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Traumatic Pattern in the Life of Rape Survivors: Script vs Screen

“Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it.”

-Helen Keller

Books and movies have equal importance in the 21st century. As technology develops, so do the needs of every human being. Everyone's life has become quite fast and busy. Books and movies provide the best way to escape and relax from the busy schedule of life. Great revolutions have occurred in both books and movies with the passage of time. While some people enjoy watching movies, the rest of the people give much importance to books as it is considered to be human beings' best friend. A person who has the habit of reading books never feels alone. Books enrich thoughts and increase vocabulary. They help in

understanding different aspects of life. Books usually have more details than movies and sometimes movies do not match print descriptions. While watching a movie, one can see and hear the details whereas while reading a book, one can imagine them and create a vivid picture of the same in the mind. There are several books that have been made into movies. The interpretation of a book into a movie is bound by resources and finance, and the visualisation of the director. Reading the book, that does not have time constraint and the book can be picked and put down at any convenient time. While a movie affords the power of visual stimulation, it is limited in terms of having to tell a story primarily through dialogue. Making that transition from words to visual representation plus dialogue is not as simple as it seems, particularly when dealing with a book that has a lot of inner dialogue, or that gives the reader insight into a character's mind. Music has vinyl and writing has books, but movies do not offer a physical object that offers an emotional connection.

In this crippled society, even a youngster is not exempted from sexual harassment. It happens because of paying little respect to gender, size, strength, appearance and furthermore, it is not exceptional to the advanced nations like America. What the vast majority neglect to acknowledge is that America still stays one of the social orders which backs assault culture. A current measurable study from *Feminism.com* portrays that 20 % of ladies in America are victims of rape. The tangle of violating is not just confined to one sex (i.e., female). It stretches out its wings to both male and female. This could be a stunning report as the vast majority of literature focuses on this issue from the perspective of female victims. A definitive explanation for this would be an adage that the world shed off the light on manly energy to be striking, legitimate and strong.

As teenage is the most crucial period in the evolutionary process of human mind, it is necessary to have such genres to help people with solution patterns. The language and plot of young adult literature is similar to what students are accustomed to find in reality, television,

movies, and popular culture. This paper “Traumatic Pattern in the Life of Rape Survivors: Script vs Screen” explores the pattern of trauma experienced by the victims of rape as projected in the script and screen versions of *Speak* and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and analyses which form has more impact. Laurie Halse Anderson and Stephen Chbosky explore teenagers’ culture, relationship and the issues they are subjected to, both physically and mentally. Their writings focus mainly on the problematic days in teenage when the mind and thoughts fail to integrate with each other. The writings which deal exclusively with an adolescent’s first confrontation with a social or personal problem. These kinds of writings help people to analyse their disrupted thoughts in order to figure out their problem.

Anderson and Chbosky in their young adult fictions *Speak* and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* describe the traumatic experience of teenagers. These novels also reflect the personal problems of teenagers which lead to abnormal cognitive behaviour. The recent development in the literary theory to analyse the mind of such dejected souls, helps the researcher to scrutinize the main cause for the cognitive changes. Psychology associated with literature provides an in-depth analysis to understand the behaviour of enigmatic characters. The victims suffer trauma due to various reasons like historical impact, cultural conflict, or psychological issues. All these issues are curable. Unfortunately traumatic symptoms take a long turn to fade from a sufferer’s life. It is one of the most denied, avoided, ignored and untreated causes of human suffering. Unresolved trauma can devastate a person’s life and lead to self-destructive behaviours. Most common symptoms are hyper arousal, constriction, immobility, and the feeling of helplessness. However hard the physician tries to confiscate the trauma from a sufferer’s mind, it is in the victim’s hand whether to fight or fright the problems before them. Cognitive therapy and psychodynamic psychotherapy helps the survivors to break their intrusive patterns of thoughts and behaviours. The sufferer’s active

“participation” in society and their involvement in therapies help them to come out of the mental prison and make them to be as normal as everyone else.

Judith Herman formulated the symptoms into three main streams. They are Hyper-arousal which mirrors the constant desire of risk and is detectable in Border-line personality. The second one is Intrusion which demonstrates the exceptional engraving of the traumatic moment. This contains the failure to rest, re-encountering the trauma and stifled memory and the last one is Constriction which deals with the deaden response of submission. This is certain in dissociation, avoidance and numbness.

These observations are better found in the print form than in the movie form. Though most of the changes from the print form to the movie form are minor and never work to change the plot’s overall direction, the intensity of the message and the traumatic experience undergone by the protagonists of both the works are very well expressed in the print form. This is because the movie has certain restrictions in which not every scene can be brought to the screen. Particularly in trauma literature, harsh realities can be more realistically mentioned in the print form rather than in the movie form.

For instance, Chbosky and Anderson, the authors of *The Perks of being a Wallflower* and *Speak* respectively, narrate the plight of the protagonists, Charlie and Melinda’s childhood sexual abuse and how they experience post-traumatic stress disorder in a vivid manner. These protagonists encounter repressed memory, dissociative disorder, alienation and insomnia which are the common traits of Border-line personality (BPD) in addition to depression and anxiety that are the distinctive traits of post-traumatic stress disorder. In *Speak*, Melinda is raped under a tree in the open space outside a party. But in the movie it is shown that she was raped inside Andy’s car. Though the changes may not be huge, the concept of associating her emotions to a tree is given more importance in the print form than in the movie form. When the potato mash is thrown at her, it is portrayed as if it was done

purposefully in the print form, but in the movie form it is portrayed as if it is accidental. Both bring a huge range of difference in the mind of the protagonist. The intensity of the situation also changes completely.

Post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms state that reliving the trauma may violate the person's subjective and interpreting ability. This may bring about unnerved memories of that occasion and increment in the uneasiness level. If that event comes as an unexpected one, i.e., if a rape victim sees a news report regarding sexual abuse, inevitably it will trigger his/her repressed memories. This may end in abnormal emotional and physical reactions. The more the victim recalls the traumatic event, the more intensive the sufferings become. Such traumatic memories are stored as 'Flashbacks' in the person's neurobiological system. This flashback flickers the traumatic event vivaciously in the survivors' mind as if the whole horrendous incident is actually happening again in their life. This shows the plight of survivors' resilience from trauma.

The above discussed psychological ideas are perfectly put into words so that a reader gets the whole idea of what the author wants to convey. However in a movie, the sexual abuse and the pain undergone by the protagonists cannot be explained so accurately and cannot be pictured so intensely on the screen.

Charlie, in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* feels traumatized when he loses his close friend Michael and his beloved Aunt Helen. Their demise makes him alienate himself from society. He starts to repress his emotions from others. He feels regretful on reviewing the purpose behind his aunt's demise and the uncertain explanation behind his friend, Michael's suicide. This culpability frequents his memory and he does not have any dear friends to uncover his excruciating background.

But in the movie form, the death of Charlie's aunt or his beloved friend is not mentioned at the beginning of the movie like it is done in the print form. Unlike the movie

form, the print form gives a proper introduction, and this helps the readers to easily get into the mind of Charlie.

In *Speak*, Melinda is delineated as a socially resolved individual. Here and there, she nibbles her lips and burrows her fingernails to the clench of the hand, to dispose of the mental torment. She does not offer significance to her sentiments. All through the novel, she talks to no one and even does not react to her teacher's inquiries. This demonstrates the void within her. Her feelings are numb and, she does not care about her appearance. People ridicule her yet she does not bother about the expressions of others. Heather, her new friend discusses her infuriation that Melinda is negative, inactive to the happenings and never tries anything to leave her psychological jail. But, Melinda dismisses the remarks as she realizes that her class friends do not understand her inward predicament. Her carelessness to ponder over her feelings falls flat and thus she neglects to demonstrate her outrage on them. But in the movie form, the incidents are very much diluted and the inner plight of Melinda is not expressed well. For example, in the movie, Melinda cuts the classes only once and goes to the hospital. But in the print form it is said that she cuts the class often and visits the hospital for her mental peace. This again shows the intensity of the traumatic condition Melinda undergoes.

In Chbosky's *The Perks of being a Wallflower*, Charlie encounters different types of post-traumatic stress disorders. These influence him to ponder over his past life. These recollections destroy his cognizant personality and, so he tries his best to segregate himself from others. This isolation begins to change when he becomes a close acquaintance of Sam and Patrick. It is Sam who influences Charlie to understand the significance of being on his own. She says that it is imperative to share what he feels to others. All through the novel, Charlie trusts the feelings inside himself in light of the fact that, to him, the world is hazardous and loaded with sufferings. Childhood traumatic experiences influence him to think along these lines. Charlie is quiet and an untouchable, and so he enjoys reading books

rather chatting with people. His hush is noted by his English teacher, Mr Bill. He propels Charlie by giving him books to peruse. These books influence Charlie to investigate his disturbed considerations. He relates himself with the characters in the books he reads. He tries to correct his slip-ups by recognizing those characters' missteps. This causes him to change his view of himself that he is not the only individual who experiences such taxing situations in everyday life. It is obvious from the books he read, that every single person bears sufferings at one purpose of time in life. It is in the hands of the sufferer to end up a casualty or a survivor. His considerations about himself and his feelings change when he begins to acknowledge things for its purpose. In the wake of experiencing childhood trauma again in his fantasies, his points of view change in dealing with horrible circumstances. Charlie states that "I'm not the way I am because of what I dreamt and remembered about my aunt Helen. That's what I figured out when things got quiet. And I think that's very important to know. It made things feel(s) clear and together" (Chbosky 211).

In the movie form, the influence of Sam in Charlie's life is not been portrayed well as is projected in the print form. The only scene in which Sam encourages Charlie is at the night when Charlie helps Sam to pack things for college. Sam says, "You cannot just sit there and put everybody's lives ahead of yours and think that counts as love. . . . I want people to like the real me" (*The Perks*). She talks about how Charlie should decide things of his life. And finally, Charlie speaks his thought but this is not clearly mentioned in the print form. He says "I know I'm quiet. And I know I should speak more. But if you knew the things that were in my head most of the time, you'd know what it really meant. How much we're alike and how we've been through the same things. And you are not small. You are beautiful" (*The Perks*).

In the print form, Charlie is portrayed as a book lover who spends most of his time reading books. But, in the movie form, though Charlie is portrayed as a book lover, he spends most of the time not with books but with Sam and Patrick. Though books are one of the main

reasons for Charlie to overcome the horrendous experience, it is not properly portrayed in the movie form. In the print form, the English teacher is mentioned as Mr Bill, whereas in the movie, he is mentioned as Mr Anderson. Many intensive scenes from the print form have been cut off from the movie. This might be one of the reasons for the diluted appearance of trauma in the movie form.

In *Speak*, Melinda tries to leave her miserable past. She realizes that she has no true friend in school. She resembles a "wounded zebra" (Anderson 5) yearning for a friend to sit beside her. When she becomes friendly with Heather, a newcomer to class, her point of view on numerous things gets changed. Heather likes to decorate her room and to associate with people. This gives Melinda another observation that she too might proceed onward with life. She begins to envision everything from the perspective of Heather. This is clear when she tries to decorate her home for Christmas. She even gets a lab partner, David Petrakis. His friendship in a considerable measure changes her. It is David, who tells Melinda about the rights. He says, "Do not expect to make a difference unless you speak up for yourself" (Anderson 159).

People's confrontation on the practicality of life encourages them to adapt to real life emergencies and this is one of the huge purposes behind the positive change in the psyche. This traumatic experience encourages Charlie to change his discernment in heaps of things. He begins to acknowledge his past. He comprehends that nobody is in charge of his trauma. He realises that if he accuses his aunt Helen for ambushing him sexually in his childhood, he also has to accuse aunt Helen's dad for beating her and the family friend who acted mischievously with her and accusations will go on. "It's like if I blamed my aunt Helen, I would have to blame her dad for hitting her and the friend of the family that fooled around with her when she was little. And the person that fooled around with him. And God for not stopping all this and things that are much worse" (Chbosky 211). This demonstrates that

Charlie ends up clear in his thoughts. He comprehends the truth of life. He acknowledges life as it is, though he has endured a considerable measure. This trauma encourages him to deal with his disturbed thoughts and it re-arranges his suppression. He states that, "So, I guess we are who we are for a lot of reasons. And maybe we never know most of them. But even if we do not have the power to choose where we come from, we can still choose where we go from there. We can still do things. And we can try to feel okay about them" (Chbosky 211). This makes him participate in the society in spite of the hardships he undergoes. He concludes his letter saying thus, "Believe that things are good with me, and even when they're not, they will be soon enough" (Chbosky 213).

In *Speak*, Melinda conveys her needs in art and this shows how her impression of life is. The illustrations she does before are a dead tree, trees contaminated from parasitic assault or lightning. She is not able to picture a genuine tree in her illustrations. This shows how hard she tries to bring her inward feelings out and scrapper when she sees a flaw in her speciality. It is Mr Freeman who causes her to see the culmination in blemishes. He says that "Scar it, give it a twisted branch- perfect trees do not exist. Nothing is perfect. Flaws are interesting. Be the tree" (Anderson 153). This encourages her to see excellency throughout her life. She comprehends that nobody is impeccable and it is be defective sooner or later throughout everyday life. Her aggravated musings get clear and she says, "I look at my homely sketch. It does not need anything. Even through the river in my eyes, I can see that (her artwork). It is not perfect and that makes it just right" (Anderson 198). Along these lines, Melinda's rationality about existence changes and her traumatic experience fortifies her to see goodness throughout everyday life.

Both Charlie and Melinda, finally discover their character. They prevail with regards to achieving their objective of predominance that is, their endeavours to determine their psychological blow and to locate an agreeable place in the society that turns out to be

genuine. Through Adler's individual psychology, the psychological capacity of Charlie and Melinda is examined. They achieve incredible statures after their traumatic experience. This trauma influences them to comprehend their genuine self and their post-traumatic growth causes them to discover a place of their own in the society. This shows that they acknowledge the truth of life and endeavour to come out of the detainment. They prevail in it by reviewing the positive parts of the traumatic experience they have experienced. Their detached forcefulness changes into a dynamic commitment to society. As the movie forms have eliminated many minute details, they bring down the intensity of the traumatic rhythm faced by both the protagonists. Hence, in the case of traumatic literature, the intensity of the traumatic experience, the psychological trauma and the idea of growth beyond survival that helps the protagonists are well portrayed only through print form than through the movie form. From these characters, the readers can realise that wallowing in self-pity or thinking about the horrible past will never add happiness to transitory life. It is a wise thought to understand that life is beautiful and worth living with the mistakes in it because imperfections add beauty to life.

Hence the paper "Traumatic Pattern in the Life of Rape Survivors: Script vs Screen" focuses on the print forms and movie versions of *Speak* and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and probes into them in the light of trauma. It is found after critical analysis that, books express the traumatic rhythm of the protagonist more vividly than the movie form. These works of art prove that trials and tribulations are blessings in disguise.

This thesis can be further studied in relation to the media- how the media projects rape cases to the world, and whether the rape victims get justice. It can also be done like a case-study by interviewing few rape victims and how their story is projected in the media, in books and in the movie. This kind of study will further add colour to research on *Speak* and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.

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