

The Psychological Impact of Sexual Harassment in Laurie

Anderson's Speak

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Abstract

The statistics of sexual assault in the U.S are alarming. Fiction writers in The U.S have represented victims and have highlighted the psychological repercussions of such assault; one of these authors is the American author Laurie Halse Anderson(1961--).The aim of this research paper is to depict the psychological impact of sexual harassment on young adult girls with reference to Speak (1999) written by Laurie Halse Anderson. The research paper focuses on the aftermath of sexual harassment on young adult girls, who are usually traumatized. The traumatized suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which is manifested through different symptoms such as: silence, disconnection, losing trust. Besides PTSD, methods of recovery represented in the novel are analyzed. The analysis draws on trauma theory with reference to Judith Herman's book Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror.

. **Key words:** psychological impact, sexual harassment, young adult's literature, trauma, PTSD

Literature and Psychology

Literature is used by many as a tool for enlightening readers as well as for shedding light on problems. It can be used to shift attitudes towards individual and social behavior in a manner that helps enlighten readers to change their perceptions towards controversial topics. For instance, in many societies the raped is blamed while the perpetrator is excused. Literature not only gives voice to the victims but also empowers them. Louise Rosenblatt in her book *Literature as Exploration* writes, "through books, the reader may explore his own nature, become aware of potentialities for thought and feeling within himself, acquire clearer perspective, develop aims and a sense of direction. He may explore the outer world, other personalities, other ways of life" (VI). For example, when the main character in fiction is a victim of rape, this offers the reader knowledge and appreciation of the life of the raped as well as helps encounter wrong preconceived ideas on rape. Marta Nussbaum in *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* states that literature "cultivates a sympathetic responsiveness to another's needs" (90) because literature offers the beginning of social justice rather than offering immediate solutions (Nussbaum 94). Thus, literature aids in solving problems and spreading awareness.

Literature interweaves with many fields such as: history, philosophy, sociology, psychology; therefore literature is a discipline where Language is a medium of expression. There is a strong association between literature and psychology since both deal with human interactions, desires, miseries, fears and derives through different approaches and methods. Shoshana Felman in her book *Literature and Psychology* (1977) remarks that “literature is considered as a body of language—to be interpreted—psychoanalysis is considered as a body of knowledge whose competence is called upon to interpret” (5). Therefore, literature can assist us in changing our cognition and the internal structure of the self and this can be reinforced by using psychoanalysis in interpreting literary texts. Literature as well as psychology enable individuals to know their personality and become conscious of the individual differences, besides questioning existence and life.

Sexual Harassment

One of the issues discussed in psychoanalysis is sexual harassment. Mary Boland in her book *Sexual Harassment* defines sexual harassment stating that “sexual obnoxious behavior involves a range of conduct from minor offensive words or acts to forced sexual activity and even rape” (3). Peggy Miller and Nancy Biele define rape saying that:

Rape is not a personal aberration in which a solitary male overcome by lust or perversion attacks a culpable, provocatively dressed female. Instead, rape in all its forms—sexual assaults on children, incest, rape, the manufacture of pornography, and strange rape—is an act of violence, a violation of the victim’s spirit and body, and a perversion of power, a form of control exercised over more than half of the population. (49)

Miller and Biele consider rape as a hate crime against women due to discrimination against them (52).

Mary Pipher, in *Reviving Ophelia* (1995), acknowledges that the two major issues that young girls faced in the States, in the 1990s, concerning sexuality is that girls are having difficulty coming to terms with their own sexuality and another problem is sexual assault (205). This has led to complications in forming a healthy female sexuality. Pipher believes that the American society is causing a split in girls because girls are always faced with conceptual conflicts as they are told by their parents to value themselves as a whole while the media objectifies their bodies neglecting their humanity and mentality (206). Pipher states that rape is the “tragedy of youth” as rape incidents in the States are increasing in younger categories (219). Pipher’s words show that one of the tragic things that can change a teenage girl’s life is being sexually harassed.

Trauma Novel

Psychoanalysis and literature are enmeshed in the sense that psychoanalysis is not a branch that is confined to medicine or psychology; it facilitates understanding of philosophy, culture, religion and first and foremost literature. Psychoanalysis is a discipline which studies psychic life in order to cure diseases of the soul; these diseases often portrayed through literature to refine the sensibilities, and to raise the awareness of both individuals and societies. Contemporary trauma can be dated to 1980 when Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was included in the medical and psychiatric profession (Whitehead 4). The surge behind trauma writing was in the 1960s and 1970s in which literature became a form of forming identity, by raising people's awareness, and causing empathy (Kidd 121). Consequently, both literature and psychoanalysis complement each other.

The field of trauma has expanded in literature due to different aspects such as domestic violence, child abuse besides major political issues such as September 11 and the war in Afghanistan and Iraq. Social problems such as shootings in schools due to bullying has also contributed to the interest in studying trauma and now trauma is a domain that is becoming discussed for different reasons (Ringel and Brandell vii). Thus, trauma has gradually attained "a superordinate status in the psychoanalytic literature" (41).

Trauma studies work from the assumption that narrative and storytelling can contribute in the healing process of a traumatized person or group (Andermher and Pellicer-ortin 2). Trauma studies frequently highlights that art with its different forms is used as a healing tool by writers, minorities and society in general because art draws attention to that which is being silenced, so it is capable of representing pain and trauma.

Young Adult Literature and the Problem Novel

Adolescence is a time when we are not children; yet we are still not adults. An adolescent is someone between the ages of 12 to the age of 19 who is confronted with challenges whether physically, psychologically or mentally. Pam B. Cole, in *Young Adult Literature in the 21st Century* (2008), describes adolescence as the time when young people are separated from their parents and discover their identities that they will carry into their adulthood (1). At that stage, they are constantly trying to discover their identities or who they are. The most perplexed adolescents are those living with over controlling parents, domestic violence or significant trauma (Cole 32). Young adults go through so many changes and this is why this stage is considered a critical one, and deserves to be the focus of a specific literary genre, namely young adults' literature.

Contemporary Young Adult (YA) literature is a comparatively new field which is usually dated by scholars to the publication of S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* (1967). The genre of YA literature has thrived since the 1960s. Alleen Nilsen and Kenneth Donelson argue that the terms adolescent and teenager first appeared following the American Civil War (6). Carolyn Smith's research shows that there is no defining moment when adolescence came into being. However, it can be said that the picture of a difficult and temperamental adolescent came into existence around the 1960s, when rock and roll became the new teenagers took as their own (1).

Today's YA literature features complex plots and is characterized by vagueness and elusiveness than pre-1960s literature for teens. One type found in this genre is the problem novel.

There are different features found in the "problem novel". For instance, the characters are not perfect and they come from various socioeconomic backgrounds (Cole 101). The setting of the "problem novels" is familiar to teens: in some novels the setting is in a school in which they face bullying, racism, violence or bigotry. The style of the "problem novel" varies: in some of them a chapter can contain only one word, a sentence or a paragraph. Besides, the novel might have e-mails, text messages, poems, letters or new articles. The atmosphere in such novels changes as at times they might end with hope and at other times the conclusion can be bleak and tragic (Cole 102). Such novels are realistic in so far as they show that sometimes there is no happy ending.

When adolescents are exposed to "problem novels"; it enables them to be aware of the world around them and to have realistic expectations of their future. In addition, these novels help to bridge the gap between young adults and adults' literature. Young adult literature is a window through which young adults can examine themselves, their lives as well as the world surrounding them. The themes of this genre include, but are not limited to, peer pressure, family relationships, sexuality, bigotry and racism.

Judith Herman's Contribution to Trauma Theory

Judith Herman (1942 --) is a Harvard professor of psychiatry who focuses on incest and traumatic stress. Her books owe its existence to the women's liberation movement and because she was involved in the movement; she was able to speak for women's real experience (1-2). Besides, her book *Trauma and Recovery* "represent the fruits of two decades of research and clinical work with victims of sexual and domestic violence" (2).

Herman's book *Trauma and Recovery* is divided into two sections: in the first section she describes the effect of trauma on a victim which

can include disconnection, surrender, constriction, or hyperarousal. She examines the consequences of being held captive for a long or short time; besides, she examines the effect of sexual harassment. The second part in the book is entitled “Stages of Recovery” in which Herman describes the methods through which a trauma victim can improve.

Herman starts her book by defining the ‘unspeakable’ in which the victim of an atrocity banishes the act from their consciousness as some things cannot be said out loud; yet these atrocities refuse to be buried (1). One of the central dialectical psychological trauma is the struggle between voicing traumatic events and denying such atrocities (2). Herman asserts that in order to recover, “remembering and telling the truth” is a prerequisite for healing and restoring social order (1). Recovery starts once the victim narrates his/her atrocity; nevertheless, such atrocity is often narrated in a fragmented way, and sometimes the victims are emotional or contradict themselves while narrating their story. This might lead to difficulty in trusting their narration (2). The narrative of the traumatized can be in the form of symptoms rather than verbal narrative (1). Herman defines studying psychological trauma as “observing horrible events. It also means coming face to face with both human insecurity in the natural world and human beings” (7).

Herman categorizes Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) into three main categories “hyperarousal”, “intrusion” and “constriction” (35). Herman defines the three categories by stating that “Hyperarousal reflects the persistent expectation of danger; intrusion reflects the indelible imprint of traumatic moment; constriction reflects the numbing response of surrender.” (35). “Hyperarousal” means that after the traumatic event the victim is always alert and overwrought as if danger might return at any moment (35). The second category of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is “intrusion” which can be experienced after a long time of the trauma. The events recur to them as if it is happening in the present which hinders their course of life. The events are presented either in flashbacks while they are awake or during sleep in their nightmares. The repetitive intrusion of the traumatic events “arrests the course of normal development” of the survivor (37). The third category is “constriction” in which the person becomes helpless and is in a state of surrender. When a person is completely impotent and any form of resistance is futile, the victim relinquishes as their self-defense shuts down (42). The whole experience may seem as a nightmare and the person may feel as if this is not happening to them or as if they are observing it outside their body (42- 43). Herman believes that the state of numbness could be seen as “one of nature’s small mercies, a protection against unbearable pain” (43) that traumatized people go through.

Herman classified recovery from trauma into three stages: safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconciling with oneself. Since two major effects of trauma are disconnection and disempowerment, recovery focuses on connecting and empowering the victim; recovery can only happen when the victim is surrounded by other people. Connection with others helps the victim to re-create the psychological faculties distorted by the traumatic experience. The first stage that Herman discusses is safety. Safety precedes all the other recovery stages for “no other therapeutic work can succeed if safety has not been adequately secured and that no other therapeutic work should even be attempted until a reasonable degree of safety has been achieved” (159). The second stage of recovery is "remembering and mourning" which means that the victim narrates in detail and depth the traumatic event. According to Herman “This work of reconstruction actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor’s life story” (175). The third stage is reconciling which is creating a new self and thinking of the future. The victim has mourned the old self destroyed by the trauma; now the victim is required to form a new self and tries to find a new faith instead of the old one which has been destroyed (196).

***Speak* (1999)**

The novel tells the story of high-school freshman, Melinda Sordino, who has been sexually harassed and keeps her harassment as a secret. Anderson uses the diary-type confessional format in narrating the novel, and the novel is narrated from the main character’s point of view so that authentic feelings of an oppressed, harassed girl can be conveyed. *Speak* is considered as a trauma novel and this is emphasized by the nonlinear plot and jumpy narrative mimicking the trauma that Melinda has been through. The novel circles around the ordeal of a young girl struggling to speak to others about her trauma. It also represents how Melinda’s life after experiencing sexual harassment has changed and how she becomes silent; it also defines how she views things around her differently.

The name of the novel, *Speak*, is ironic since the protagonist, Melinda, in the novel, a 9th grader, is most of the time silent. Her silence is because of an unspeakable act which is the trauma of being raped, so the first impact of the trauma on Melinda is that she becomes silent. It is revealed through flashbacks that occur much later in the novel that a boy in Melinda's school has raped her at a party and she has sought help by calling 911. Melinda has been known since that as a snitcher and is treated with hostility from all her classmates and former friends because she ruined the secret party for them. Melinda’s silence is tangible from the moment she called 911; she could not say a word on the phone. Her

silence causes her problems when mingling with teenagers of her age and tries to hide.

Manifestation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Melinda does manifest the classic symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. From the very beginning of the novel, Melinda is always in a state of hyperarousal whether when she is trying to find a place to sit in the bus “Where to sit? I’ve never been a backseat waste case. If I sit in the middle, a stranger could sit next to me” (3). Or when her old friends stare at her “I close my eyes. This is what I’ve been dreading the most” (3). Her fear persuade her to refuse the pizza offer by her friend claiming: “the world is a dangerous place. You don’t know what would have happened. What if he was just saying his parents were going to be there? He could have been lying, you can never tell when people are lying. Assume the worst. Plan for disaster” (154). Because of her traumatic experience Melinda continuously feels that she is in danger and something dreadful will happen to her if she goes out with someone. She always stays silent and is always expecting something bad to happen thus she loses trust in all those around her.

The second symptom is intrusion; Herman explains intrusion by saying: “the traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously” (37). Melinda admits that she is struggling to overcome what she has been through “there is a beast in my gut, I can hear it scraping away at the inside of my ribs. Even if I dump the memory, it will stay with me, staining me” (59) this leads to her seclusion as Melinda decides “[her] closet is a good thing, a quiet place that helps [her] hold these thoughts inside [her] head where no one can hear them” (59). Herman states that “[the traumatized] cannot resume the normal course of their lives, for the trauma repeatedly interrupts” (37). Melinda is affected by her rape which intrudes in her life as a teen. The first symptom she suffers from is being silent and having difficulty getting the words out “I can’t get any words out, it is too dry. I try again with a little cough” (74). Melinda describes how the incident affected her “I see a girl caught in the remains of a holiday gone bad with her flesh picked off day after day as the carcass dies out” (74).

The memory even intrudes in her school life. Melinda has been raped under a tree and there is an analogy between cutting a frog at school and Melinda’s rape in which she feels that she is doing to the frog what has been done to her. While cutting the frog, in the chapter “Dead Frogs”, Melinda describes how she feels while cutting it “I have to slice open her 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” (94). While Melinda was cutting the frog, she passes out, “I just want to

sleep. The whole point of not talking about it, of silencing the memory, is to make it go away. It won't" (94). Melinda struggles from the intrusion of the painful memory as there are always flashbacks to what happened as well as incidents in her sub-consciousness triggering her mind as a result this hinders her from having a normal life.

The third symptom is constriction in which the traumatized individual's "system of self-defense shuts down entirely" besides feeling indifferent, emotionally detached and passive (Herman 42). Herman defines constriction as being powerless; Melinda blames herself of how powerless she was while being raped as she says: "why didn't I run like this before when I was a one-piece talking girl?" (114). Herman states that "psychological trauma is an affliction of the powerless. At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by an overwhelming force" (33). This is the reason why Melinda became helpless and could not even scream while being raped.

Melinda's Recovery

Recovery is the ultimate goal that the traumatized has to reach; Melinda goes through various stages until she recovers. Recovery, which Herman clearly expects to occur within the context of psychotherapy, involves three key stages: "establishing safety, reconstructing the trauma story, and restoring the connection between survivors and their community" (3). Herman writes that "when the truth is finally recognized, survivors can begin their recovery" (1) and that "truth is a goal constantly to be striven for" (148). Herman carefully notes that "the first principle of recovery is the empowerment of the survivor. She must be the author and arbiter of her own recovery", leading her to add that "no intervention that takes power away from the survivor can possibly foster her recovery, no matter how much it appears to be in her best interest" (133).

The first stage of recovery is establishing safety Herman asserts that stating "the central task of the first stage is the establishment of safety" (155). Melinda does not feel safe at her own house, so this is why she decides to take the closet as her safe haven. She describes how she lacks any feeling of security in her own house saying: "It is the last day of spring break. My house is shrinking and I feel like Alice in Wonderland. Afraid that my head might burst through the roof, I head for the mall" (166). Melinda feels like her own house is suffocating her; although, ones house should be a place where one feels safe. She also says: "I want the snow to bury our house" (101). Melinda finds difficulty sleeping at home as she marks that "it is getting harder to sleep at home" (132). The only place where she finds peace and feels safe is in her closet. "The closet is warm and I'm ready for a nap. I've been having trouble sleeping at home... it feels safer in my little hideaway" (152).

Melinda retreats to the closet where she can hide her trauma so that people will not be able to know what has happened to her, the closet helps her cope with her trauma. She describes her closet saying: “my closet is a good thing, a quiet place that helps me hold these thoughts inside my head where no one can hear them” (59). Don Latham in her article “Melinda’s Closet” notes that:

What is interesting about it though, is not so much that it reflects her (re)construction of her identity, but that in so doing it reflects the queerness of the strategies she uses to [affect] her recovery, strategies that, paradoxically, serve both to suppress her voice and to help her recover/discover a voice with which she can speak the truth. (369)

Another place where Melinda feels safe is in her art class, she says: “The art room is one of the places I feel safe” because there she does not worry about “looking stupid” (186). The chapter where she introduces her art class is named “Sanctuary” (11) which means that it is not only a safe place but also a sacred one where she feels sheltered and free. Melinda describes her art class “Art follows lunch, like dream follows nightmare” (11). Being at school is a nightmare but the only place where she feels safe is in her art class because through art she becomes free and can vent out all the mixed feelings that she goes through. The room is designed in which sun light enters it and the walls “plastered with sketches of tormented teenagers” (11). The room is bright and lightened, so the sun in the art class can represent the light which enters the dark areas of her psyche and the warmth that encompasses her in spite of her suffering. Her description of the plastered sketches on the wall show that she can relate to them as they describe how she feels from the inside in which she is tormented by her rape and is a proof that there are others who suffered like her.

Melinda describes her art teacher whose name is Mr. Freeman. He greets the students on their first day saying “welcome to the only class that will teach you how to survive,” which is art (11). This implies that Anderson here introduces a new method of recovery in which Melinda starts to heal through the production of art taught by her art teacher. Jessi Snider describes Mr. Freeman in which “He is an enabler of healing, coaching his students in the cathartic value of art, who also happens be an authority figure” (304). Mr. Freeman’s name is symbolic which shows that he is the one who is going to help Melinda restore her freedom and can also be the voice of Anderson; he acts like an art therapist for Melinda.

The first thing he writes for his students on the board is the word “soul”. Mr Freeman explains the importance of art classes saying that

“this is where you can find your soul, if you dare” (12). Art enables Melinda to find her soul that is tormented and lost because of being raped. Mr. Freeman asks them to find their soul because this is “where you can touch that part of you that you’ve never dared look at before” (12). He emphasizes the importance of art saying: “If you don’t learn art now, you will never learn to breath!!!” (13). Besides he tells them that they can create art from anything around them and encourages them to use their creativity which is sometimes hindered by the society around them. He urges them to put life into their art “you must figure out how to make your object say something, express an emotion, speak to every person who looks at it” (14). Mr. Freeman additionally asserts that if they fear anything then fear can help them since “fear is a great place to begin art” (36). His art classes are a gate to Melinda to be open to herself; her art class is a place where she can put all her distorted thoughts and feelings on a paper which is a means of recovering.

Melinda starts to learn that art is about expressing emotions. There are certainly emotions as Mr. Freeman says: “Art without emotion is like a chocolate cake without sugar. It makes you gag” (143). The tree that Melinda draws reflects that this is her “dark period” where her pain is rendered highly visible. Admitting that she does not know how to draw a tree, Melinda says: “My trees suck” (142). On the other hand, Mr. Freeman explains to her the purpose of art explaining that “art is about making mistakes and learning from them” (142). He urges her to think of her emotions while drawing trees “The next time you work on your trees, don’t think about trees. Think about love, or hate, or joy, or rage- whatever makes you feel something, makes your palms sweat or your toes curl” (143).

Through the voice of Mr. Freeman, Anderson highlights the importance of emotions when drawing, as art can be used to overcome traumas. Mr. Freeman keeps on asserting how without expressing ones emotions, one can “die one piece at a time” (143). He tells her that because people do not express how they feel; there are many old people who are almost dead from the inside waiting for a “heart attack or cancer or a Mack truck to come along and finish the job” (143). Melinda struggles to follow Mr. Freeman’s advice in searching for her feelings and facing them “How can I find them?” she always questions herself. She is confused of how to find them as “they are chewing [her] alive like an infestation of thoughts, shame, mistakes” her resolution was “I have to stay away from the closet, go to all my classes. I will make myself normal. Forget the rest” (146). Thus she starts to feel that one way of healing is through communicating with others; she starts to realize that isolating herself is hindering her from recovery and from discovering her

true feelings. Mr. Freeman succeeds in aiding Melinda start her journey for recovery; consequently, she can face her trauma.

In the second stage which is remembrance and mourning the patient starts to tell the story of the trauma in depth and in detail; therefore, "This work of reconstruction actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor's life story" (Herman 175). Melinda by the end of the book narrates in detail what has happened to her. She describes how she felt at that time:

No I didn't like this. I was on the ground and he was on top of me. His lips lock on mine and I can't say anything. I twist my head away. He is so heavy. There is a boulder on me. I open my mouth to breathe, to scream, and his hand cover it. No I DON'T WANT TO!" but I can't spit it out. Shirt up, shorts down, and the ground smells wet and dark and NO! He hurts me hurts me hurts me and gets up. And zips up his jeans. And smiles. (158)

Melinda not only describes what happened but also describes how she felt. Herman states how important it is for the victim to express his/her feeling, "the patient must reconstruct not only what has happened but also what she felt" (178). Melinda starts to cry as she confronts herself for the first time with her feelings after the trauma "who was that girl I had never seen before" (158). Melinda's feelings are also expressed after watching Oprah's show; she is able to name what has happened to her "my head is killing me, my throat is killing me, my stomach bubbles with toxic waste. I just want to sleep. A coma would be nice. Or amnesia. Anything, just to get rid of this, these thoughts, whispers in my mind. Did he rape my head, too?"(191). Although the show is an eye opener; yet, it was shocking as she is more aware of what has happened to her.

Melinda starts to become aware of what has happened to her by calling what has happened rape. Naming the problem is one of the steps towards recovery although the patient may not fully recall the traumatic event and may deny that it ever happened (Herman 157). Melinda starts to imagine her life on a TV show describing it saying "If it were an After-School special, I would speak in front of an auditorium of my peers on How Not to Lose Your Virginity. Or, why Seniors Should Be Locked Up. Or, My Summer Vacation: A Drunken Party, lies and Rape" then she asks herself "Was I raped?" (190). Melinda starts naming what she has been through. Anderson uses media as a means of helping Melinda name what has happened to her. Melinda starts to realize what happened to her from Oprah's show where Oprah interviews a girl who talks about her rape. Oprah starts describing what happened to the girl "Let's explore that. You said no. He covered your mouth with his hand. You were thirteen years

old. It doesn't matter that you were drunk. Honey, you were raped. What a horrible, horrible thing for you to live through. Didn't you ever think of telling anyone? You can't keep this inside forever" (190). By watching this, Melinda becomes aware of what has happened to her and starts to feel that she is not the only one who has gone through such experience.

The third stage of recovery is "restored social connection" (Herman 155). Finally, Melinda decides to tell someone what has happened to her. She communicates at first by writing a warning on the wall of one of the stalls in the women's restroom, "I start another subject thread on the wall: Guys to Stay Away from. The first entry is the Beast himself: Andy Evans" (203). She starts warning girls from Andy Evans describing him as a beast. Later, Melinda starts to find that her message provoked other girls who start responding to her warning on the wall writing "he's a creep, he's a bastard, and he should be locked" (215). Although Melinda felt disappointed in Rachel, her former best friend, who takes Andy as her boyfriend, she decided to warn her by sending her an anonymous note, but Rachel's response was that she accused Melinda of being jealous and a liar who is jealous of Rachel's popularity. Eventually, Melinda starts to feel relieved when Rachel breaks up with Andy after he tries to grope her during the prom. At this point, Melinda starts to feel that she can fly and with some astonishment she is ready to quit her closet: "I don't want to hang out in my little hidey-hole anymore. . . . I don't feel like hiding anymore" (222). She feels that she is heard and she can make a difference through her messages on the wall.

Janet Alsup argues that *Speak* acts as a site of discursive resistance against rape culture as Melinda decides to speak which gives her control over her life and her experience; also through this testimony "can the oppressive culture script be exposed and subverted" (165). Additionally, Anderson offers art therapy which is a practical mean for adolescents going through a trauma in their real life. She allows Melinda's trees to do more for her than a verbal confession perhaps ever could (Snider 306). Anderson manages to present a therapy to PTSD through art. Snider mentions that "Anderson's choice of art as therapy acts as a catalyst for change, not just for Melinda in the novel, but also for *Speak* to break away from the literary traditions surrounding rape and metamorphosis. By drawing leaves, by carving trees, by gathering twig arrangements, but by not becoming a tree, Melinda is able to heal" (306).

Conclusion

The researcher's aspiration in this paper is to investigate the effect of sexual assault on young adult girls as well as the methods for recovery as they get represented in YA fiction. *Speak* is a young adult's

novel that depicts the life of a teenage girl who suffers because of being sexually harassed. The research depicts the representation of trauma caused by sexual harassment and the various manifestations. The paper utilizes Judith Herman's book *Trauma and Recovery* for analyzing the novel *Speak* by Lurie Anderson.

Judith Herman's classification of the effect of trauma into the three stages of disconnection, surrender, and constriction, as well as her prescription of recovery through the stages of safety, mourning, and reconciling, can provide a very useful frame whereby the selected novel can be studied. Tracing such stages in the lives of the character, would not only help readers understand the novels, but will also provide authentication of Herman's theory. Moreover, detecting and evaluating the recovery journeys of the fictional victims may further highlight their traumatic experiences, and may provide credibility to the research conducted in psychology.

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المستخلص

إن إحصائيات الإعتداء الجنسى فى الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية وكندا مفرعة، لدرجة أن كتاب القصص والروايات فى كلتا الدولتين يصورون الضحايا فى أدب الشباب ويركزون على الأثار النفسية لتلك الإعتداءات عليهم. تكشف الدراسة الحالية النقاب عن تأثير الإعتداءات الجنسية على نفسية الشباب فى روايه *Speak* (1999) (تكلمى) للكاتبة الأمريكية لوري هالسى أندرسون . تُركز الدراسة على أثار الإعتداء الجنسى على الشباب واللائى يقعن فريسة للاعتداء حيث يعانون من اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة. ولهذا الاضطراب أعراض عدة، من ضمنها تشويه الذات، الذى تركز الدراسة على تحليله بالإضافة لعدة أعراض أخرى(عصاب ما بعد الصدمه). بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تقوم الدراسة بتحليل طرق التعافى من الصدمة. وأخيراً، يعتمد التحليل على نظرية الصدمة وفقاً لما ورد فى كتاب جوديث هيرمان *Trauma and recovery* (الصدمة والتعافى) .

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاثر النفسى، التحرش الجنسى، الاداب الناشئه، عصاب ما بعد الصدمة