RAPE IN LAURIE HALSE ANDERSON'S *SPEAK*: RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE AND ITS AFTERMATH

A THESIS

BY

KAMONWAN CHUMMEE

9 S.A. 2562

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree in English

at Srinakharinwirot University

July 2018

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AN ABSTRACT

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Kamonwan Chummee. (2018). Rape in Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*: Rape Myth Acceptance and Its Aftermath. Thesis, M.A. (English). Bangkok: Graduate School, Srinakharinwirot University. Thesis Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Supaporn Yimwilai.

With the rising number of reported rape cases, rape becomes one of the crucial social problems worldwide. The violation on women's bodies is an issue which has been discussed in many ways. Children's literature is one of the powerful tools used to raise awareness of sexual assault in readers. This study aimed to study the effects of rape myths on a rape victim, a rapist and people surrounding the victim in Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*. It investigated the aftermath of a rape victim and how she was able to overcome symptoms of rape trauma syndrome, both physically and mentally.

Findings revealed that rape myths had a great impact on people's attitudes and judgments, including the victim, the rapist, and people surrounding the victim. Because of the false beliefs and attitudes, the victim, Melinda, felt responsible for being raped and kept the rape incident a secret. The rapist, Evans, strongly believed that he was not a wrongdoer. Moreover, people surrounding Melinda thought that she was a liar.

After being sexual assaulted, Melinda, the victim, showed many symptoms of rape trauma syndrome, both physically and mentally. She responded to the rape experience with a variety of symptoms, including physical, behavioral and psychological reactions. The result showed that although she did not meet any psychologist or receive professional treatment, she was able to overcome the trauma she had suffered by having a good role model to follow, expressing her feelings through art, and to other people.

This study points out that good education and guidance on sexuality plays significant role in protecting young people from sexual exploitation.

การข่มขืนในวรรณกรรมเรื่อง Speak ของ Laurie Halse Anderson การยอมรับมายาคติของการข่มขืน และผลที่ตามมา

บทคัดย่อ

ของ

กมลวรรณ ซุ่มมี

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา

ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาภาษาอังกฤษ

กรกฎาคม 2561

กมลวรรณ ชุ่มมี. (2561). การข่มขืนในวรรณกรรมเรื่อง *Speak* ของ Laurie Halse Anderson การยอมรับมายาคติของการข่มขืน และผลที่ตามมา. ปริญญานิพนธ์ ศศ.ม. (ภาษาอังกฤษ). กรุงเทพฯ: บัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ. อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาปริญญานิพนธ์: ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ ดร.สุภาภรณ์ ยิ้มวิลัย.

การข่มขืนเป็นปัญหาสังคมที่สำคัญปัญหาหนึ่งในระดับโลก ซึ่งสามารถเห็นได้จากจำนวนที่เพิ่มขึ้นของคดีข่มขืน การล่วงละเมิดร่างกายของผู้หญิงเป็นหัวข้อที่ถกเถียงกันในหลาย ๆ รูปแบบ วรรณกรรมสำหรับเด็กนับเป็นวิธีที่มีประสิทธิภาพวิธีหนึ่งในการกระตุ้นการตระหนักถึงปัญหาที่เกิดขึ้นจากการข่มขืน งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ศึกษาผลกระทบของมายาคติของการข่มขืน (Rape Myths) ต่อผู้ถูกข่มขืน ผู้ข่มขืน และผู้คนรอบข้างเหยื่อในวรรณกรรมเรื่อง *Speak* ของ Laurie Halse Anderson งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ยังศึกษาเกี่ยวกับผลที่ตามมาของการถูกข่มขืน และวิธีที่เหยื่อก้าวผ่านอาการบาดเจ็บจากการถูกข่มขืนทั้งทางร่างกายและจิตใจต่าง ๆ

จากการศึกษาพบว่ามายาคติของการข่มขืนมีผลกระทบอย่างมากต่อทัศนคติและการตัดสินใจต่าง ๆ ของผู้ถูกข่มขืน ผู้ข่มขืน และผู้คนรอบข้างเหยื่อ ความเชื่อและทัศนคติของผู้คนเกี่ยวกับการข่มขืน เหยื่อ และผู้ข่มขืน ถูกเข้าใจบิดเบือนโดยมายาคติเกี่ยวกับการข่มขืน เพราะมีความเชื่อและทัศนคติที่ผิดเกี่ยวกับการข่มขืน เหยื่อ และผู้ข่มขืน ตัวเหยื่อรู้สึกว่าการถูกข่มขืนเป็นความผิดของตนเอง จึงเก็บเรื่องไว้เป็นความลับ อีวานส์ ผู้ข่มขืนเชื่ออย่างสนิทใจว่าเขาไม่ใช่คนผิด ยิ่งไปกว่านั้นผู้คนรอบข้างเมลินดาคิดว่าเธอเป็นคนโกหก

หลังจากถูกข่มขืนเมลินดาหรือเหยื่อแสดงอาการบาดเจ็บจากการถูกข่มขืน (Rape Trauma Syndrome) ทั้งทางร่างกายและจิตใจหลายอย่าง เธอตอบสนองต่อการถูกข่มขืนโดยแสดงอาการของโรคในหลายรูปแบบ ประกอบไปด้วยการแสดงปฏิกิริยาผ่านทางร่างกาย ทางพฤติกรรม และทางจิต ผลจากการวิจัยพบว่าแม้เหยื่อจะไม่ได้รับการรักษาจากนักจิตวิทยา หรือได้รับความช่วยเหลืออย่างถูกต้อง เหยื่อก็ยังสามารถหายจากอาการบาดเจ็บที่ทรมานเธอได้โดยการปฏิบัติตามต้นแบบที่ดี การระบายความรู้สึกผ่านงานศิลปะ และกับผู้อื่น

งานวิจัยนี้แสดงให้เห็นว่าการให้ความรู้และการให้คำแนะนำที่ดีเกี่ยวกับเรื่องเพศมีบทบาทสำคัญในการป้องกันเยาวชนจากการถูกแสวงหาประโยชน์ทางเพศ

The thesis titled

"Rape in Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*: Rape Myth Acceptance and Its Aftermath"

by

Kamonwan Chummee

has been approved by the Graduate School as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in English of Srinakharinwirot University.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, my greatest appreciation goes to Assistant Professor Dr. Supaporn Yimwilai, my thesis advisor. Without her guidance, devotion, patience and valuable suggestions, the completion of my thesis would not be possible. Words could never be sufficient to express my gratitude.

I also wish to express my gratitude to my thesis committee, Asst. Prof. Dr. Khomduen Phothisuwan and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nitaya Suksaeresup, whose comments, criticism, support, and encouragements have left a positive mark on my thesis and guided me in the right direction.

I would like to thank the Graduate School of Srinakharinwirot University for its financial support which enabled me to present my research study in an international conference in Japan. It was a great experience and success for me.

My special thanks go to my family—the most important people in my life. Without their warmest care, unconditional love, and incomparable support, I would not have achieved anything in my life.

Kamonwan Chummee

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Rape has become a crucial social problem worldwide. Because of the surging number of rape cases reported each year, it is a crisis that many countries are trying hard to solve. To promote the end of sexual violence, especially rape, many organizations in many countries have been established to help and give knowledge to rape survivors and to individuals who are at risk. Nowadays, rape is a significant violent crime that occurs frequently in Thailand; news reports and images of the violation of female bodies are displayed daily in newspapers and on television screens. Over the past few years, warnings about the dangers of sexual assault have been transmitted through the media, both directly and indirectly. Many rape cases have had a great emotional impact on the general public, resulting in worldwide outrage about this kind of crime. For example, in September 2014, there was a report that a 14-year-old girl was raped at the temple by a monk who was supposed to be teaching her about morality. The next day, police officers arrested a father in Phet Buri who had repeatedly raped his own daughter for a year. In July 2014, a railway officer raped a 13-year-old girl before murdering her by throwing her out of the train. In October 2014, international media attention was focused on the case of a British tourist couple who were raped and murdered in Koh Tao. As a result of such irresponsible crimes, Thailand's reputation has been damaged nationally and internationally. According to an article entitled "Study: One Rape Every 15 Minutes," the Public Health Ministry of Thailand reports that there were more than 31,000 rape cases in 2013, an average of 87 cases per day. In short, one victim was raped every 15 minutes. Sixty percent of rape cases involved university or school students (Study: One Rape).

Women and girls can be sexually harmed by any of the men around them. It is not only strangers who can harm them sexually; any male relative could pose a threat to women and girls. News reports illustrate that rapists can be acquaintances of the victim, or even people whom the victim trusts, such as relatives, neighbors, teachers, friends, coworkers, or monks. Moreover, rape can be committed by somebody the victim is dating, or even by a spouse. Consequently, women are at risk of rape in all walks of life.

Few rape victims have the courage to report rape for several reasons. A fear of social stigma is one of the reasons that discourage victims from reporting the crime. Media coverage and social attitudes about gender and sexuality normalize rape and encourage the acceptance of rape myths. People develop distorted beliefs about rape victims and put the blame on the victims for being raped. Consequently, given the lack of respect for women, rape victims may be judged as vamps who "ask for it." Furthermore, some victims may worry that people who work in the legal system will have the same negative attitudes. Because of social stigma, they are automatically forced to prove themselves to others in order to be seen as victims "worthy" of help.

There is currently a sharp focus on learning about the dangers of sexual violence and how to prevent them. According to "Special Report: Sexual Abuse Prevention Software, by Thai Students," with the rising number of sexual abuse cases globally and the effect on human lives, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are trying to reduce the number of rapes (Srisinsuphya). Media that are easily accessible are used to portray the dangers and to help people protect themselves. In order to raise young people's awareness and enable them to protect themselves from the risks, parents and authorities also try to educate them about the dangers of sexual assault. Moreover, innovative techniques are being used to help reduce the number of rape cases. Thai students who see the centrality of this issue have developed a mobile application, sexual

abuse prevention software, with the aim of helping individuals in an emergency situation (Srisinsuphya). Because of their concern about the women and girls among their loved ones, people do not feel indifferent about this brutal crime and are not prepared to tolerate it. They have become greatly aware of this terrible sexual danger.

Seeing the importance of the phenomenon of the violated female body, women and girls, the main target of this violent crime, are becoming more aware of sexual assault as a crucial issue in many ways. Parental advice is one forum for raising awareness among young people of sexual assault. Education in the school system, through subjects such as Social Studies and Health Education, is another way to boost awareness in young people. Furthermore, television and newspaper media are widely used because of their accessibility. Dramas and television programs are created to directly and indirectly send messages against sexual violence. Similarly, literary works are a tool for raising awareness and helping people to cope with sexual assault problems; literature is one of the universal influential media that people have easy widespread access to.

Literature is a powerful tool for changing people and societies. A work of literature is creatively written by an author for entertainment and appreciation; however, sometimes it directly or indirectly informs readers with a profundity of thought that can effectively change the society. According to Mem Fox, "Texts are important influences that shape us by reflecting the politics and values of our society." Texts are not just passive items that we actively interpret meaning from; they are created to mold us through letters (656). Through writing style, use of vocabulary, and richness of emotion, an author's message conveyed in a literary work can easily sway and reach the audience's hearts. Works that are highly popular can make a huge impact on people. For example, *Ceremony*, a novel by the Native American writer Leslie Marmon Silko, is a literary work that encourages readers to be concerned with the preservation of Native American

culture. Moreover, the relationship portrayed in the book between humans and nature promotes a sense of environmental awareness. Therefore, literary works can have a great impact on their readers.

Children's literature is a powerful tool for raising awareness among young people. Children's literature was originally created from the oral tradition of storytelling for adults, later adapting the qualities of the stories to suit a younger audience. Sex, violence, and rape, when they appear in literary works aimed at children, are always controversial topics that make parents seriously concerned. However, ignoring these topics and pretending that they do not exist does not help prepare children for the real world. They can use books as a window to experience others' circumstances without facing them in their own lives. Confronting difficult issues through texts may lead to positive changes in behavior; in particular, books related to sexual assault may serve as a tool for raising awareness. Judith Rovenger stated that children's literature is like a moral compass. It is not only "the stuff of memories, but it also can be a vital compass point along the byways of life" (45-46). Many books are notably worthy of being shared and read because of their ability to develop human beings spiritually and physically. Readers can feel pleasure, pain, fear, and hope when they encounter situations in literature. For example, Carol Hillsberg and Helene Spak used children's literature in a school as material for teaching children how to cope with bullying (23-28). Through reading, audiences—especially children—can learn what behavior is acceptable in the society. Reading supplements their limited life experience. Children can turn what they read into personal and meaningful learning experiences that they can adapt to their lives. They can also learn what is right or wrong.

In order to raise awareness about sexual violence, many authors use their books as a way to educate and communicate with readers. There are many children's books in the

market related to the theme of sexual assault. Many of them have received awards because of their popularity and profundity of thought. Of these, *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson is the focus of this study.

Although *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson is banned from schools in many states of America, it is a continuously recommended book for children and young people. It was published in 1999, and it continues to be widely criticized for its difficult subject matter. It has won more than twenty awards, including ALA Best Book for Young Adults, ALA Top Ten Best Book for Young Adults, and the ALA Quick Pick for Young Adults, and it has been recognized in the Edgar Allan Poe Awards, the New York Times Bestseller List, and the IRA Young Adult Choice. It received positive reviews from many critics and readers. For example, *Publishers Weekly*, a weekly magazine focused on the international book publishing business, commended the book's "overall gritty realism", emphasizing that "Melinda's hard-won metamorphosis will leave readers touched and inspired." This famous work of children's literature has been translated into sixteen languages around the world. However, the novel has been banned from school libraries and heavily criticized by teachers and librarians, because it exposes difficult issues to children.

Speak is the story of Melinda Sordino, a high school girl, who is raped by a boy in senior class at an end-of-summer party. She breaks up the party by calling the police in an attempt to report her rape incident, but she flees before reporting the crime and keeps it secret. No one else really knows about what happened that night. As a result, she is friendless and an outcast; because they do not know the truth, everyone hates her, even her close friends. She starts her life in high school traumatized. She only feels safe when she spends time alone, and her art class is the only source of healing for her soul. However, she comes to realize that being silent is not the way to cope with her problem and that speaking up is.

Speak is chosen as the focus of this study for several reasons. It has received many awards and has been translated into many languages. Despite this acclaim, it still faces censorship in many states of America. It is also considered to be a problematic novel, as it is concerned with rape and its aftermath. I hope that this study will help readers to see the importance of using children's literature as a tool to raise awareness of sexual assault and learning to cope with difficult situations. Furthermore, I hope that my study will encourage people to become aware of rape as a serious social problem that needs to be solved.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the effects of rape myths on the victim, on the people surrounding the victim, and on the rapist in the context of Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*;
2. To inquire the effect of rape experience on the female protagonist in the context of Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*;
3. To investigate the way a female protagonist copes with difficulties after being raped in the context of Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the presentation of rape and the aftermath of rape in a children's book, *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson.

Procedures

This study consists of the following steps:

1. Accumulation of Information

Information was collected on the following topics:

1.1. Definition of rape;

1.2. Related research on rape in literature;

1.3. Related research on rape myths;

1.4. The concept of rape culture.

2. Information Analysis

2.1. Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* was examined.

2.2. Rape myth acceptance and its effects were analyzed through the text.

2.3. The aftermath of rape was examined.

3 Report of Findings

The findings of the study were discussed in expository form.

4 Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Studies

Conclusions were drawn from the findings and suggestions are made for further studies.

Significance of the Study

This study is meant to promote better understanding of rape and rape myth acceptance in a society. Through better understanding of rape and rape myths, the readers will understand and be aware of the effects of rape and the rape myth acceptance that have long been characteristic of many societies. They can use this study as a guide to analyze rape and rape myths in real life; so that they can convince people to concern

themselves seriously with the crucial social problem of rape and encourage them to make positive social changes with regard to violence against women.

Definitions of Terms

Rape is a forcible act of sexual intercourse with another person without consent.

Rape culture is a complex of beliefs and attitudes in a society that normalizes, trivializes, denies, and/or perpetuates men's aggressive behaviors and violence against women.

Rape myths are false but commonly held beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists that perpetuate the broad acceptance of rape culture.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, the two theories that this study relies on, rape culture and rape myths are reviewed. The definitions and principles of each theory are discussed in detail. Related studies are also presented. At the end of the chapter, Laurie Halse Anderson's biography and works are provided.

Definitions of Rape

It is difficult to clearly define rape, and many definitions have been suggested. According to *Grolier Academic Encyclopedia*, rape is "the act of forcing sexual intercourse upon an unwilling victim." In other words, it is sex against a person's will. For Susan McCammon et al., rape is "sexual coercion which involves depriving a person of free choice and using force (actual or threatened) to engage a person in sexual acts against that person's will" (278). Rape is characterized by William Kornblum et al. as "the act of forcing sexual intercourse on another person against his or her will" (208). Daniel J. Curran and Claire M. Renzetti assert that "rape legally occurs when a person uses force or the threat of force to have some form of sexual intercourse (vaginal, oral, or anal) with another person" (284). Terry Gillespie further clarifies rape as "a brutal and degrading crime of sexual violence whether perpetuated on a female, male, adult or child, and one which, whoever the victim, is perpetrated by men" (148).

Definitions of rape sometimes cause confusion because of the complex and contradictory nature of rape. For example, Carole J. Sheffield stated that rape is "sexual intercourse with a female, not the wife of the perpetrator, without the consent of the female" (6), implying that marital rape is a permissible right for a husband over his

female (46). From the discussion above, it can be concluded that rape can be defined as a forcible act of sexual intercourse with another person without consent.

Rape Culture

Rape is one of the least reported crimes according to information published by police. Rape and attempted rape are unreported by women for several reasons. James A. Glynn et al. state that 25% of women considered rape an intimate problem, and they wanted to deal with it themselves. Twenty-three percent of the victims feared revenge by the rapist. The idea that the police are ineffective and insensitive to rape victims deterred another 23% of raped women from reporting the crime (78). Moreover, Curran and Renzetti point out that the majority of acquaintance rapes, where the rapist was someone known to the victims, went unreported while rapes by a stranger were ten times more likely to be reported by the victims (285). Therefore, it is possible that the number of rapes reported annually is considerably lower than the actual number of rapes committed.

Rape culture, a consequence of social learning, is a complex set of beliefs that condones sexual violence as acceptable human behavior. In some societies, male sexual aggression and sexual violence against women are encouraged. This is often an outgrowth of gender role expectations instilled at a very young age. Gender roles established early on perpetuate an unequal relationship between men and women. According to James William Coleman and Donald R. Cressey, sex roles consist of duties and obligations assigned on the basis of gender at an early age. Societies traditionally have different expectations of men and women in regard to these roles (277). People learn the expected behaviors and attitudes from older members of their own gender. For example, women should be pure, dependent, supportive, submissive, openly emotional, and less ambitious. Moreover, female roles traditionally are focused on home and family. On the other hand,

activity, independence, emotional control, aggression, and dominance are expected of men. Men have an advantage over women as they get "the lion's share of power and authority" (Coleman and Cressey 295). They are taught to compete and achieve for themselves and their families. Violence and aggression are clearly accepted as ways for them to maintain their masculine identity. Furthermore, the nature of sex role differences affects individuals' beliefs about sexual activity and a human being's value. Women are sometimes seen as the property of men. In the past, women *were* property of their fathers or husbands. With insufficient social power to control their lives, women depended on men as protectors because they had more power (Crosby 5). However, as property, women were not valued and were often forced into sexual relations. To this day, in patriarchal environments, sexual violence against women is accepted because men are expected to be dominant and aggressive, while women are expected to be submissive and passive. *Peggy Reeves Sanday* points out that rape is not a natural human behavior, but is a culturally based action that has been enforced in patriarchal societies (qtd. in Mulliken 6). As a result of these gender stereotypes, rape culture is perpetuated in many societies.

Rape culture is a distorted cultural view accepted and perpetuated by many societies. Some people have been conditioned to accept and believe that sexual assaults against women are unimportant. As a result of this belief, instead of educating males to respect women, females are taught to protect themselves from the risk of being raped (Crosby 1). In fact, some men do consider women sexual property. One convicted rapist in the United States told an interviewer the following:

> Rape is a man's right. If a woman doesn't want to give it, the man should take it. Women have no right to say no. Women are made to have sex. It's all they're good for. Some women would rather take a beating, but they always give in; it's what they are for (qtd. in Curran and Renzetti 287).

Some men rationalize their aggressive feelings and sexual intimidation as a way to express their masculinity. Sex is viewed as conquest, and rape is the natural result of male sexuality. The use of force in sexual activities shows the degree of desire and the eagerness of force (Dworkin 225). For men, forcible sex is on "the line between rape and acceptable masculine sexual behavior" (Curran and Renzetti 287).

Women have not been fully protected from rape by the enactment of laws. Historically, according to Susan Brownmiller, during slavery, social stratification and inequality were facts of life (qtd. in Mauro-Cochrane 48). The earliest written laws reflect a strict social stratification system. Rape laws were property laws written to protect a man's property (women) from being devalued. Rape was considered the action of devaluing a man's property (Mauro-Cochrane 48; Lindgren et al. 392). For this reason, women, as the property of their fathers or husbands, were not the actual focus of the laws. Today, women are considered victims in rape cases, but they still must prove themselves the victims, rather than the guilt of the rapists being proven. Furthermore, proving victimization is more complicated if the rapists are known to the victims. More likely, it will be considered as "private disagreements and misunderstandings" by authorities (Curran and Renzetti 285-286).

Rape Myths

Rape myths are false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists that perpetuate a widely accepted rape culture. Many people have inaccurate ideas about rape. Unfortunately, some men use these myths to justify their sexually violent actions. Crosby suggested that rape myths can be divided into three groups: myths of victim blaming, myths of the rapist's exoneration, and myths of the rape's surrounding environment (9).

Myths of blaming the victims include many prejudicial beliefs about women. These myths subscribe to the misconception that it is the woman's fault for being raped. Blame is placed on the female survivors of rape, rather than on the perpetrators of the crime. For example, there is a belief that if there is no physical injury as a result of the victim's resistance, she should not be treated as a rape victim because women cannot be assaulted against their will. They can supposedly prevent rape if they want to by fighting hard. False reporting is another rape myth that makes it easy to blame the victims. Some think that women lie about being raped because they feel guilty after having sex, or they want to seek revenge against their partners. There is also the idea that women "ask for it." The belief is that because of their provocative dress and actions, women deserve to be raped (Sherwood 7; Curran and Renzetti 28; Mulliken 7). Women's beauty and charm are often blamed for arousing men's sexual desire. Sometimes a woman's friendliness may be misinterpreted as an invitation to have sex with a man. In Lance R. Shotland and Lynne Goodstein's study, they found that rape by an acquaintance is questioned as being a genuine rape. They stated:

> "Several authors suggest that it is commonly accepted for a woman to conceal her genuine interest in sexual contact and merely suggest her intentions in subtle or symbolic ways....Conversely, cultural beliefs about the dating situation hold that a woman is expected to resist a man's advances at least in the beginning stages of a sexual encounter, even though she may be responsive and ultimately consent to having sexual relations....It appears that some men may underrate a woman's verbal protests and overrate her expressions of friendliness in their attempts to facilitate a sexual encounter (qtd. in Sherwood 5-6).

This shows that gender patterns constructed by society can affect the attitudes of men on how to interpret women's signals or words. Women's rejection signals and words may be ignored because some men think that women pretend to be "hard to get." Men misinterpret this as flirting. The word *no* from a woman may mean nothing to a man, and he may ignore her protests in favor of his own desires.

There are many notions that support the myths that exonerate rapists. These beliefs benefit rapists by negating accusations against them. An illustration of this type of myth is that if an incident does not involve a weapon or a violent physical attack, some people, even some victims, do not consider the event a rape (Mulliken 8). Without sufficient, accurate knowledge about rape, many people do not know what is considered rape. Some victims do not think that they have been raped; therefore, they do not report the incident as a crime. Moreover, there is the belief that a wife cannot be raped by her husband because the husband has a right to do whatever he wants to his spouse. Another commonly held rape myth is that women are usually raped by strangers. However, some researchers' data show evidence contrary to this belief. According to Lewis A. Coser et al, about one-third of rapes are committed by people known to the victims (qtd. in Glynn et al.78). It is also believed that only men with mental illness commit this violent crime (Curran and Renzetti 284). Media sometimes publicize the idea that rapists are psychotic. The thinking is that normal men cannot commit this crime. Consequently, a rapist may be treated as a sick person rather than as a criminal. Moreover, there is a belief that rapists are not Caucasians, but people of color. Most rapes are interracial crimes (Curran and Renzetti 284), and men of certain races are more likely be accused of rape than others. As a result, white people are generally not accused of rape. According to Joyce E. Williams and Karren A. Holmes's study, men from minority groups, African Americans and

Mexicans in particular, often see themselves as scapegoats in rape accusations (qtd. in Mulliken 10). Some believe that the stereotypical rapist is not a white man.

There are myths about the site of the rape and its surrounding environment. Some believe that being in certain places increases a woman's chance of being raped. In reality, rape can occur anywhere: at home, at school, on public transport, in temples, etc. But a myth exists that rape only occurs in dark and isolated places outside of the home, and it usually happens in lower-class neighborhoods (Curran and Renzetti 284; Crosby 9). Therefore, it is a woman's responsibility to avoid such places to lessen her chance of being raped. Staying at home, women will be safe. So, when they go to risky places, such as a bar or an isolated area, they are responsible if they are raped.

Through these three false myths, rape culture is perpetuated by misconceptions regarding rape, rapists, and rape victims. Moreover, society discourages rape victims from reporting the crime. Rape experiences are minimized by rape myths as unimportant experiences. Although police officers are trained to deal with rape cases effectively, victim-blaming attitudes have not totally disappeared from every police department. Victims will not get the proper help they need if they keep the rape secret, nor will the perpetrators be punished. In addition, victims can become embarrassed and blame themselves for what happened. Consequently, male sexual aggression against women is accepted and justified in some societies while it is also being constantly perpetuated in those societies.

Related Research

In "The Language of Rape: Sexual Violence in Novels by Faulkner, Naylor and Morrison," Pamela E. Barnett studied about a language of rape as a patriarchal visual system in *Sanctuary* (1931) by William Faulkner, *The Women of Brewster Place* (1980)

by Gloria Naylor, and *Beloved* (1987) by Toni Morrison. Through sociolinguistic lens, she examined the language used that portrays women roles in the representation of sexed and racialized subjects in dominant culture. She found that the language of rape about male and female bodies naturalized as myths was produced in *Sanctuary* repeatedly. *The Women of Brewster Place* showed gender notions of rape and the naturalization of male and female bodies about the role of heterosexuality. Also, in *Beloved* she stated that rape was an issue, but it was against the cultural acceptance—heterosexuality and interracial sexuality. It indicated unspoken sexual violence in the dominant cultural narrative.

In "Romanticized Images of Sexual Victimization in Young Adult Literature: The Twilight Series," Amy R. Crosby studied the normalized and romanticized messages and imagery of sexual violence and victimization that promoted a rape culture in the *Twilight* series by looking into incidents of stalking, physical violence, sexual violence, emotional violence, and so on. Finally, she found that there were 217 incidents of violence appeared in romanticized and normalized way throughout the four books of this series.

In "Black Feminist Discourse on Rape and Its Revision in Black Women's Contemporary Narrative of Slavery," Dominique Nicole Swann examined directly in the conversation on sexuality in black female slaves' live in two neo-slave narrative literature, Dolen Perkins-Valdez's *Wench* and Andrea Levy's *The Long Song*. He examined that because of the inherent power imbalance, there was a sturdy line between masters and slaves that divided them from having consensual sexual relationship. He found that although the enslaved women, the protagonists of both *Wench* and *The Long Song*, were literally consented to have sexual intercourse with their master, they did it for better living in return. It was not a truly consent of sexual relation.

Nancy Weitz Miller studied woman's chastity and rape in "Rape and the Rhethoric of Female Chastity in English Renaissance Literature." She looked into female

chastity and its relationship of beauty constructed in texts written by men and women between 1529 and 1675, especially by Jean Luis Vives, Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, John Milton, and Margaret Cavendish. She indicated that there was a conflict between two ideological idea of woman's chastity portrayed in texts. Women were told to behave as a good woman in virtue, but they still had to attract a husband. Their beauty was look as a God's given gift. On the other hand, it was looked as a sin for luring men. Consequently, the texts showed that because of their beauty, chaste women had to take responsible for their victimized position of sexual assault for driving men's sexual desire.

In "See Jane Cry: Rape and Familial Fragmentation in Selected Contemporary American Novels," Jennifer Lynn Hritz analyzed contemporary American literature that related to child abuse. *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* by Dorothy Allison, *She's Come Undone* by Wally Lamb, and *We Were the Mulvaneys* by Joyce Carol Oates were studied focusing on the child victims of sexual violence and their abusers. She also looked into the effect of rape in each text to family structure and so on. She stated that these were the failure of the ideal American family.

Erik Cleveland and Sybil Durand in "Critical Representations of Sexual Assault in Young Adult Literature" showed powerful opportunity for teachers and students to critically engage in and discuss about rape, a sensitive issue, through young adult literature as a valuable material. The study determined to understand the realities of sexual violence in young people's lives and its representation in young adult literatures by examining critically four novels: *Inexcusable* by Chris Lynch, *Fault Line* by C. Desir, *Canary* by Rachele Alpine, *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson. They found that an aggressive sport and sport culture promoted aggressive sexual actions and a rape culture. Victim blaming was also another aspect of rape culture represented in young adult

literature. The decision of women on dressing, drinking and having sexual relation in the past was used to judge the victim for being assaulted.

In "The Effect of Young Adult Literature on Adolescents' Rape Myth Acceptance" by Victor Malo-Juvera, a young adult novel, *Speak*, was used to find the effect of rape myth acceptance on young people. Malo-Juvera found that adolescents' rape myth acceptance could be decreased after reading the young adult novel, *Speak*. The study supported that aesthetic readings as young adult literature should be used as a part of English/Language Art curricula as helping teens reevaluate the beliefs in rape myths.

Applying children book to teach children about sexuality could be seen in "Pushing the Envelope: Exploring Sexuality in Teen Literature" by Eleanor Wood. The study emphasized the benefit of using children books to develop children's knowledge of sexuality. She pointed that instead of avoiding children from sensitive issues of sexuality, they could and should be taught through children books as a different way in order to learn and promote their sexual orientation and activities. She stated that with accurate, truthful advisory and guidance, reading about this topic from children's literature could promote healthy sexuality and give a good environment to learn about themselves in puberty age.

To understand attitudes of young people about sex with consent, Maddy Coy et al. conducted a study "'Sex without Consent, I Suppose that is Rape': How Young People in England Understand Sexual Consent" in 2013. Through online survey, participating in focus groups and individual reviews, the responses of 607 young people aged 13-20 from diverse backgrounds and geographical locations were studied. The study showed that surrounding with information about sex from media, sexting (sending sexualized pictures) and their group norms, their attitudes and understanding about both consent and coercion were wrongly shaped. The construction of gender from societies which had influence on

young people's mind affected the meaning of consent in real life contexts. The study also demonstrated that peer pressure influenced young people to look over the visual signal of repudiation. He asserted that rape was understood by young people as a forced sex when it happened only between strangers.

In "Confessing Captivity: Queer Narratives of Trauma by American Women Writers," Cortney Michelle Grubbs examined American women's writings in order to study how the experiences of captivity and trauma were intertwined in the American women's literature. To clarify her argument, Mary Rowlandson's 17th-century captivity narrative, Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette*, Christine Jorgensen's *Christine Jorgensen: A Personal Autobiography,* Susanna Kasen's *Girl, Interrupted*, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* were examined. She stated that the use of language captivity and other components used in captivity narrative of American female authors was the way to portray physical, emotional, and psychological trauma experiences.

In "My life was Over, My Life Had Just Begun: Rape Recovery through Survivor Testimony, and Trauma Prevention with Early Humanist Education," Jennifer J. Pruiett-Selby used primary texts include: *Lucky* by Alice Sebold, *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson, *Memory Slips* by Linda Katherine Cutting and other sources to examine how victims were able to heal their trauma. Pruiett-Selby emphasized the importance of solution to heal rape victims after the attack. She stated that the victims did not only damaged physically, but their unseen trauma from rape should significantly be seen as important. Silently suffering alone, victims could be healed through art, music and writing. By expressing their voice through art works, they could also help preventing other people from being raped.

In "Get Real, Girl: You'll Never be Perfect: An Analysis and Comparison of Feminine Identity Construction in Popular Teen Magazines and the Novels of Laurie Halse Anderson," Laura Anne Walsh pointed that in popular teen magazine and Laurie Halse Anderson's novels construct different meaning of being a girl. By using Bazerman and Prior's (2003) content analysis method with feminist theory, she analyzed three popular teen magazines, including *Seventeen Magazine, Girl's Life and Teen Vogue* and four novels of Laurie Halse Anderson include *Catalyst, Prom, Speak* and *Wintergirls*. She found that the magazines gave a message to girls that they had to be perfect as "an ideal girl." To change from being imperfect, they had to buy the products advertised in the magazines. With few pursuits provided, young readers were brainwashed with the pop culture's value messaged in columns about beauty, the opposite sex, and a career in entertainment. On the other hand, in novels of Anderson, female protagonists portrayed to young readers how to be "a real girl." They could decide what their life would be without a boy and beauty to succeed in life emphasized in the magazines. All of female protagonists struggled in the same challenges, yet they could overcome all the obstacles by themselves.

In "Reclaiming Voice in Anderson's *Speak*: Adolescent Girls' Self-Awareness of Aphasia in the Intermediate Classroom," Kimberly G. Mahon conducted qualitative study used three methods of data collection: reading response journals, text-based discussion sessions, and one-on-one interviews, in five participants to explore their awareness of silencing and their access to speech because of the realization of the importance of one's voice. Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* were used as an instrument for this study because it was a story that the female protagonist had aphasia. This study revealed that Anderson's *Speak* made readers aware of the access to speak, silence and the effect of how they communicate. Mahon pointed that girls were taught and learned by surrounding

environment when they should speak or be silence in order to keep their relationship with others.

Laurie Halse Anderson's Biography and Works

Laurie Halse Anderson was born on October 23, 1961 in Potsdam, New York, USA as Laurie Beth Halse. She is the oldest daughter of Frank A. Halse Jr. and Joyce Holcomb Halse. She married Scot Larrabee since June 5, 2004. Previously, she married Gregory H. Anderson, and had two daughters, Stephanie Holcomb Anderson and Meredith Lauren Anderson.

In her childhood, Laurie Halse Anderson attended Fayetteville-Manlius High School, in Manlius, a suburb of Syracuse, New York. As a student, she showed her interest in writing. She loved reading, especially science fiction and fantasy. She attended Onondaga Community College and transferred to Georgetown University in 1981. In 1984, she graduated with a bachelor's degree in languages and linguistics.

Anderson started her career as a freelance journalist at The Philadelphia Inquirer. During this time, Anderson also wrote her first children and young adult novel, *Ndito Run* and released it in 1996. In the early years of her career, she wrote many pieces of non-fiction. In 1999, Farrar, Straus and Giroux published her best-known novel, *Speak* which became a *New York Times* bestseller and made her first recognized. In 2004, the book was adapted into a film in which Kristen Stewart starred as Melinda Sordino. The book received several awards and honors, including National Book Award Finalist in 1999, Golden Kite Award in 2000 and ALA Best Books For Young Adults in 2000. *Speak* was translated into 16 languages. In 2018, Anderson admitted that she was sexual assaulted when she was thirteen-year-old, and *Speak* was based on her experience. Some of

Anderson's notable works are *Catalyst* (2001), *Prom* (2002), *Twisted* (2007), *Wintergirls* (2009), and *The Impossible Knife of Memory* (2014).

CHAPTER 3

RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE

Rape myths not only encourage men to commit sex crimes by giving them accusations; they also discourage rape victims from reporting the crime. The way people think about rape, rape victims, and rapists is shaped by social learning. The acceptance of rape myths considerably influences people, societies, and authorities in having distorted attitudes toward rape, rape victims, and rapists. Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson is a work of children's literature that can distinctly expose false beliefs held in our societies. Because of the influence of rape myth acceptance, Melinda, the protagonist, Evans, the rapist, and people surrounding her, hold distorted beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists.

Melinda, who is herself under the influence of rape myths, knows how society will judge her after she reveals the rape. For this reason, she is the first to blame herself for being raped. Because of rape myth acceptance, Melinda keeps her rape experience secret. There are many reasons that make Melinda feel that she should take responsibility for being raped.

The first reason that stops Melinda from reporting the crime is that she took herself into risky places. One rape myth that some people believe is that, in certain places, especially dark and isolated places, women have a high risk of being raped (Curren and Renzetti 284; Crosby 9). They should avoid being in these places; if they decide to go to these risky places, they have to be responsible for the outcome. Women who voluntarily take themselves to risky places will increase the degree of suspicion and doubt in some people's minds about rape victims, because self-protection is one of the criteria that people use for judging women. In Melinda's case, she realizes that she is the one who

walked into a risky situation, by being out late at night and going to the party with her friends without her parents' permission. A party where it can reasonably be assumed that alcohol, drunk people, and sometimes drugs are present is one of the risky areas where a good girl or a good woman should not go. Moreover, Melinda puts herself at higher risk by going into the woods with a man while she is drunk, where, as she describes, "somebody giggled, hidden beyond the dark, quiet boygirl whispers" (Anderson 156). She knows it is a place where couples whisper sweet nothings and exchange kisses with each other, and so, in that isolated area, she does not anticipate any danger. She cannot claim that she is forced to go to the party or to the woods; she makes her own decision to walk into trouble. Therefore, because of her decisions to put herself in unsafe places, she is reluctant to report the crime. Because of her acceptance of rape myth, she thinks that being assaulted is her responsibility.

Another reason that prevents Melinda from reporting the sexual assault is that she was drinking alcohol. Some people believe that women who drink are not good women. Women who go to bars wearing provocative dresses are sometimes seen as gullible, of lower value, and deserving to be raped. Given the lack of respect toward females in patriarchal societies, having drunk alcohol is enough to discredit a rape victim in the eyes of the authorities (Sherwood 7; Curran and Renzetti 285; Mulliken 7). Women and alcohol are not a good combination, and good women avoid alcohol. Many people think that a woman who is willing to drink a lot of alcohol should not complain of being raped. As a fourteen-year-old girl, Melinda is not legally permitted to drink, but she drinks nevertheless. Because she is drunk, she jeopardizes herself. In a semi-conscious state, she cannot make a good decision to prevent herself from getting into an unsafe position. As she recalls the event, "I tasted a beer … Another beer and one more, then I worried I would throw up" (Anderson 156). Because she is incapacitated by alcohol, she is unable

to give consent or prevent sex from taking place. Therefore, because she decided to go to a party and drink alcohol, it is difficult to make other people believe that she does not "ask for it," in the words of one of the rape myths that always blames the victim. Some men seize the opportunity to have sex with a drunk woman by implying that unconsciousness means consent; therefore, women who willingly drink lots of alcohol should not complain about being raped. In Melinda's case, it cannot be denied that, if she tells the truth, some people may think that she deserved to be raped. As a result, because she is influenced by this rape myth, she thinks that no one will believe her rape experience.

Another myth that affects Melinda's willingness to report the crime is that the rapist is not a stranger. It is always complicated in a case when a rape victim knows the offender. Shotland and Goodstein's study showed that a rape committed by someone known to the rape victim is often questioned as a rape (qtd. in Sherwood 5-6). A previous relationship between the woman and the offender is always used as evidence in judging the crime. This has often affected judgments made by people, by society, and by the authorities. In Melinda's case, the truth is that she flirts with the rapist at first; the meeting between Melinda and the rapist starts with the flirting of a boy and a girl. He is therefore not a complete stranger. This creates trouble for Melinda, who holds the false belief that the rapist must be a stranger, in her attempts to explain her unfortunate situation to other people. While she is being flirted with by a "gorgeous cover-model guy," and thinking her friend would be jealous of her, she is happy. At first, she lets him flirt, touch, and kiss (Anderson 156-157). Montgomery suggests that flirting often has different meanings for men and for women. Sometimes men and women flirt to build a friendly relationship, but mostly men flirt with women because of sexual intention (qtd. in Grauerholz 41). Montgomery's idea seems to fit well with Melinda's case. Melinda's intention is just to

have a handsome boyfriend in order to make a bright start to high school life like other teenage girls. On the other hand, Evans, the rapist, interprets Melinda's previous actions as signs that she consents to have sex with him. Consequently, because of the different interpretations of flirting between Evans and Melinda, she ends up being raped by a senior boy from her school. Therefore, given all of her actions, it is hard for her to persuade people to believe that she did not consent or "ask for it." Moreover, other people who hold rape myths may think that she deserves to be raped, because her flirting provokes the man to have sex with her. Curran, Renzetti and Sheffield state that rape is a crime in which victims must prove themselves as victims, and they have to prove that they did not consent (285; 7). Similarly, Melinda herself questions whether her flirting meant consent. Therefore, it is problematic for her to prove that she is the victim of this sexual crime because people usually blame date rape victims. This is illogical, because people overlook the victim's right to say no at any time. Legally, a previous relationship between the victim and the offender cannot be used to judge a sexual crime; willingness to flirt, to kiss, and to embrace does not always mean consent to having sexual relations (Kring et al. 445).

Another reason that stops Melinda from reporting her rape experience is that she feels she did not fight hard enough to protect herself from being raped. Some people hold the idea that a woman cannot be raped against her will and that she can protect herself from being assaulted by fighting hard (Sherwood 7; Curran and Renzetti 28; Mulliken 7). According to Carole Sheffield, rape is considered as a sexual act that demands evidence to prove that there has been forcible action or resistance to that action. To convict a rapist, a victim is required to provide proof in the form of evidence of force and resistance. A victim's words are not sufficient to convict a rapist of a crime (6-7). In Melinda's case, when she realizes that the situation is too much to handle, she cannot resist or take control

of anything. Because of her drunkenness and the difference in physical strength, she cannot firmly refuse or prevent the nonconsensual sexual activity from taking place. She can only mumble about wanting him to leave her alone, and she knows she sounds like "a deranged drunk" (Anderson 158). When she wants to scream, her mouth is shut by his hand, and her refusal of consent is intentionally ignored. After the rape, although she decides to call the police, she flees before reporting the crime because of her doubt that the event took place. "Was I raped?" is a question that presents itself to victims who hold rape myths, and Melinda is one of them (Anderson 190).

Melinda's rape case is by no means the only rape case to go unreported: many victims decide not to report crimes. Nancy Crowell and Ann Burgess claim that twenty to twenty-five percent of American women will be sexually assaulted during their lifetimes (qtd. in Kring et al. 444). However, rape is one of the least reported crimes, according to information published by police. Twenty-five percent of victims consider rape an intimate problem that they want to conceal and deal with by themselves (Glynn et al. 78). When a woman is raped on a date (when the rapist is someone known to the victim), it appears that she is less likely to report the incident. On the other hand, a random rape by a stranger is ten times more likely to be reported by the victim (Curran and Renzetti 285). Moreover, according to Koss and Harvey, sixty percent of rape victims are worried that they will be blamed for being raped (qtd. in Kornblum et al. 209). The number of reported rape cases therefore does not accurately reflect the incidence of rape.

The acceptance of rape myths has a great impact on Andy Evans's attitudes toward rape. According to Sheffield, victim-blaming is pervasive in male-dominated societies. Rape myths are established to justify the sexual violence of men against women and to ensure that men will not be punished for their sexual violent actions (13). Some rapists use rape myths to justify their violent sexual activities toward other people. Since

rape myths are widely accepted in many societies, they are sometimes used to clear rapists of accusations.

From Evans's perspective, he has not done anything wrong. He believes that Melinda's sexual assault experience is not rape, just a misunderstanding and disagreement between Melinda and him. Evans, the rapist, also justifies his sexually violent actions and puts the blame on Melinda. He states:

> You have a big mouth, you know it? Rachel blew me out at the prom, giving me some bullshit story about how I raped you. You know that's a lie. I never raped anybody. I don't have to. You wanted it just as bad as I did. But your feelings got hurt, so you started spreading lies, and now every girl in school is talking about me like I'm some kind of pervert. You've been spreading that bullshit story for weeks. What's wrong, ugly, you jealous? Can't you get a date? (Anderson 24)

He clearly holds false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists. His logic is distorted by his beliefs and his high self-esteem. He negates the accusation of being a rapist by telling Melinda that he is a boy that everyone wants to know and date; there is no need for him to rape anyone. Melinda is thus blamed as a liar who wants to seek revenge. Evans's distorted thinking is similar to an idea of rape in *Playboy*, published in October 1990, which states that "the new definition of rape gives women a simple way of thinking about sex that externalizes guilt, remorse, or conflict. Bad feelings after sex become someone else's fault" (Dworkin 230). Evans accuses Melinda of being mad and of spreading a rumor about being raped because she is not the one he chose. Moreover, for Evans, what happened is not rape, because he thinks that Melinda enjoyed it: "You didn't scream before. You like it. You're jealous that I took out your friend and not you" (Anderson 25). He overlooks the truth that she said "No," even though it sounded like a mumble because

she was drunk. Moreover, he covered her mouth with his hand in order to prevent her from screaming. His response toward Melinda's refusal of consent is supported by Shotland and Goodstein's study, which indicates that women's verbal rejections may be underrated by men (qtd. in Sherwood 5-6). Melinda's weary resistance is ignored and somehow interpreted as her wanting it, when he asks her, "Do you want to?" Evans' question shows his distorted belief that women secretly want to be raped and that they enjoy it. Therefore, he does not feel guilty about any of his actions toward Melinda, because he thinks he has done nothing wrong.

Being influenced by rape myths, people surrounding Melinda think that she is a liar. The actions of the people surrounding Melinda essentially affect her willingness to report the crime. One reason that keeps Melinda from telling someone about the rape is that she wants to be accepted into the community and into a group of friends. Social rejection is one of the results she encounters from trying to speak. For example, she is crying, with tears on her face and a bruise on her lips; however, she is slapped by someone who hears that she has called the police, and her friend, Rachel, is mad at her (Anderson 158-159). Without any reason being given, she is shunned by the other students. Being a teenager is about being part of a clan, but Melinda starts her high school life clanless and a pariah in the school. She does not want to be friendless: "I need a new friend. I need a friend ... Not a true friend ... Just a pseudo-friend, disposable friend. Friend as accessory. Just so I don't feel and look so stupid" (Anderson 25). She still cares about what people think and about how they judge her. She only wants to be a normal teenager who has a friend to "confess everything, hand over the guilt and mistake and anger to" (Anderson 59).

In addition to being shunned at school, bullying is another effect of Melinda's trying to tell the truth. Although she does this to protect her rights over her own body and

her right to be safe, she is physically and verbally bullied by other students. In her words, "Rachel and every other person I've known for nine years continue to ignore me. I'm getting bumped a lot in the halls. A few times my books were accidentally ripped from my arms and pitched to the floor" (Anderson 16). She is also hurt by mean children who found out that Melinda had called the police: "When the pep rally ends, I am accidentally knocked down three rows of bleachers" (Anderson 35). In fact, these events are not accidents, but the other students intentionally assault her. She realizes that social judgment and word of mouth are powerful after she calls the police on the night of the party. She is not sure that everyone will believe her if she tells them what happened to her on that night. Therefore, before telling the truth, which will harshly affect her social life, she has to think twice. In the end, concealing the rape event as a secret is the course of action she chooses for her own safety.

Rachel's acceptance of rape myths has a significant impact on Melinda's courage for reporting the sexual crime. After telling the truth about rape, sometimes a rape victim is looked on as a liar for various reasons. According to Sherwood, Curran, Renzetti, and Mulliken, some people think that a woman will lie about being raped because she feels guilty after having sex or because she wants to seek revenge (7; 28; 7). This idea applies clearly in Melinda's case. Because of concerns about safety, Melinda decides to tell Rachel, her ex-best friend, who is now dating Andy Evans, the rapist, about the rape incident at the party so that what happened to Melinda will not happen to Rachel. She hopes that Rachel will believe her and get away from him. Unfortunately, Rachel thinks that Melinda has made up a story because of jealousy and anger; Melinda's goodwill is viewed as the revenge plan of a jealous girl. Rachel believes intensely that her boyfriend cannot be a rapist. Evans, a white man who is good-looking and rich, has certain characteristics that make people treat rape accusations with suspicion. Curran and

Renzetti state that people often believe that Caucasians are not rapists; according to Mulliken, African-Americans and Mexicans, who have a bad image in society, are often accused of being rapists (284; 10). In the context of this kind of belief, Evans can hardly be seen as a rapist. Rachel is therefore angry at Melinda and says, "Liar! I can't believe you. You are jealous that I'm popular and I'm going to prom and so you lie to me like this. And you sent me a note, didn't you? You are so sick" (Anderson 213). It shows that Melinda's goodwill is worthless, because Rachel sees it as an attempt at revenge by her jealous ex-friend. Besides, Rachel's words destroy the courage Melinda needs to speak the truth. Her rape experience is seen as a lie told by a jealous and vindictive girl who is only doing it for her own benefit. Her experience is minimized as unimportant, and this reaffirms her view that people may not believe her: "I got my hopes up halfway through the conversation with Rachel—that was my mistake. It was like smelling the perfect Christmas feast and having the door slammed in your face, leaving you alone in the cold" (Anderson 214).

Because of insufficient knowledge about rape, Melinda, a fourteen-year-old girl, feels ashamed and thinks it is her fault for being raped. She truly believes that she has to take responsibility for being raped. Her embarrassment and shame are shown in the way she thinks about herself. She thinks that she is similar to Hester Prynne, the protagonist found guilty of adultery in *The Scarlet Letter*, a novel taught in English class. To expose her humiliation publicly, Hester must wear a scarlet "A" on her dress to mark her shame and, as a punishment, she must stand on a scaffold for hours. However, her secret lover remains unidentified. He is tortured with anguish as a result of his unconfessed sin. Melinda, because of the embarrassment and guilt in her mind, thinks she is similar to Hester: "I can see us, living in the wood, her wearing that A, me with an S maybe, S for silent, for stupid, for scared. S for silly. For shame" (Anderson 118). Instead of branding

herself with a letter "A" like Hester, Melinda disgracefully brands herself with a letter "S" to stand for her being silly, stupid, and scared. This suggests that she blames herself for going to the party and that she should be silenced. Consequently, her heart is slowly dying: "they [my feelings] are chewing me alive like an infestation of thought, shame, mistake" (Anderson 146).

Melinda is a good example of a person who does not understand the realities of sexual violence. According to Kring et al., a person who is below the required age cannot legally take part in any sexual activity, even with consent; any such activity is classified as statutory rape (444). Because of the consequence of social learning and insufficient guidance, Melinda has inaccurate ideas about rape. She does not know that she is protected by the law in all coercive sexual circumstances. She is too young to know that it is not her fault for being raped or that the rapist's use of force is enough grounds for prosecuting him. Sex is always a controversial topic to teach accurately and truthfully to young people; however, C. J. Bott has argued that "trying to pretend rape does not exist is dangerously ignorant" (qtd. in Cleveland and Durand). Consequently, to protect children like Melinda from distorted beliefs and potential bad circumstances, schools, parents, and the authorities should help prepare children to become socially responsible people who can live in the real world.

CHAPTER 4

THE AFTERMATCH OF RAPE

Because of the long history of sexual inequality, women have always been second-class citizens. In patriarchal societies, the rights of women have been limited for a long time. In the past, women were just the property of their father or husband. Their value was judged by men, and purity was one of the criteria used for making value judgments on women. On that view, rape is just an action of devaluation of men's property. For years, women fought for the right to be equal to men in everything; however, they could not completely change people's minds in patriarchal societies. Some beliefs about women still show the inequality in people's minds, even in the minds of women themselves. Rape myth acceptance is a good example of the results of sexual inequality in society. Women who are raped are usually regarded negatively because of the acceptance of rape myths. Mostly, rape victims are blamed by other people, and sometimes by themselves.

Rape victims do not only hurt physically from being raped. Many rape victims continue to suffer from post-rape trauma. Some who ask for help might be healed both physically and mentally by suitable doctors. However, as mentioned in Chapter 2, most rape victims do not report the crime and, therefore, most of them do not receive professional help. They usually endure rape trauma syndrome (RTS), which can affect their lives physically and psychologically.

RTS was mentioned by Ann W. Burgess and Lynda L. Holmstrom in the Journal of the American Psychiatric Association in 1974 (Keogh 221; McGrath 254). Cling mentions that RTS is acknowledged as a form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) caused by the stress of rape (qtd. in McGrath 256). RTS is a stress response pattern

characteristic of victims of nonconsensual or forcible sexual activity. Rape victims have different physical and psychological responses toward rape, depending on multiple factors (Burgess and Holmstrom; Hazelwood and Burgess qtd. in McGrath 255). According to Andrew Keogh, particular characteristics of RTS sufferers that can be examined by a specialist include intrusive symptoms, nightmares, numbness, social impairment, sleeping disorder, irritability, and jumpiness or exaggerated startle responses (221). Consequently, some rape victims suffering from RTS may never live normal lives again.

Melinda is one of the rape victims who show many symptoms of RTS. The rapist not only physically violates her; he also hurts her mentally. She responds to the rape experience with a variety of symptoms, including physical, behavioral, and psychological reactions.

After being raped, Melinda clearly shows physical symptoms of RTS, such as lip-biting. Due to the trauma, Melinda cannot control her own body: "I nibble on a scab on my lower lip," and "I can't stop biting my lips. It looks like my mouth belongs to someone else, someone I don't even know" (Anderson 19). Although Melinda notices that there is something wrong with her lips, she does not know that this is an intrusive symptom caused by her stress. Siobhan, a student in her school, talks about Melinda's lips to Heather: "She's creepy. What's wrong with her lips? It looks like she's got a disease or something" (Anderson 53). This shows that Melinda is not the only one who sees her abnormal lip-biting behavior. However, no one can recognize or acknowledge that it is a physical sign of mental illness.

Another physical symptom Melinda shows when she is under pressure is nail-biting. For example, when she receives an envelope from an unknown sender on Valentine's Day, she has to figure out whether it is a joke from her haters or from David

Petrakis, in whom she has some interest. Under stress because of an envelope, she bites her thumbnail until it bleeds (Anderson 128). Melinda also describes buying a bottle of "Black Death" nail polish because it will match the "squiggly lines" of her bloody nails (Anderson 96). This shows that she regularly bites her nails when she feels depressed and under stress. Her tension unconsciously forces her to hurt herself.

Scraping her arms with unfolded paperclips is another kind of physical harm that she inflicts on herself. As she describes it:

> I open up a paper clip and scratch it across the inside of my left wrist. Pitiful. If a suicide attempt is a cry for help, then what is this? A whimper, a peep? I draw little windowcracks of blood, etching line after line until it stops hurting. It looks like I arm-wrestled a rosebush (Anderson 101).

Because Melinda's soul is tortured and destroyed after being raped, without her realizing it, she feels indifferent toward everything. This shows that the hurt of all the self-harm is unable to equate to the bad feelings inside her mind. Her self-harm therefore gets worse and worse, day by day. Nevertheless, she does not know that it is her way of indirectly expressing her stress, and the signs of her stress are ignored by everyone, even by Melinda herself.

According to Fiona Mason and Zoe Lodrick, injuring themselves and engaging in self-harm behavior is one kind of "self-medication" in rape victims with PTSD (31). Therefore, biting her lips, chewing her nails, and scraping her arms, as illustrated above, are acts that Melinda carries out unconsciously to heal herself from her psychological distress. Because she cannot express to anyone her torment about being assaulted, the pressure and tension are unwittingly revealed through her self-harm actions.

Last but not least, Melinda's sleeping behavior becomes disordered because of her anxiety. According to Mason and Lodrick, rape victims experience increased levels of

sleeping disorder as part of a process for the avoidance of remembering the rape (31). This symptom is also evident in Melinda's case, as her only "goal is to go home and take a nap" (Anderson 28). She feels exhausted all the time and needs to sleep more and more. However, sleeping at home becomes so difficult that she wants to sleep in the hospital, Lady of Mercy Hospital: "I pick up a gown. I want to put it on and crawl under the white knobbly blanket and white sheets in one of those high-off-the-ground beds and sleep. It is getting harder and harder to sleep at home ... Would they let me rest for a few days?" (Anderson 132). The secret of being raped becomes hard for her to handle now, and it has an impact on her sleeping. Her desire to sleep in the hospital suggests that, whether or not she realizes it, she needs treatment and support to make her feel better.

Because she has been forced to have sexual relations, Melinda's behavior obviously changes. Firstly, she seems to choose to avoid connecting with people around her. She cuts herself off from her family by staying in her room as much as she can. She feels uncomfortable speaking, even with her father, and she describes what happens when she hears her father's jeep in the driveway while she is watching television. She reacts to the sound by bolting upstairs, and "by the time Dad unlocks the door, everything looks the way he wants to see it, and [Melinda] have vanished" (Anderson 17-18). This shows that she does not want to communicate with her family. At school, she also separates herself from other students by finding her safe zone, an abandoned janitor's closet. Because she is physically and verbally bullied by other students, Melinda feels that school is not a safe place for her anymore. She is faced with aggressive actions, such as "a few times [Melinda's] books were accidentally ripped from [her] arms and pitched to the floor" and "getting bumped a lot in the halls" from other students. Henceforward, she feels that she is "in the middle of a hostile crowd" of people who hate her. She thinks that "Rachel and every other person I've known for nine years continue to ignore [me]"

(Anderson 33, 16). Moreover, people surrounding her seem to mean nothing to her. She starts naming people by their distinctive points. For instance, she calls the school principal Principal Principal, her English teacher Hairwoman, her biology teacher Ms. Keen, her Social Studies teacher Mr. Neck, and, more importantly, she calls Evans, the rapist, "IT." There are few people that she mentions by their real names. This indicates that she has no connection with people around her; she feels more comfortable maintaining a distance between her and other people. Sadly, no one cares about helping Melinda out of the oppressive situation she finds herself in. Consequently, being alone makes her feels safer, and this leads her to skip class and stay alone in the closet (Anderson 31).

Another obvious change in Melinda is shown in her studies. The effect of being raped is obviously noticeable in her academic record. In the past, Melinda used to be "a straight-B student, no behavioral problem, few absences" (Anderson 133). Skipping classes to go somewhere else, sneaking into the closet for a nap, doing her artwork, hiding from mean people, and releasing her feelings have both beneficial and unbeneficial effects on Melinda. In terms of beneficial effects, she feels safe hiding from mean people in her safe zone, and it gives her time to figure out "how to save Rachel, her former friend, from Andy Evans in [Melinda's] closet, [her] throne room, [her] foster home" (Anderson 174). However, it also isolates her from reality and life. Furthermore, her school grade performances become worse than before, and her parents are called to meet with the principal because of the change. Bad grades are one sign that shows something is wrong with Melinda. Unfortunately, nobody tries to find the cause of the changes in her.

The turmoil of horrible flashbacks is a mental condition that Melinda faces after being raped. Mason and Lodrick point out that one psychological response of rape victims is trying to forget everything that reminds them about the assault. In pretending that

nothing happened to them, some sufferers may use a psychological response to fragment their rape events. Survivors of rape who are confronted with an extremely distressing situation can be profoundly disturbed by flashbacks, nightmares, and emotions (31). As Mason and Lodrick describe, Melinda attempts to live as if nothing has happened to her, and she suffers harshly from flashbacks. For example, in a biology class, students are taught about anatomy, and they have to dissect a frog. For other students, cutting up a frog seems to be "cool," and David Petrakis, Melinda's lab partner, thinks it will be good practice for his future career. However, Melinda feels different from the others, and she faints when she and Petrakis are dissecting the frog. The way the frog is tied up reminds her of the horrible memory: "I have to slice open [the frog's] belly. She doesn't say a word. She is already dead. A scream starts in my gut—I can feel the cut, smell the dirt, leaves in my hair" (Anderson 93-94). The bad memory that Melinda is trying to forget becomes clearer because of the dissection. It recalls the rape event that she is trying to forget but actually cannot. As Mason and Lodrick have demonstrated, rape victims who try to forget about rape and live their lives as if nothing happened seems to suffer from flashbacks, as Melinda does. Therefore, if she does not accept the reality of what has happened, she will have to continue to bear this psychological distress.

Moreover, Melinda loses her ability to speak, not only about the rape but also about everything: she has lost her voice, become voiceless. According to Janis, traumatic experience is deeply disturbing to every feature of an individual's function. After facing a dangerous or frightening situation, an individual will go into survival mode, which includes fighting or fleeing. If the individual cannot properly protect himself/herself by either fighting or fleeing, he/she may choose the only option left, which is dissociation. Janis also identifies loss of language as one of the most remarkable features shown in cases of trauma (qtd. in Bloom). Similarly, Melinda goes through speaking problems. She

cannot express her thoughts or feelings to anybody. For example, she cannot tell Rachel, her best friend, the truth about the rape, despite thinking that "if there is anyone in this entire galaxy I am dying to tell what happened, it's Rachel." However, Melinda cannot say any words to Rachel because she feels that her "throat burns" (Anderson 5). This indicates that her nerves are tense, affecting her stomach and producing acid that burns her throat. This is not just a psychological effect; she is also experiencing physical symptoms that prevent her from talking. Similarly, when Melinda sits in the bleachers with Heather at a pep rally, a girl sitting behind her asks, "Aren't you the one who called the cops at Kyle Rodger's party at the end of summer?" After the girl is sure that it was Melinda who called the cops, she pokes her hard with her nails. One of the people who hears about this calls Melinda an "asshole," because her brother is in jail and has lost his job. Although Melinda is bullied by these people, she cannot defend herself. Her mouth remains shut. "You don't understand" is the answer she gives in her head, although no one hears it. Because no one understands her real situation, she cannot express her depressed and painful feelings to anybody. She therefore becomes voiceless.

Furthermore, after being raped, Melinda is faced with the problem of trusting people. According to Mason and Lodrick, victims who are raped by acquaintances often experience greater difficulty in building intimate relationships than victims who are raped by strangers; they are aware of potential danger and question everything because they cannot trust their judgment again. They think that everyone can be a sexual threat to them (30). In Melinda's case, she starts to question her own judgment because her previous false judgment led to her being raped. This is clearly shown when Petrakis asks her to celebrate after the basketball game at his house, "Come on, Mel. You gotta come with us! My dad told me to bring anyone I wanted. We can give you a ride home after if you want. It'll be fun. You do remember fun, do you?" (Anderson 153). This shows that he has

some interest in Melinda and wants to start a relationship with her. However, being raped by a high school boy who seemed nice makes Melinda think twice about Petrakis's invitation. In the end, she refuses his invitation, because "I don't have a good track record with parties" (Anderson 154). This shows what Melinda is thinking: that even though David Petrakis is a "hero" for her, she still cannot fully trust him (Anderson 79). Moreover, when Petrakis says he might call her, Melinda thinks she will answer his call, but there will be no touching between them. If he touches her, she will "explode" (Anderson 185). This indicates that she does not trust anyone.

One mental illness that Melinda suffers after being assaulted is self-revulsion. After being raped, Melinda thinks about herself differently and feels that she is not the same "Melinda" anymore. Because she feels impure, she feels revulsion for herself. She cannot bear to look at her own body: "I can't even look at that part myself (Anderson 33)," because she thinks that it is too dirty. Melinda even tries to wash away all her facial features when she cries because of the feeling of self-hatred (Anderson 53); being nobody is making her soul die one piece at a time. Furthermore, she cannot bear to look at herself in mirrors. She takes the mirror in her room down and puts it in the back of her closet, and she also covers the mirror screwed to the wall in the janitor's closet with the Maya Angelou poster that a librarian gives her (Anderson 19, 58).

The name of Maya Angelou appears in this story with good reason. The author seems to choose her to connote the importance of the right to speak. Maya Angelou is an African-American writer and civil rights activist who uses her written work and autobiographies as her voice for disclosing to the public her history and the suffering of African-Americans. She exposes through her writings—her artistic work—the torture experienced in her lifetime. I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings is her first autobiography, in which she tells about her early life up to the age of seventeen. Although this book is a

famous and critically acclaimed autobiography, it is banned in some U.S. libraries because in it Angelou describes being sexually abused. One of those libraries is Melinda's high school library. The school librarian gives Melinda a Maya Angelou poster because she cannot display it in the library. Melinda thinks that Angelou must be a great writer because the school board bans her work (Anderson 58). Angelou is respected as a spokesperson for black people; banning her book means banning her voice. Angelou is therefore an inspiration that drives Melinda to express her feelings. On the other hand, the school board also lends credibility to Melinda's belief that "nobody really wants to hear what you have to say." Anything you have heard from television about expressing your feelings and communicating to people is a "lie" (Anderson 10). The space for truth in society is still limited.

The Healing Process

Given their feelings of guilt, humiliation, degradation, self-blame, and embarrassment after being sexual assaulted, most victims are significantly hurt, physically and emotionally. In response, most of them change their routines and behaviors for the rest of their lives. People who experience this kind of crisis situation are sometimes too emotionally vulnerable to endure the suffering. In Melinda's case, although she has suffered from post-rape trauma both physically and psychologically, she is in the end able to overcome her pain.

First, she has an ideal person to be her role model. David Petrakis, Melinda's lab partner in biology class, is an important person who, intentionally and unintentionally, inspires her to speak. Melinda truly admires him and sees him as her "hero" (Anderson 79). When Mr. Neck, a history teacher who always uses his authority and personal political views to abuse and brainwash students in his class, expresses his ideas about

stopping immigration in America in 1900 because his son did not get a job as a firefighter, many of the students react differently to this offensive topic. Petrakis is the only one who is brave enough to voice an opinion that is opposite to that of Mr. Neck. He argues that getting a job is not about the nationality of the person; in this case, it is about the lack of ability of Mr. Neck's son. Although the debate is stopped by Mr. Neck, who is now furious because the result is not what he wanted and everything seems out of his control, Petrakis vigorously and immediately expresses his standpoint and fights for his right to speak and think differently. He opposes Mr. Neck with these words:

> The Constitution does not recognize different classes of citizenship based on time spent living in the country. I am a citizen, with the same right as your son, or you. As a citizen, and a student, I am protesting the tone of this lesson as racist, intolerant, and xenophobic.

After saying this, Petrakis stares at Mr. Neck and looks at the flag for a minute before walking out of the class. His actions mean "a million things without a word. [I, Melinda] make a note to study David Petrakis. I have never heard a more eloquent silence" (Anderson 66). With the support of his parents and his family's lawyer, Petrakis is given the right to express his idea. His speech strongly inspires Melinda (Anderson 64-66). His bravery really impresses and inspires her, and his fight for the right to speak inspires Melinda to stand up for her own right to speak. Silence is not necessarily a bad thing, but it must be used wisely, and Petrakis knows when to be silent and when to speak out. His brilliance, confidence, and self-assertion inspire Melinda to become stronger and help her to become able to speak the truth about her rights.

David Petrakis's speeches influence Melinda to find the courage to tell her secret. Mr. Neck assigns the students to write a report on "Cultural Influence at the Turn of the Century" for extra credit, and Melinda chooses to write about the suffragettes. For

Melinda, it is a chance to express her feelings, because women at that time were like dolls in men's houses, unthinking and voiceless—like Melinda. As a result, she writes an excellent report with footnotes and lots of sources. However, Mr. Neck, who has a bad attitude toward Melinda, asks her to present the report in front of the class. Unable to speak and voiceless, Melinda chooses to write on the blackboard:

> THE SUFFRAGETTES FOUGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO SPEAK. THEY WERE ATTACKED, ARRESTED, AND THROWN IN JAIL FOR DARING TO DO WHAT THEY WANTED. LIKE THEY WERE, I AM WILLING TO STAND UP FOR WHAT I BELIEVE. NO ONE SHOULD BE FORCED TO GIVE SPEECHES. I CHOOSE TO STAY SILENT (Anderson 181).

By presenting her report in silence, Melinda receives a D and ends up in Merryweather In-School Suspension after being sent to the authorities by Mr. Neck (Anderson 178-181). Although Petrakis feels sorry for Melinda's grade and her punishment, he makes the point that she misses about the suffragette movement: the suffragettes were concerned to speak out in order to gain rights. If women at that time had not spoken out, they would not have been able to change anything. Silence was not the solution: "That's letting the bad guys win" (Anderson 184). With Petrakis's advice, Melinda decides to speak up for herself.

Because of a good environment and a fully inspirational teacher, Melinda recovered from her psychological traumas in art class. Mr. Freeman, a talented art teacher, is a key person who supports and helps Melinda. He is the only teacher whom Melinda does not give a nickname. His name already connotes something, and he urges Melinda to express her feelings and thoughts. As a talented artist and a good teacher, he is able to notice Melinda's depression from her artworks. For example, he analyzes Melinda's turkey-bone exhibit that is related to her internal suffering: "I see a girl caught in the remains of a holiday gone bad, with her flesh picked off day after day as the carcass

dries out ... This has meaning. Pain" (Anderson 74-75). Moreover, Mr. Freeman is the only one who willingly listens to Melinda's problem. When he first notices the problem, he does not hesitate to ask or to break Melinda's silence by saying, "You're a good kid. I think you have a lot to say. I'd like to hear it ... If you ever need to talk, you know where to find me" (Anderson 143-144). This indicates that he is ready to listen and support Melinda, and his generosity begins to break the ice in her heart. His name, Mr. Freeman, also implies something that can soothe Melinda and free her from the pressure she is under. His art class is a sanctuary for all the students, especially Melinda, for whom it is "Cool Central," because Mr. Freeman makes his class free of rules. Consistent with his name, students are allowed to eat and turn on the radio, as long as they work (Anderson 91). With all of this, Mr. Freeman shows that freedom should not have rules. If Melinda wants to be free from the pressure in her mind, she has to overcome her fear. Thanks to his caring nurture, the distance between Melinda and Mr. Freeman is destroyed.

When she has no one to talk about her problems with, Melinda expresses her feelings through her year-long art project in this art class. On the first day of the class, Mr. Freeman says, "Welcome to the only class that will teach you how to survive ... This is where you can find your soul if you dare. Where you can touch that part of you that you've never dared look at before" (Anderson 11-12). This statement suggests that art has the power to transform and empower people to survive in life. According to Sandra L. Bloom, the damage done by dissociation can be improved by any kind of artistic performance. Bloom cites the ancient native tribe of the Navajo, who believe that "to be sick is to be fragmented ... to become healed is to become whole." Bloom concludes that mental disorders are a result of the fragmenting of the mind and that the arts can help to heal people who are sick in this way.

Melinda, a rape victim who suffers from post-rape trauma disorder, can gradually overcome her turmoil because of the arts. According to Judith Lewis Herman, in fragmented patients, reconstruction of the trauma story is an essential step toward recovery. However, throughout the exploration of the trauma story, patients may find it more difficult to use words for communication. Herman finds that they naturally switch to nonverbal communication methods, such as drawing or painting (qtd. in Pruiett-Selby 85). By means of her long-term project "tree," Melinda can express her inner feelings through her artworks—a form of nonverbal expression. Her trees are metaphors of her inner emotional disturbance, and they change as her recovery proceeds. At first, Melinda can see what her tree looks like in her mind, but she cannot "bring it to life"; her tree looks like a dead tree (Anderson 90). This shows that Melinda struggles to draw her tree because she cannot express her feeling thoroughly. She keeps trying and spends a lot of time on making her trees look alive, but they always look gaunt and rotten. When she is finally able to manage her feelings and conquer her fear of speaking, her last tree looks like it is "breathing." It looks strong and beautiful, and she draws birds flying around it (Anderson 227-229). This suggests that Melinda feels relieved and free from the guilt in her mind. This long-term artwork project helps to heal her. She uses art as a way to speak out about her feelings, and she finds that art refreshes her life again. Consequently, she would like to be an artist when she grows up, because she sees the benefits of art and of a good supportive teacher (Anderson 91).

Finally, Melinda is completely healed after sharing her bad experience with other people. Judith Herman notes, "Most survivors seek the resolution of their traumatic experience within the confines of their personal lives. But a significant minority, as a result of the trauma, feel called upon to engage in a wider world" (207). Melinda also chooses this method to deal with her pressure. She decides to write on the wall in the

women's restroom after seeing other students' writings on the wall. Melinda writes the heading "Guys to Stay Away From," and she decides that the first name in the list is Andy Evans, her rapist (Anderson 203). Although she chooses to speak out anonymously, it works well. Without anyone saying the word "rape" directly, other students seem to understand why girls should avoid Andy Evans. Melinda's writing leads many different people to write negative comments about Evans on the wall, and this makes Melinda feels like "she can fly" (Anderson 215). In Speaking Out: The Benefits for Survivors of Sexual Assault, Louise asserts that speaking out is the way to end the feelings of shame and embarrassment that victims suffer from. In her experience, telling other people about her sexual assault has been good, socially and personally. She has received many positive and warm responses from people who share the same experiences and the feeling of being an outcast. Melinda's case is similar to Louise's experience. After seeing other girls' comments about Evans, Melinda no longer feels alone, because she has found people who understand what she has experienced. She realizes that she is not the only one assaulted by Evans. It is not her fault that she was raped, and she should not blame herself. There is no shame that she has to bear in relation to the rape incident.

In the end, as a rape victim who has endured post-rape traumas for a long time, Melinda is able to overcome her fear, shame, embarrassment, and self-blaming. To gain back her own identity and self-esteem, she struggles with many obstacles that threaten to wreck her bravery. Nevertheless, she manages to overcome the crisis of her life with tacit encouragement to change and to stand up for her right to live happily by having a good role model to follow, by expressing her emotion through art, and by sharing her secret with other people.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes the reaction of the victim, the rapist, and the people surrounding the victim in Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*. This study also examines the way the female protagonist in *Speak* copes with difficulties after being raped. The analysis draws on the phenomenon of the acceptance of rape myths in society. Discussion and suggestions for further studies are provided at the end of this chapter.

Conclusion

It is found that rape myths have a great impact on people's judgments, including those of the victim, the rapist, and the people surrounding the victim. They distort people's beliefs about rape. In *Speak*, because of rape myths, Melinda, the rape victim, blames herself for being raped. She blames herself for going to risky places, drinking alcohol, flirting, going out with a man while she is drunk, and not fighting hard enough. Melinda therefore hesitates to report the crime. Not having anybody to consult, Melinda becomes deeply depressed by her belief that the rape was her fault.

People surrounding a rape victim can be influenced by rape myths. Social rejection is the outcome for Melinda after the first time she tries to tell the truth. She is bullied by other people and becomes a liar in their eyes. As a result, Melinda is reluctant to report the crime.

The influence of rape myths not only affects the rape victim; it also induces the rapist to have distorted attitudes about rape, the rape victim, and himself as the rapist. Andy Evans, the rapist in this story, shows the result of these distorted beliefs. He feels no guilt about what he does to Melinda. His sentiment is distorted by his strong beliefs

and his high self-esteem. Because of these, he insists that sex between Melinda and him happened with the agreement of both parties. He does not have to rape anyone. He is completely certain that he has done nothing wrong.

After being raped, Melinda shows many symptoms of rape trauma syndrome, both physically and mentally. Because she is depressed, she engages in self-harm—such as biting her lips, biting her nails, and scraping her arms—to relieve her suffering. Her sleeping pattern becomes disordered. In terms of psychological effects, she avoids meeting people, including her family and friends. Because she has lost focus, her performance at school becomes worse. Flashbacks of the horrible event are another condition that Melinda has to handle after being raped. Because of the trauma, Melinda also suffers speaking problems, and her ability to trust people is almost destroyed. Moreover, Melinda suffers from feelings of self-revulsion.

Owing to the stress of being raped, rejected from society, and isolated from other people, Melinda suffers from post-rape trauma. Luckily, although she does not meet with any psychologists or receive professional treatment, she is able to overcome the trauma she has suffered. She does this by having a good role model to follow, by expressing her feelings through art (supported by an inspirational teacher), and by anonymously writing on the wall about her rape incident.

By having an ideal person as a role model, Melinda is inspired to find the strength and bravery to speak out about her suffering. Because of David Petrakis's brilliance, confidence, and self-assertion, Melinda receives inspiration from his actions. She learns from him that silence is not bad, but you have to do it at the right time. Petrakis also gives her the advice that sometimes speaking out is the way to get your rights. Melinda is inspired, both intentionally and unintentionally, by this thoughtful role model.

With a good environment, an art class helps Melinda recover from her mental illness. First, Mr. Freeman, an inspirational teacher, notices Melinda's grief from her artworks, and he is ready to listen and help Melinda if she needs it. His personality and teaching style make people feel relaxed and relieved, and Melinda is among those who like his art class. Moreover, because she expresses her feelings through her artworks, Melinda's depression is indirectly released; her artworks reflect her feelings at the time. As she has no one with whom she can discuss her rape experience, Melinda can only express her feelings through art. In *Speak*, Melinda's artworks play an important role in showing Melinda's feelings at each moment. In the end, when Melinda manages to overcome her fear of speaking, her artworks become cheerful again.

By anonymously sharing her sexual assault with other people (writing about it on the toilet wall in school), Melinda is released from restraint and recovers from her mental pain. Sharing her feelings with other people relieves Melinda from depression and loneliness, because she finds that she is not the only one who has experienced sexual assault by Andy Evans, the rapist. Many girls in this high school are victims like Melinda. She realizes that she is not the only one, and that she is not facing this problem alone; there are people who understand her feelings. By reading the comments of other people on the wall, Melinda realizes that it is not her fault for being raped and that she should not blame herself.

Discussion

The analysis of *Speak* shows that rape myths have great influence on the victim, the rapist, and the people surrounding the victim. Because people in society are influenced by rape myths, their attitudes about sex are distorted. The sexual assault victim

does not know her rights over her body because of the acceptance of rape myths; the rapist, who is also influenced by the distorted myths of rape, misunderstands what is involved in sexual consent. As in the study by Maddy Coy et al., *"Sex without Consent, I Suppose that is Rape": How Young People in England Understand Sexual Consent,* young people who are surrounded by misinformation about sex from the media and from cultural norms will misunderstand the nature of sexual consent and ignore the act of refusing consent. As the study shows, young people continue lacking accurate knowledge about sexuality. In *Speak,* all of the girls who have been sexually assaulted decide to keep their bad experiences secret, as Melinda does. Their actions can be explained by Victor Molo-Juvera's study, in which he finds that young people have bad attitudes toward rape victims. As a result of the influence of rape myths, women are blamed for rape, and this clearly explains why Melinda and the other girls in the school feel reluctant or uncomfortable about reporting sexual crimes.

The present study shows that Melinda, the protagonist of *Speak,* is faced with the aftermath of being raped but is able to overcome her difficulties. Rape victims commonly suffer from post-rape trauma, and there are many signs that Melinda is suffering both physically and psychologically. In *Speak*, a good role model plays an essential part in encouraging Melinda to find the bravery to speak out about her painful event. Without that role model, she may remain in her distress, living in a shadow for the rest of her life. Similarly, Jane Orleman, a survivor of childhood abuse, was helped by an inspiring role model to overcome her hardship. Her role model was Charlotte Salomon, an artist and Holocaust survivor, who used self-portraits to present her experiences to viewers in the form of testimony. This inspired Orleman to use art to express her own experiences of child abuse instead of concealing them (Pruiett-Selby 86, 88). Melinda, the protagonist of *Speak*, has also become a role model for many people who have been victims of sexual

assault in real life. Anderson, the author of *Speak*, has received many messages and letters from readers who have had the same experience as Melinda and who share their stories, sadness, and fear. This shows that the experience of Melinda in *Speak* gives victims of assault hope that people will respond to them with understanding and encourages them to share their circumstances. In light of this great response on the part of her readers, Anderson has written a poem, entitled *Listen*, to show her understanding and to emphasize that rape and sexual assault are committed not only in the book but also in reality. *Listen* shows that Melinda's story can encourage and empower other victims to find their voice and take their place in the society.

Art is a type of therapy that can help patients overcome traumas. Generally, rape victims who suffer from trauma may face the problems in speaking about their bad experience, as in the case of Melinda. Because of the horrible event, she loses her voice and is unable to speak. Consequently, Melinda's method of expressing her feelings is through art—a nonverbal method. She recovers from the trauma because she can use art to articulate her feelings about the rape event. She comes to realization that the rape was committed without her consent and that she does not have to feel embarrassed or ashamed about it. This finding is in line with Judith Lewis Herman's study. Herman believes that an important step toward the recovery of trauma victims is the recollection of the trauma events that they have been trying to conceal or forget. Because the events are unbearable, most patients find it difficult to use words to express what has happened to them (177). As Bloom's study shows, the most remarkable effect of trauma is the loss of language—"speechless terror"—which may cause trauma victims to switch to nonverbal methods of communication, such as painting and drawing. Merlin Donald calls this act "mimesis," the ability to intentionally generate conscious, self-initiated, self-representational acts without using language (qtd. in Bloom). However, the ultimate goal of the process of

recognizing the events is to put the story into words (Herman 177), and human beings cope with the difficulty of this by shutting down the language areas of the brain entirely. Creating art is an act that repairs the two hemispheres of the brain that are functioning incorrectly because of the trauma. Jane Orleman is an example of someone who uses art to express her experience publicly and heal her trauma; through her paintings, she conveys messages to both survivors and wrongdoers. Her artworks are testimonies of her childhood suffering. She opens her mind through her art, and she allows viewers to experience her anxieties, emotions, and fears (Pruiett-Selby 86-87). Orleman suggests that art, in cooperation with a therapist, helps "articulate her memories and to repossess her body" (Pruiett-Selby 87). Herman states that a victim who can articulate her terrible event, through writing, speaking, painting, or other artistic methods, will reduce the intensity of her emotions toward the event; the process of telling and repeating the event through art is a way to gain clarity regarding her own reality (195).

Social support is a key factor in healing victims suffering from trauma. In *Speak*, living in a dysfunctional family, Melinda receives no support from family members. Moreover, she is friendless after being assaulted. Without the support of family or friends, Melinda has no one to rely on or speak to. Luckily, she meets Mr. Freeman, who provides her with assistance, care, love, and available time when she needs it. By showing his attention through listening and supportive actions, Mr. Freeman can connect with Melinda. She finally trusts him enough to tell him about the rape event. Through telling the bad experience, Melinda's anxiety and depression are gradually relieved, and she recovers from her trauma. Many studies show that positive social supports are significant to psychological well-being and physical health of PTSD patients. This finding is in line with a study by Gul Pinar et al., in which they find that social support is a powerful tool that helps promote mental adjustment in chronic high-stress patients. People who have

less social support may encounter greater difficulty in finding relief and healing (qtd. in Liu et al. 2-3).

This study shows that expressing or sharing her horrible experience with other people helps Melinda to feel relieved and connected to the world again. Her method of expressing her emotion toward Andy Evans, the rapist, is to write anonymously on the wall in the girl's restroom. Her bravery in writing and putting her feelings into words shows that she is ready to move on. This is consistent with Herman's idea that nonverbal methods enable patients to reconstruct in words an experience they have been trying to forget, which is the ultimate goal of the process of recovery. The first attempt of the patient may be partially fragmented; however, they will eventually be able to retell the story completely (177). In line with Herman's theory, Melinda's writing on the wall is the first stage of her attempt to share her horrible event; she goes on to recover fully from her trauma when she tells her rape event to Mr. Freeman.

The present study also shows that the influence of rape myths has a great impact on people's judgments about sexuality, rape, rape victims, and rapists. Because of culture, religion, beliefs, customs, and social norms, sexuality is ignored and talking about it is censored. As a result, many children are not educated about sexual topics; because they know less about life, they are more vulnerable in a world that is not always secure. This is counterproductive, like pushing our children into danger without a shield. On the other hand, educating them about sexuality and sexual assault will keep them from fear, ignorance, and false belief. Thus, good education about sexuality and gender equality should be provided.

Although *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson has won many awards, it has been challenged and banned by individuals and organizations. In the past, the content of literature for children and young adults was limited, because people were concerned

about the age of the readers. Violence, sexuality, abortion, bullying, and blood-thirstiness were topics that would never appear in literature targeted for children or young adults. Therefore, *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson has been judged as unsuitable for children and teenagers to read because of inappropriate content, namely rape, sexual harassment, and bullying. First published in 1999, it still frequently causes conflict and controversy, more than fifteen years after its publication. According to Jennifer Kendall, *Speak* is listed as one of the top 100 books challenged by the American Library Association. Wesley Scroggins, a professor at Missouri State University, claims that *Speak* should be labeled as "soft pornography" instead of literature for children and young adults. He also states that to expose this immoral content to children is unacceptable and that school board members and administrators in Missouri should remove or ban the book from their curriculum (Flood). However, *Speak* shows that the facts of life can be hard and dark. It shows children and teenagers that life is not always happy and carefree, unlike the fairytales they read. They need to be prepared to protect themselves in the real, unsafe world.

The present study shows that knowledge and support are important for preventing young people from going astray or failing to cope with misery. As a member of a dysfunctional family, Melinda is lucky in being able to overcome the aftermath of rape without receiving professional help. With information and support available to her at the time, she is brave and dares to speak out and to fight against the norm. Nowadays, people can find a lot more information easily because of the development of technology. Women know the importance of education, and they are eager to learn as much as they can in order to open their eyes to the world. This education can lead to social change. For example, women's rights groups in the Arab world have secured the repeal of a law that

allowed rapists to escape punishment by marrying their accusers (Sengupta). Open discussion about sexuality is better than leaving children in the dark.

With the rising number of brutal rape cases, correctly educating our young people about sexuality is a crucial issue. In most patriarchal societies, women are warned "do not get raped" instead of men being warned "do not rape." In order to change this false belief, education is needed. Good education and guidance on sexuality will help improve moral judgment and attitudes in society; people will know what it is right or wrong to do to other people. The "#MeToo" campaign is an example of a movement driven by activists who are trying to educate people all over the world that rape, harassment, and objectification of other people, especially women, is unjust. Another benefit of teaching young people properly about sexuality is that it leads to greater respect for each other. By learning and acknowledging accurate information about sexual topics, women and victims will respect themselves. Padma Lakshmi, who also supports the #MeToo campaign, has spoken and encouraged other people on the Variety Power of Women platform with this lesson: "I teach my child that her body is her own and that no one should touch her without permission. While I don't want to scare her, I do want to arm her." Her speech encourages people to love and believe in themselves. Lakshmi's idea is in line with the approach taken by Cindy Sirinya Bishop, a Thai model and actress. Bishop, who runs the #donttellmehowtodress campaign in Thailand, states that "Two lessons we need to be teaching our kids from a very early age are 'my body is mine' and 'no means no.'" If everyone accepts and respects these ideas, there will be no more trouble caused by rape myths.

In the end, it is clear that people's attitudes and beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists affect the victims' decisions. Therefore, young people need to be educated accurately to protect them from sexual exploitation. In the same way, Eleanor Wood's

study shows that sensitive issues about sexuality should be taught to our children through children's books in order to promote healthy sexuality and provide accurate, truthful advice, allowing children to reach puberty without being damaged by false beliefs.

Suggestions for Further Studies

While this study focused on *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson, I hope that it points in a new direction for studying of other children and young adult literature by other authors. There are some questions that one might consider in studying: How is rape portrayed in literature? How does the rape myth acceptance affect Thai culture? How does young adult literature help raise awareness of rape myths among Thai students?

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

A Synopsis of *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson

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The novel is about Melinda Sordino, a high school girl, who is raped by Andy Evans at a senior party in the summer before her freshman year of high school. Melinda breaks up the party by calling the police in an attempt to report her rape incident, but she flees before reporting the crime and keeps it in secret. As a result, some people are arrested. She starts her high school at Merryweather High School as an outcast since all her old friends left her. She is shunned by other people for calling the police. Melinda does not tell anyone what happened to her, and nobody asks. She becomes depressed.

Because of her depression, Melinda begins to skip school and spends much of her time in an abandoned janitor's closet because she feels safe when she spends time alone. She also withdraws from her parents and other authority figures, who see her silence as a means of getting "attention." She slowly befriends her lab partner, David Petrakis, who encourages her to speak up for herself.

An art class is the only source of healing for her soul. Melinda expresses her feelings through her year-long art project, creating various interpretations of a tree, in this art class. Melinda slowly remembers what Evans did to her. Nevertheless, many months of suffering with post rape trauma both psychologically and physically, Melinda finally admits to herself that she was raped by Andy Evans at the party last summer.

Although Melinda feels depressed with the horrible event, she gathers her courage and writes on the woman's restroom wall that Evans is a guy that women should keep away from. Because of her writing, Melinda finds that there are many girls in the school who are sexually abused by Evans like her. Knowing that she is one of many victims, Melinda realizes that it is not her responsibility of being raped. She feels more relieved.

As the end of the school year, Melinda's former best friend Rachel, who dates Andy Evans, breaks up with him on prom night after Melinda confesses to her what happened in the last summer. Because of this, Evans attacks Melinda in the abandoned janitor's closet, her "sanctuary." Melinda is forced to confront Evans again. However, she can defend herself and is able to get help in time. When words spread about what happened in the prom and the truth about her rape is revealed, other students do not treat Melinda as an outcast anymore. She gains respect from other students and feels relieved. She then tells her rape incident to her art teacher, Mr. Freeman, and this finally sets her free.

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