

Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*: The Effects of Rape Trauma and the Construction of the Recovery Narrative

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ABSTRACT

Speak (1999) is Laurie Halse Anderson's first novel that calls attention to a critical, social issue that is common to girls entering teenagehood in the United States. The novel tells the specific story of the rape and subsequent selective silence of a ninth-grade protagonist named Melinda Sordino. Since the novel's focus is on sexual violence and its associated traumatic responses, this paper offers an analysis of the novel through contemporary trauma theory. It presents Melinda's painful narrative by depicting the impairment that the rape trauma causes in her behaviour, attitudes, thinking, interactions, and her overall well-being. In addition to exposing the adverse psychological effects on the victim, it scrutinises the tools she employs during her journey towards healing or recovery. This is done through demonstrating how Melinda's resilience in the face of traumatic experience, reconciliation with her miserable situation, and acts of resistance to be changed by this experience can be read in the context of recovery rather than of madness and illness, as the traditional trauma theories could possibly suggest. Reading the novel through the lens of contemporary trauma theory makes one realise that Anderson's work fulfils the goal of empowering survivors of rape, and it thus contributes to the recovery of those individuals who have undergone sexual violence at some point in their lives.

KEY WORDS: PTSD, Rape, Reconciliation, Recovery Resilience, Resistance, Sexual Violence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* is one of her landmark works of fiction originally published in 1999. Constructed as a story of suffering, the novel portrays a gloomy vision of the social environment in which the protagonist lives, and this has attracted the attention of the readers. After its publication, *Speak* immediately hit the shelves and became very appealing. In her review,

Packard (2018, p.2) calls *Speak* "a five-star book . . . with an absolutely stunning look at the importance of finding voice in the face of adversity and challenges". As a New York Times Best Seller, it has received much scholarly attention in the past two decades (Alsup, 2003; O'Quinn, 2001; Latham, 2006; Tannert-Smith, 2010; Park, 2012, Malo-Juvera, 2014; Hubler, 2017). For example, young adult literature scholar Alsup (2003, p.165) argues that *Speak* is not a traditional "rape story" that can be easily ignored as boring, clichéd and a story that the reader has "heard before". In her opinion, readers are compelled to pay attention to this novel because of its unconventional form of narrative—including lists, bulleted points, "script-style dialogue introduced by names followed by colons," and multiple headings—which symbolically represents Melinda's inability to speak about what happened to her in a conventional way (p.165). This novel is mainly suggested to young adult readers due to

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its ability to speak to them about their problems in their own language.

In addition to the demonstration of the psychic effects of rape on Melinda, this paper focuses on her strong gestures towards controlling the impact of her trauma, and transforming the posttraumatic symptoms into sources of empowerment and resistance. This is done by representing trauma and recovery through the text's principal character. This paper argues that Melinda is suffering in silence not because she cannot relate her story but because she fears to be disbelieved by her peers, school administrators, and her family. Therefore, this is a conscious choice, deserving of respect. As such, the paper goes beyond the traditional trauma theory in some ways. First, it demonstrates how Melinda's silence is an intentional act of resistance rather than her inability to relate her story. Second, in identifying the recovery narrative, the paper shows the possibility of other alternative ways to interpret this novel with more productive subjectivity that is identified through exploring the convergence between resilience, reconciliation and resistance. Third, it breaks the boundaries of the testimony-based representation towards the symbolic representation of trauma through Melinda's relationship with her surroundings and her expression of emotions through the creation of art. In so doing, this paper suggests the formation of a recovery narrative as an alternative to the testimony-based traditional approach, which inhibits the trauma sufferer's individuality and restricts the formation of a recovery narrative.

This paper is divided into four sections and three subsections. It starts with a discussion of the psychological impairment that rape trauma causes in Melinda's thinking, actions and social interactions. This is followed by an investigation of the friction between silence and testimony as two methods of healing from trauma suggested by traditional and contemporary trauma theories. Then, it moves on to discuss Melinda's journey towards recovery and the construction of the recovery narrative through other possible ways, including her performance of the life-affirming daily practices of resilience, reconciliation and resistance. The final section is the conclusion where a brief account of the findings is provided.

2. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF RAPE TRAUMA

Melinda attends an end-of-summer party a few weeks before her first day of high school. At the party, she meets an older, attractive boy named Andy Evans, who goes to the same school Melinda will attend in the fall. Andy seems to be modest enough at first, so she agrees to make out with him. When she declines his further advances, he overpowers and rapes her when she is

drunk and too young to know "what was happening" (Anderson, 2011, p.183). After the rape, Melinda calls the police, breaks the party then flees home through the backyard because she is too scared to inform the dispatcher of the rape incident. Her panicked phone call results in the arrest of the party attendants for underage drinking.

After a few weeks, Melinda starts high school at Merryweather High School as an outcast, shunned and ostracised by her peers for calling the police. During her fresher year, she is harassed and bullied at school and receives constant criticism from her parents for "flush[ing] her grades down the toilet" (Anderson, 2011, p.115). In reaction to the rape and the provocation she receives from her peers and family, she retreats into silence, and she subsequently falls into deep alienation. As the effect of the rape trauma escalates, she begins to skip school, withdraw from her parents and others who interpret her silence as a way to get attention. Despite the pain, anger, and loneliness she goes through, she chooses not to tell anyone of the rape incident. Instead, she hides herself in a closet to help herself cope with her trauma and to prevent people from knowing the truth. She struggles with an increased, severe psychological trauma as she attempts to remain in denial, as stated in Latham (2006) and Malo-Juvera (2014). The traumatic incident fragments Melinda's sense of reality, which, in turn, leads to her silence or in Herman's word, "mutism" (2015, p.35). As Tannert-Smith (2010, p.397) argues, Melinda's "past intrudes upon [her] present and the damaged psyche takes refuge in cycles of repetitive play and re-enactment or a pervasive numbness and speechlessness that . . . disconnect [her] from emotions and external stimuli". Her main refuge is her art class that gives her solace, with a teacher named Mr Freeman.

With its vivid depiction of Melinda's rape, *Speak* is one of the prime examples of adolescent trauma fiction. One of the features of trauma fiction is the transformation that the protagonist goes through as a result of an external, horrifying event causing a range of PTSD symptoms that impact the life and behaviour of the victim (Tannert Smith, 2010). Also, this is quite evident in the case of Anderson's *Speak* that foregrounds the traumatic experience as well as the damaging psychic impacts that the main character goes through. It is the tension between the desire for disclosure and the desire for secrecy— between what Herman (2015, p.1) describes as "the will to proclaim" and "the will to deny"—that gives rise to the feelings that Melinda says are "chewing [her] alive" (2015, p.125). Melinda stays in the speechless terror of trauma, resulting in the "fragmentation of the self, shattering of social relationships, [and] erosion of social supports" (Waites, 1993, p. 92). In the first day of school, Melinda takes herself for a "wounded zebra in a National

Geographic special, looking for someone, anyone, to sit with . . . [but she does not] have anyone to sit with" (Anderson, 2011, pp.4-5). The trauma she experiences causes her sense of identity to be contested: "I have no friends. I say nothing. I am nothing" (Anderson, 2011, p.116). When sitting in the cafeteria, Melinda says, "I am the only one sitting alone, under the glowing neon sign which reads, 'Complete and Total Loser, Not Quite Sane. Stay Away. Do Not Feed'" (Anderson, 2011, p.128). Latham (2006, p.374) writes, "Confronted by feelings of alienation from her former self and feelings of unease with her current, fragmented self, Melinda at times wants to erase her identity completely". In so doing, she attempts to erase herself: "I wash my face in the sink until there is nothing left of it, no eye, no nose, no mouth. A slick nothing" (Anderson, 2011, p.45). This act of erasing oneself starts immediately after the rape when she looks at her self-reflection in a window and says, "Who was that girl? I had never seen her before" (Anderson, 2011, p.136). Viewing herself in a mirror makes Melinda become horrified of her scarred lips: "It looks like my mouth belongs to someone else, someone I don't even know" (Anderson, 2011, p.17). One can deduce from this quoted line that a mouth belonging to someone else will not speak anymore.

3. TRADITIONAL VS CONTEMPORARY TRAUMA THEORY

Silence or speechlessness is what traditional trauma theorists see as a repressive response to trauma indicating the victim's inability to remember, describe, and tell their story. However, a more recent literary trauma theorist, Craps (2010, p.55), interprets this silence as a "coping mechanism, a conscious choice deserving of respect". In his "Speak, Trauma: Toward a Revised Understanding of Literary Trauma Theory" Pederson (2014) argues that the proposition that trauma is amnesic inhibits the potential of subjectivity and the formation of a recovery narrative. According to McNally, "traumatic amnesia is a myth, and while victims may choose not to speak of their traumas, there is little evidence that they cannot" (2003 cited. in Pederson, 2014, p.334; emphasis in original). Both McNally and Pederson challenge the traditional trauma theorists' claim that trauma victims fail to reconstruct their story. To them, trauma victims' their silence is not an indication of forgetfulness but a chance to pull themselves together. As will be discussed below, Melinda survives her traumatic experiences, and the major part of her recovery is in silence, which is a forceful expression of resistance, a way of survival, a state of safety, or a refuge.

In addition to McNally and Pederson's opinions, Schönfelder (2013, p.32) goes as far as calling the traditional theorisation of trauma "anti-therapeutic". This is because the traditional narrative framework

relies on the trauma survivor's spoken utterances and this limits the scope for identifying and representing the recovery narrative. A generic approach to trauma theory denies individual agency by claiming that everyone who experiences trauma and heals does so in the same way. In contrast, contemporary discussions on trauma theory aim at developing approaches that focus less on similarities of traumatic experience and more on individual differences that may be explored through the trauma survivor's reclaim of their individual agency. In contrast to the conventional approach that focuses merely on the effects of trauma and features the sufferer as crazy or mentally ill, this paper moves towards a more comprehensive understanding of traumatic experience and the recovery narrative achieved through the confluence of the three, daily practises of resilience, reconciliation, and resistance. A narrative framework beyond the linguistic (testimony based) representations may provide alternative ways for representing recovery.

4. MELINDA'S JOURNEY TOWARDS HEALING AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE RECOVERY NARRATIVE

Bearing McNally's claim in mind, one might realise that Melinda's silence is by no means an indication of repression in this novel. Instead, it could be interpreted as a coping mechanism and a conscious decision to gather one's strength and memorialise loss. For example, when Melinda gives a report on the suffragettes as an assignment for Mr Neck's class, she refuses to give it an oral presentation, as Mr Neck demands. She writes,

"i am going to stand up for what i believe. No one should be forced to give speeches. I choose to stay silent" (anderson, 2011, p.156).

This quote suggests that Melinda's silence is an active choice. Even if Melinda did speak, there is no certainty that she would be understood, listened to, or believed, as evidenced by Rachael's reaction to Melinda's disclosure in the library. In addition to this, Melinda wonders why people make such a big deal about her lack of speech. She goes on to make a connection between her choice for silence and what police officers tell a suspect: "anything you say will be used against you," (Anderson, 2011, p.157) which is a form of self-incrimination. This makes Melinda say, "May be I don't want to incriminate myself. Maybe I don't like the sound of my voice" (Anderson, 2011, p.157). To Melinda, talking might lead to the incrimination of oneself and putting oneself into more trouble. This again emphasises Melinda's conscious choice for silence. Quite paradoxically, the choice for silence gives Melinda individual agency to choose her own trajectory of recovery without the limitations of traditional trauma theory, which considers speaking or narration as the

only avenue for recovery. Therefore, the notion of silence as a repressive response to trauma is broken down in the narrative to create a path through which Melinda may emerge from the rubbles of these traditional notions, which this paper considers to be limiting.

Through the interplay of the above mentioned daily practices, the popularly held view that traumatic experience definitely results in madness or illness could also be undermined. Through identifying the effects these practices on Melinda, one may note how these help to change Melinda from a sufferer into a survivor with a positive perspective on her life. Thus, the focus on individual subjectivity allows the identity of the survivor to develop and her recovery to become possible. Through a detailed discussion, the following three sub-sections explain the significance resilience, reconciliation and resistance in the process of Melinda's healing and the creation of the recovery narrative.

5. RESILIENCE

Resilience is the "hardiness" one grows to persevere or cope "in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of threat" (American Psychological Association, 2014 cited in Southwick, et al. 2015, p.1). The concept of hardiness thus provides a framework for identifying the developmental experiences an individual undergoes to gain resilience. Melinda demonstrates resilience when she adapts to her condition, realigns her perspective on life, and reorganises her life after suffering. Throughout the story, she learns to gain confidence and stand for herself by struggling against her traumatic memory, limiting its effects, and understanding the potential through which she makes positive changes in her life.

At the beginning of the school year, the shock of the traumatic incident makes the victimised Melinda underestimate her ability, intelligence, performance and strength. Melinda expresses her inadequacy in creating a tree in the following quotation:

I stay awake. I take out a page of notebook paper and a pen and doodle a tree, my second-grade version. Hopeless. I crumble it into a ball and take out another sheet. How hard can it be to put a tree on a piece of paper? Two vertical lines for the trunk. Maybe some thick branches, a bunch of thinner branches, and plenty of leaves to hide the mistakes. . . . I don't think Mr Freeman is going to find much emotion in it. I don't find any. (Anderson, 2011, p.32)

Her frustration that she cannot put emotion into her tree prevents Melinda from acknowledging her ability. On another occasion, she writes that she does not "know anything" and that her "trees suck" (Anderson, 2011, p.122). This demonstrates Melinda's failure to see the potential that she has, as it is evident throughout the

first marking period of the novel. In the early second marking period, she is still unable to appreciate herself and her abilities. When she has her first success in the gym class, she is chosen as a volunteer to teach the basketball team. However, she rejects the offer by talking to herself: "I couldn't do anything. I just won't show up" (Anderson, 2011, p.169).

However, she later develops her resilience or the hardiness when she is able to make plans and carry them out successfully. Hardiness can be seen in her positive perception of one's self and her confidence in her problem-solving skill. After the second marking period, Melinda sees life as meaningful, gains control over her condition, and learns from the experiences that she gets in her life. At a point, Melinda writes: "I have to stay away from the closet, go to all my classes. I will make myself normal. Forget the rest of it" (Anderson, 2011, p.125). When Melinda is able to challenge her peer Nichole in tennis class successfully, she begins to develop her resilience yet further. This is in addition to her excellent performance in the creation of art, for which people give her praises and compliments. When she makes the sculpture from the turkey bones and the found objects, Mr Freeman says to her: "Excellent, excellent. What does this say to you?" (Anderson, 2011, p.63). Mr Freeman also praises Melinda for the cubist sketch of a tree she has made and appreciates her ability to put emotion into it: "I am seeing a lot of progress in your work. You are learning more than you know" (Anderson, 2011, p.121). He also suggests Melinda not think about trees but "love, or hate, or joy, or rage" (Anderson, 2011, p.122) or whatever makes her feel. On another occasion, Mr Freeman tells Melinda that she is a good girl and that the room to his office is always open to her (Anderson, 2011, p.123). Not only Mr Freeman but also Ivy praises her for her artwork. Ivy throws very encouraging statements at her: "[Melinda], you're better than you think you are. . . . [Your tree] will look great. You have a great start there" (Anderson, 2011, p.146). These compliments give her a sense of pride that boost her confidence and transform her into someone who looks positively into herself and the future. These make her see beyond herself and start to participate in making sense of her life rather than avoiding the circumstances surrounding her. Her positive outlook is evident when she says, "I am a good girl. I go to every single class for a week. It feels good to know what the teachers are talking about again. My parents get the news flash from the guidance counsellor" (Anderson, 2011, p.120). The fourth marking period clearly shows Melinda's transformation and growth. She works hard in her classes and passes her exams: "I passed an algebra test, I passed an English test, I passed a biology test. Well, hallelujah" (Anderson, 2011, p.143). She acknowledges her hard work and her chance to succeed in whatever

activity she sets her minds on. For instance, Melinda says, "I'm tough enough to play [tennis] and strong enough to win. Maybe I can get Dad to practice with me a few times. It could be the only glory of a really sucky year if I could beat someone at something" (Anderson, 2011, p.170). Her choice to make plans and pursue tennis as a hobby signals her new engagement and positive outlook on her life.

Southwick et al. (2015) argue that resilience lies in one's ability to establish constructive rapport with others inside and outside their family and care for others. When Melinda comes to terms with her condition, she starts to feel that she is loved and cared for. The first time that she feels loved is when her mom is happy to receive a note from her: "I had to write a note to my mother asking her to buy lunch of bags, bologna, and little containers of apple-sauce. The note made her happy" (Anderson, 2011, p.127). Although she is still afraid to open herself to her mom, she appreciates her ability to reconnect herself with her mother. Entering the fourth marking period, Melinda begins to establish good rapport with her former best friend, Ivy, and David Petrakis, her biology lab partner, and Mr Freeman. In addition to these people, Melinda reaches out to Heather multiple times. For instance, when the Martha clan assign Heather with the task of making pillows for hospitalised little kids, Melinda helps her out in the process (Anderson, 2011, pp.79-80). Connecting with these people is a gateway for Melinda to no longer be afraid of rejection and failure. Resilience helps Melinda to make a new life, find incredibly creative ways to put the pieces of her life back, and re-instil hope for a better life. Therefore, locating these potentials in Melinda demonstrates this paper's claim regarding the effects of resilience on the process of recovery. The following section discusses the power that reconciliation grants trauma victims in their process of recovery.

6. RECONCILIATION

As noted by Chu (2011), reconciliation lies in one's ability to accept the traumatic incident along with the feelings it brings with itself. It is coping with a changing environment caused by sexual trauma. As a consequence, it facilitates the trauma sufferer's reintegration into society. Reconciliation also assists the sufferer not to blame oneself. As the novel progresses, Melinda becomes more self-conscious of her condition, begins to reconcile with her situation, and grows a sense of awareness of her vulnerability, which is significant to the thriving of herself as an individual. Near the end of the novel, Melinda says:

IT happened. There is no avoiding it, no forgetting. No running away, or flying, or burying, or hiding. Andy Evans raped me in August when I was drunk and too young to know

what was happening. It wasn't my fault. He hurt me. It wasn't my fault. And I'm not going to let it kill me. I can grow. (Anderson, 2011, p.198)

Phrases such as "no avoiding it," "no forgetting," "no running away, or flying" highlight Melinda's acceptance and recognition of her condition. She is convinced that Andy is the one to blame for the rape. She, therefore, realises that the best way to deal with her traumatic event is facing and accepting the rape as it happened. As O'Quinn (2001, p.55) writes, accepting the vicissitudes of life gives Melinda an awareness to "refuse to be a victim, . . . but [to be] emancipated by it". Melinda's ability to reconcile with her changed-self adheres to the claim by McCoy (2013, p.ix) that developing a sense of awareness of human vulnerability is "important to the thriving of both . . . individuals and communities".

Another indication of reconciliation is the development in her interaction with the perpetrator, Andy Evans. At the beginning of the novel, she refers to him as IT because she is too scared to mention his name. Towards the end of the school year, she starts to call him "Monster" and herself "BunnyRabbit" (Anderson, 2011, p.86-97). At the end of the third marking period, Melinda refers to the perpetrator as "Andy Beast" (Anderson, 2011, p.117) rather than IT or Monster. When she tells Rachel of the rape incident near the end of the novel, Melinda is finally able to call the rapist by his full name. Changing the way, she calls Andy Evans is a sign of accepting herself and her condition. In this manner, Melinda is able to reconcile with her traumatic experience by expressing her feelings towards and responses to vulnerability. This novel is mainly offered to girls to read so that they could learn how to survive once they get raped. The author seems to suggest that girls need to be aware that they are more vulnerable to sexual violence during their adolescent years. The subsequent, final subsection discusses the effects of resistance as a shield to avoid being defined by the psychic impacts that rape trauma leaves in the life of trauma victims.

7. RESISTANCE

As Craps (2010) claims, trauma victim's silence is a conscious choice to come to terms with her condition and resist to be defined by the traumatic experience. Rejecting to surrender is the moment resistance is developed and agency is reclaimed. Therefore, resistance is the conscious choice to refuse to be overwhelmed, defined or changed by the feelings and impacts of the traumatic incident. In this spirit, resistance is a vital component which enables sufferer's subjectivity and the determinism they need in their process of recovery.

As McGee (2009) argues, Melinda's failure to speak about what has happened to her and her subsequent silence is not the product of repression. Instead, her difficulty with verbal communication is deeply connected to the confession that many adults around her require from Melinda. Regardless of what she has to say about not wanting to speak, Melinda does attempt in numerous occasions to tell what happened: "I want to confess everything, hand over the guilt and mistake and anger to someone else" (Anderson, 2011, p.51) and "I should probably tell someone. . . . Get it over with. Let it out, blurt it out" (Anderson, 2011, p.99). However, she is repeatedly silenced by the adult figures that badly want her to talk. For instance, in the inquisition with Melinda regarding her failing grades, her mom repeatedly asks Melinda to look at her in the eye and tell her what has gone wrong. To Melinda, this is "the Death voice," the voice that used to make her pee when she was a kid (Anderson, 2011, p.36). Another instance is when Melinda attends a meeting where the principal has summoned her parents in order to address Melinda's frequent absences. In this meeting, for example, Melinda notes the very many adult voices that demand her assent but silence any potential response. As an example, all of the following dialogue from the novel comes in a single paragraph, with no mentioning of who is speaking: "Why won't you say anything?" "For the love of God, open your mouth!" "This is childish, Melinda." "Say something." "You are only hurting yourself by refusing to cooperate." "I don't know why she's doing this to us" (Anderson, 2011, p.114). Such a multitude of voices, McGee (2009) writes, may remind the reader of Melinda's earlier comment, that it "is easier not to say anything. . . . No one really wants to hear what you have to say" (Anderson, 2011, p.9). When her mother says, "She's jerking us around to get attention," Melinda thoughtfully replies in her head, "Would you listen? Would you believe me? Fat chance" (Anderson, 2011, p.114). As Herman (2015, p.133) notes, "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, "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". In *Speak*, Melinda is not given the opportunity to tell of the rape incident. Rather, she is required to confess, speak up and recover in the adults' terms rather than her own. This is the reason that she is not willing to relate her story, not due to her inability to remember what has happened to her as Caruth could have suggested. Rather, she does not want to abide by other people's terms. When Melinda feels that it is the right time, she finally tells Mr Freeman what happened. It can safely be argued that Anderson subverts conventional trauma theorists' tradition by having

Melinda begin to heal much earlier in the book, long before she finally speaks out loud to an adult.

It is beyond doubt that Melinda suffers deeply after her trauma, but even early in the book Melinda is portrayed through her writing as a bright individual whose sense of humour, wit, sarcasm, observations, insight, and wisdom allow her to knowingly and playfully mock what she sees in High School. For example, she sarcastically lists the ten lies told to those attending high school, to mention just a few "1. We are here to help you. 2. You will have enough time to get to your class before the bell rings. 3. The dress code will be enforced. 4. No smoking is allowed on school grounds" (Anderson, 2011, p.5). She gives the readers with a humorous list of titles written in her diary, naming and labelling her peers and teachers. Her way of coping with her solitude is to mock those around her. Melinda writes, "My English teacher has no face. She has uncombed stringy hair that droops on her shoulders. . . . I can't decide if she had pissed off her hairdresser or is morphing into a monarch butterfly. I call her Hairwoman. Hairwoman wastes twenty minutes taking attendance because she won't look at us" (Anderson, 2011, p.6; emphasis added). Greta-Ingrid is the name Melinda gives to Rachel's new, exchange-student friend who "flushes and comes out of the stall. This one looks like a supermodel with a name like Greta or Ingrid. Is America the only country with dumpy teenagers? She says something foreign and Rachele laughs. Right, like she understood" (Anderson, 2011, p.21). During her first sight of Mr Freeman, she describes him as an "ugly, Big old grasshopper body, like a stilt-walking circus guy. Nose like a credit card sunk between his eyes" (Anderson, 2011, p.10). When it comes to her Spanish teachers, she says, "my Spanish teacher is going to try to get through the entire year without speaking English to us. This is both amusing and useful—makes it much easier to ignore her" (Anderson, 2011, p.14). Melinda not only mocks others but cracks jokes on herself: "I get hosed in Spanish. 'Linda' means 'pretty' in Spanish. This is a great joke. Mrs. Spanish Teacher calls my name. Some stand-up comic cracks, 'No, Melinda no es linda.' They call me Me-no-linda for the rest of the period. This is how terrorists get started, this kind of harmless fun. I wonder if it's too late to transfer to German" (Anderson, 2011, pp.41-42; emphasis in original).

Melinda begins to recover when sharing some sweeter moments with her former friend Ivy, beating the superior athlete Nicole at tennis, and physically standing upon to her attacker in the final few pages. Mr Freeman's art project acts as another example through which Melinda willingly confesses what she has hidden for so long. Herman (2015, p.1-148) writes that "When the truth is finally recognised, survivors can begin their recovery" and that "truth is a goal constantly to be

striven for". There is great power in Melinda's silence and her willingness to work through her own trauma in her own way. It is interesting to note that Melinda's power does not come only from speaking about what happened. Just as often it comes from not speaking about what happened. Thus, Speak thereby demonstrates resistant silence through Melinda.

8. CONCLUSION

This paper discussed the representations of the conflict between trying to heal the past wounds and the overwhelming, persistent effects of rape trauma. In the interpretation of the novel, the paper resorted to contemporary trauma theory, which advocates individual agency through performing the daily acts of resilience, reconciliation, and resistance rather than verbal testimony, which is considered the only curative model by the traditional trauma theorists. While the pervasiveness of Melinda's trauma is an essential element in the novel, Speak displays a tendency to keep trauma contained and to keep its damage within limits. In this spirit, Anderson refrains herself from depicting Melinda as weak character indulging in her misery. Instead, throughout the narrative, she emphasises her resistance, resourcefulness, and emotional strength. In this manner, the novel reinforces the dynamics of trauma and resistance, development, and recovery. That trauma can knock a person down physically and figuratively is undeniable. However, the fact that Melinda can get back on her feet again and not be defeated by the trauma but continue to survive her situation, shows her resistant, individual agency, acceptance of the vicissitudes of life and refusal to let the traumatic experience stop her from growing.

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