexual abuse like Charlie, having this type of support helps them lower the intensity of the symptoms they may be experiencing (Hébert et al. 691). Hence, it becomes crucial for Charlie to have found such a deep connection with other people.

Overall, both Ari and Charlie build strong friendships during their respective stories, but most importantly, they learn to grow next to those friends despite their trauma. Rather than turning into themselves, by connecting with peers, their loneliness stops being an ingrained part of their identities and something that stops them from flourishing.

3.3. Romantic relationships: fighting internalized homophobia and confronting past trauma

As the book title suggests, the focus of *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* is Ari and Dante's relationship. What begins as a casual encounter in the neighborhood pool will lead these two characters to a journey of self-discovery in which Ari will be able to grow as a person thanks to the comfort and sense of solace that Dante will bring to his life.

When Dante enters Ari's life, it becomes apparent that the latter has found an exceptional person in his new friend. The first scene when we see the special bond they have created happens in Dante's bedroom, where he is reading aloud some of his favorite poems to Ari:

I didn't worry about understanding them. I didn't care about what they meant. I didn't care because what mattered is that Dante's voice felt real. *And I felt real*³. Until Dante, being with other people was the hardest thing in the world for me. But Dante made talking and living and feeling seem like all those things were perfectly natural. Not in my world, they weren't. (Alire Sáenz 31)

Ari has only known Dante for a short time, but his impact on his life has been life-changing for someone as reserved as him. At the novel's beginning, we learn that while Dante is carefree and open, Ari struggles with a constant feeling of loneliness, which seems to be a key element of his personality. When they both meet, even though they appear to have completely different personalities, Ari sees something in his friend that he shares, which they later learn is their sexual orientation. However, Ari will not know that he is gay until he accepts Dante's help and discovers why he feels so ashamed of being himself. Throughout the book, Ari's lack of acceptance of his gay identity and the feelings of shame that come with it make him struggle when trying to find the element that seems to be missing from his identity. Later in the story, we learn that this feeling of shame may be contributing to Ari's distancing himself from society. This distancing is reinforced by the fact that Ari knows that others will not accept him. As a gay and Latino boy living in the 80s, he belongs to two marginalized groups in a time where acceptance was not as prevalent as nowadays, which makes Ari's complex relationship with himself even more understandable. Besides, as Lardier et al. (76) state, queer adolescents of color have to endure an increased level of marginalization and shame. These circumstances commonly lead to higher rates of suicide and mental disorders compared to their white counterparts.

Along with those facts, we have seen that Ari's and Dante's families function differently. While Dante knows that his parents, who are more liberal and open, will always accept him unconditionally, Ari is not sure about his parents' reaction. Ari's parents are as reserved as him about their feelings, and they come from a catholic background, which might make the situation of coming out far more unreachable for our protagonist.

When arriving in the middle of the book, things will start to change for both Ari and Dante, as Dante confesses his love for Ari. This confession is a shock for Ari at a time when being openly gay was not as talked about as today. From that moment onward, Ari will

³ Italics by Alire Sáenz

have to start confronting Dante's sexuality and what it may mean for himself. Ari seems to have some trouble dealing with it. The idea of Dante loving him haunts him in his dreams and makes him have a nightmare that deeply unsettles him. Said nightmare consists of him running over Dante with his car because instead of looking at the road, he was staring at a girl (Alire Sáenz 171). Running over him could be seen as a metaphor for the internal anguish Ari is going through regarding his feelings for Dante. In his dreams Ari's need for a heterosexual crush in order to be accepted by society distracts him from the person he should be paying attention to, Dante. As a result, Ari cannot be honest with his feelings and tries to avoid recognizing himself as homosexual. This nightmare represents his anxiety towards the thought of what could happen to his relationship with Dante if he chose to follow the conventional path instead of what would make him happy.

The torment surrounding Ari increases when, days after the confession, Dante kisses him for the first time: "And he kissed me. And I kissed him back. And then he started kissing me. And I pulled away" (Alire Sáenz 255). Ari's words indicate that when Dante starts kissing him with more intent, Ari retreats and assures him that he does not like it. When he receives Dante's kiss, Ari resorts to his habitual pattern: retreating to himself whenever he must explore a part of himself that feels uncomfortable. Even when Dante has already become Ari's safe space and a person with whom he feels like himself, the struggle to recognize his feelings for Dante is still there for a long time. This struggle is not surprising, as people who belong to sexual minorities are generally highly influenced by an internal need to fit in and hide their sexuality. Their circumstances differ from those of people from racial minorities, whose identity is seen constantly by the world (Diaz 24). Being Latino has been ingrained in Ari and evident to others since he was born. However, his being part of the queer community is something that others are unaware of and that he has to accept and integrate as part of his identity.

Nevertheless, after Dante confesses his feelings for him and kisses him, Ari will gradually evolve and change. Dante's openness and self-acceptance influence this change. Ari, who has presented himself as almost averse to talking about his emotions and thoughts, seems to have found in Dante a confidant and someone in whom he can put his trust. We can see the growth he has made emerge when Dante expresses his awe at the sight of Ari engaging in a conversation about deep feelings such as love. Ari talks about love in a way that suggests that he is internally thinking about what it means to love in a non-canonical way, referencing his feelings towards Dante and their shared queerness:

“Maybe everyone loves differently. Maybe that’s all that matters.”

“You do realize you’re talking, don’t you? I mean you’re really talking.”

“I talk, Dante. Don’t be a shit.”

“Sometimes you talk. Other times you just, I don’t know, you just avoid.” (Alire Sáenz 247)

The fact that Ari, who has always found it challenging to communicate with others throughout the book, can speak his mind with Dante, shows how much Dante has helped him evolve. Ari even says he hates “the thing of living in my head” (Alire Sáenz 299), that is, his constant inner monologue. That statement means that he distances himself from the constant need to be alone and the resistance to connect he experienced at the beginning of the book. Thanks to Dante’s impact, Ari starts breaking the wall that makes him unable to communicate with the people he loves.

Finally, after pages and pages of Ari’s struggle with his own identity and with his relationship with Dante, everything that has happened between him and Dante comes to the surface. Interestingly, Ari’s parents are the ones who make their son aware of the fact that his love for Dante is evident and that he should no longer avoid his feelings. His dad, in particular, seems to relate to Ari’s avoidance of the matter, as he tells him: “Ari, it’s time you stopped running” (Alire Sáenz 347). Not only will this conversation help him come to terms with his feelings for Dante, but it will also help him reconnect with his parents, specifically with his dad. At the novel’s beginning, this talk between them could not have happened, since they needed to connect to reach this point of openness.

After the conversation, we reach the final moment of the book, the catharsis, where Ari makes the move of inviting Dante to go in his truck to the desert, a place both characters love. There, Ari confesses to Dante how scared he felt about admitting that he returned his love: “You said I wasn’t scared of anything. That’s not true. You. That’s what I’m afraid of. I’m afraid of you, Dante” (Alire Sáenz 358). Apart from the risk of social rejection, this fear is strengthened by Ari’s internalized homophobia, which he must overcome to accept the part of himself in love with Dante. The cultural ideal of machismo, which consists of outdated ideas of what it is to be a man, is one of the main challenges gay Latino men must overcome when coming out. Being a gay Latino man means going directly against pre-established gender norms and against the ideals of machismo. Besides,

it seems to indicate that you give up your power as a man if you decide to be openly gay (Diaz 36). Thus, the decision to tell Dante that he is in love with him and to start a relationship with him is a huge sign of Ari's growth as a person.

In addition, having seen in Dante the example of how to be oneself unapologetically has brought our protagonist a tremendous amount of peace regarding his sexual orientation. Being able to love Dante has completely changed Ari's perspective on his own life and future:

This was what was wrong with me. All this time I had been trying to figure out the secrets of the universe, the secrets of my own body, of my own heart. All of the answers had always been so close and yet I had always fought them without even knowing it. From the minute I'd met Dante, I had fallen in love with him. I just didn't let myself know it, think it, feel it. My father was right. And it was true what my mother said. We all fight our own private wars. (Alire Sáenz 358)

In our analysis of Charlie's friendships, we were introduced to his group of friends and saw how they positively affected this character. In this section, we will focus on Sam's impact on our protagonist, acknowledging her as Charlie's main love interest. From the book's very first pages, Charlie seems to hold a conflicted view toward sexual relationships. In the scene when he meets Sam for the first time, he already realizes that he has a crush on her. Following that moment, he has a sexual dream about her at night and instantly feels conflicted about it (Chbosky 23). He seems to be highly aware of not making other people, in this case, Sam, feel invaded or uncomfortable. This extreme empathy can already hint us to his past trauma related to the sexual abuse he suffered as a child. Children who are victims of sexual abuse can develop what can be called "traumatic sexualization" (Finkelhor and Browne 531). This term means that the sexual development of a person is hindered to the point in which they have misconceptions about sexual behavior and morality. These misconceptions can even correlate sexual relations with frightful ideas (Finkelhor and Browne 531). Instead of seeing his dream as something natural for his age, Charlie seems to be more worried about whether knowing about it would make Sam angry enough not to want to be his friend.

The dream Charlie has about Sam is caused by his feelings of infatuation toward her. Nevertheless, Charlie does not dare to act upon those feelings and tell her what he feels for her. Even if Charlie wants to go on a date with her someday, he decides to conform to her being his friend (Chbosky 23). With this attitude, we are introduced to Charlie's crippling loneliness and how it directly affects his possible romantic relationships. Instead of dealing with his crush and letting his feelings flow, he chooses to tiptoe around Sam and check first if it is safe for him to do something about his romantic feelings for her.

As the story progresses, Sam and Charlie will develop a special connection that intensifies Charlie's feelings for her. As to Sam, even if she does not initially fall in love with Charlie, she does appreciate their mutual connection because she feels that it is with Charlie with whom she can be honest and raw about her life.

She told me about the first time she was kissed. She told me that it was with one of her dad's friends. She was seven. And she told nobody about it except for Mary Elizabeth and then Patrick a year ago. And she started to cry. (Chbosky 74)

After Sam shares such an intimate part of her life with Charlie, she kisses him, stating that she wants his first kiss to be with someone who loves him, an act of pure affection far from what she had experienced in the past. This scene changes something in their relationship as they can openly talk about their past and their lack of romantic experiences. Both of their experiences with sexual abuse create a connection between them, even if neither of them is wholly aware of Charlie's past trauma. Moreover, the gentleness with which Sam treats him in this scene and throughout the rest of the book will make Charlie feel more relaxed about entering a romantic relationship, as it offers him a sense of security that he has not had until now.

Despite their emotional connection, Sam will inadvertently cause Charlie pain with the appearance of Craig, her new boyfriend. After the intimate moment she and Charlie had shared, it hurts him and makes him jealous to see her with another boy. Charlie tells the reader that he tends to think about the kiss he and Sam shared to feel better about it, but that will not keep him from getting worse mentally. His unrest intensifies at the New Year's Party, when, under the effect of drugs, he notices that Sam and Craig are in a room by themselves. While he hears them having sex, he thinks of the end of a poem he had previously read, where a person intended to commit suicide: "But the thing is that I can

hear Sam and Craig having sex, and for the first time in my life, I understand the end of that poem. And I never wanted to. You have to believe me” (Chbosky 102).

We can assume that dealing with Sam’s relationship with Craig has become another struggle for Charlie’s mental health. From that moment on, the relationship between Charlie and Sam will become unstable as Charlie’s mental state worsens over the story’s second half. However, even though Sam is not a source of pure happiness for Charlie during those times, confronting his bittersweet feelings towards her will help him connect with his thoughts and feelings. As he admits on several occasions, this connection with his inner world is something that Charlie finds challenging but cannot avoid in this case because his feelings for Sam are very intense.

At the end of the book, a particularly raw scene between Charlie and Sam will be what will lead Charlie to connect with his struggles fully. That scene happens when Charlie and his friends hold a gathering in Sam and Patrick’s house since Sam is heading early to university for a summer course she will be taking during the summer. After most of them leave, Charlie stays a little bit longer to say goodbye to Sam properly, and they both talk in the intimacy of Sam’s room. There, they start kissing and caressing. Charlie had been longing for that level of intimacy since he met Sam. However, when they are about to have sex, Charlie’s PTSD is triggered due to his past trauma with sexual abuse, and he has a panic attack. Fortunately, Sam treats him with care, and they have a genuinely tender conversation about his needs:

“Please don’t feel bad. It was very nice,” I said. I was starting to get really upset. “You’re not ready?” she asked. I nodded. But that wasn’t it. I didn’t know what it was. “It’s okay that you’re not ready,” she said. She was being really nice to me, but I was just feeling so bad. (Chbosky 217)

Even in the face of a situation he had dreamed of, Charlie is incapable of enjoying his relationship with Sam and immersing himself in it. This moment reveals how his inability to identify his trauma and the trauma itself cause him not to be able to connect with Sam the way he would want to. His failed sexual experience with Sam will also trigger Charlie’s later post-traumatic episode and his resulting hospitalization. Although the terms in which the sexual encounter with Sam happened may not have been ideal, thanks to Sam and the intimate moment they share, Charlie will be able to begin his process of

healing the trauma that his aunt left in him. Had Sam not helped Charlie arrive at that stage, he may not have understood himself and his mind until much later in life. Besides, Sam is there for him as he heals from his traumatic episode: “And I thought about Sam telling me to do things. To be there. And I just thought how great it was to have friends and a family” (Chbosky 230). Sam’s appearance in his life has made him see life in a different light, as she has pushed him to live and be a person living in the real world rather than in his head.

In spite of the protagonists’ struggles with relationships, we have seen that both Ari and Charlie have formed deep, romantic connections with people, a new territory where none of them had stepped foot before. Furthermore, as a result of their romantic relationships, both protagonists start uncovering their true personalities, facing their trauma and growing into healthier ways of living.

4. Conclusions

After analyzing both novels, we can affirm that both Ari and Charlie have been positively affected by their close relationships. These relationships have helped them face their trauma and begin their coming-of-age process. Regarding their families, we have seen that connecting with their respective parents and siblings, who, by the end of the story, try to create a welcoming environment for them, has made both protagonists more resilient and confident about their future when confronting their trauma. Similarly, the friendships explored in this essay have allowed the protagonists to embrace social relationships. As a result, they have healed wounds related to their lonely nature and seen that there are people they can trust. Finally, Ari's romantic relationship with Dante and Charlie's romantic relationship with Sam have proven incredibly beneficial for both protagonists. Thanks to them, they can see the world in a much more positive light and process their trauma. All these relationships have ignited a spark in Ari and Charlie, and this spark will help them face their biggest fears with the knowledge that they are not alone through the journey.

Despite their similarities, there have also been factors that have made each of their experiences unique. We cannot forget that in the case of Ari, he belongs to two marginalized groups. The internalized homophobia that Ari has endured or the family dynamics that come from being Latino have made Ari live his life through a rougher lens. On the other hand, Charlie's abuse has been different from Ari's. As we mentioned in the theoretical background, PTSD symptoms vary from victim to victim. For Charlie, the sexual abuse he suffered has been way more incapacitating when trying to live his everyday life.

Regarding the limitations I found when writing this paper, there is an evident lack of studies that deal with how trauma is portrayed in young adult and children's literature. For future research, it would be relevant to focus on how trauma – specifically, PTSD – is represented in other young adult novels, particularly in books with protagonists who belong to a minority. Furthermore, not only should research be done about these stories, but also there should be more stories like these, especially with protagonists who may experience more trauma due to the struggles they live as people that belong to racial, sexual or class minorities. Moreover, it is relevant to say that adolescents with PTSD should be able to see themselves represented in mainstream media, as this representation

can be crucial for their understanding of their struggles. Besides, these stories will become a source of information for people unfamiliar with mental disorders. Stories for adolescents that focus on mental disorders will purposely lead to the destigmatization of said disorders because adolescents who suffer from them will feel represented.

Works Cited

- Alire Sáenz, Benjamin. *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*. Simon & Schuster, 2012.
- Bachem, Rahel, et al. "The role of parental negative world assumptions in the intergenerational transmission of war trauma." *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* 55, 2020, pp. 745-55. doi.org/10.1007/s00127-019-01801-y
- "Benjamin Alire Sáenz." *Simon & Schuster*, www.simonandschuster.com/authors/Benjamin-Alire-Saenz/44544494. Accessed 12 July 2022.
- Brent, David A., et al. "Psychiatric Effects of Exposure to Suicide among the Friends and Acquaintances of Adolescent Suicide Victims." *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, vol. 31, issue 4, 1992, pp. 629-39. doi.org/10.1097/00004583-199207000-00009
- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "bildungsroman". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 6 May 2020, www.britannica.com/art/bildungsroman. Accessed 24 July 2022.
- Chbosky, Stephen. *The Perks of being a Wallflower*. Pocket Books, 1999.
- Diaz, Emily. *Intersectional Identity: Psychological Well-Being of Queer of Color Individuals*. 2015. Haverford College, Senior Thesis. *Institutional Scholarship*, hdl.handle.net/10066/16643
- Dekel, R. and Goldblatt, H. "Is There Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma? The Case of Combat Veterans' Children." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 78:3, 2008, pp. 281-89 (2008). doi.org/10.1037/a0013955
- Duke, Marshall P. and Van Buskirk, Ann M. "The Relationship Between Coping Style and Loneliness in Adolescents: Can 'Sad Passivity' Be Adaptive?" *The Journal of Genetic Psychology* 152, Issue 2, 1991, pp. 145-57. doi.org/10.1080/00221325.1991.9914662

- Finkelhor, D. and Browne, A. "The traumatic impact of child sexual abuse: A Conceptualization", *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 55:4, 1985, pp. 530-41. doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.1985.tb02703.x
- Hébert, Martine, et al. "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder/PTSD in adolescent victims of sexual abuse: resilience and social support as protection factors." *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva*, vol. 19, n. 03, 2014, pp. 685-94. doi.org/10.1590/1413-81232014193.15972013
- Hendrickson, Briana, "Using Young Adult Literature to Confront Mental Health: A Culturally Relevant Approach" (2018). Master's Thesis. 4406. thekeep.eiu.edu/theses/4406
- Irwin, Katherine. "'You Kind of Find Yourself Helpless': Teens' Identity Constructions and Responses to Childhood Trauma." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, vol. 51, no. 1, Feb 2022, pp. 59-84. doi.org/10.1177/08912416211026725
- Lardier, David T., et al. "The Relationship Between Queer Identity, Social Connection, School Bullying, and Suicidal Ideations Among Youth of Color", *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, 14:2, 2020, pp. 74-99. DOI: [10.1080/15538605.2020.1753623](https://doi.org/10.1080/15538605.2020.1753623)
- Margalit, Malka. *Lonely Children and Adolescents: Self-Perceptions, Social Exclusions, and Hope*. Springer, 2012.
- Planellas, Irina, et al. "Do teenagers recover from traumatic situations? Identification of types of change and relationship with psychopathology and coping." *Children and Youth Services Review* 116, 2020, pp. 1-9. doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105147
- "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)." *National Institute of Mental Health*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd#part_2612. Accessed 8 July 2022.

- Strickland, Ashley. "A Brief History of Young Adult Literature." *CNN*, 15 Apr. 2015, www.edition.cnn.com/2013/10/15/living/young-adult-fiction-evolution/index.html. Accessed 4 July 2022.
- "The Perks of Being a Wallflower." *IMDb*, www.imdb.com/title/tt1659337/awards. Accessed 29 Aug. 2022.
- Thompson, Elizabeth. "Stephen Chbosky." *Pennsylvania Center for the Book*, 2018, www.pabook.libraries.psu.edu/literary-cultural-heritage-map-pa/bios/Chbosky__Stephen. Accessed 29 Aug. 2022.
- Torres, Felix. "What is PTSD?" American Psychiatric Association, www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/ptsd/what-is-ptsd. Accessed 1 Mar. 2022.
- Tyler, Kimberly A. "Social and emotional outcomes of childhood sexual abuse: A review of recent research." *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 7(6), 2002, pp. 567–89. [doi.org/10.1016/S1359-1789\(01\)00047-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1359-1789(01)00047-7)
- "Types and Kinds of Feasts and Festivals." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/topic/feast-religion/Types-and-kinds-of-feasts-and-festivals. Accessed 4 July 2022.
- Zatzick, Douglas. "Collaborative Treatment of Traumatized Children and Teens: The Trauma Systems Therapy Approach." *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 161(9), 2007, p. 914. doi:10.1001/archpedi.161.9.914.