

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

Laurie Halse Anderson is a famous American author whose works have earned numerous national and state awards, as well as international recognition. As written in Gale Biography entitled “*Laurie Halse Anderson*” (2010, para.1), Laurie Halse Anderson was born October 23, 1961, in Postdam, NY. She is Frank A. Jr. And Joyce Halse’ daughter. As said in her acceptance speech in Margaret S. Edwards Award, her father was a minister and also a poet and a very good story teller which influence her. She married Gregory H. Anderson on June 19, 1983 but got divorce. She then married Scot Larrabee in 2005. Two of her children from her first husband are Stephanie and Meredith. While two of her children from her second husband are Jessica and Christian. While raising her family as said in Gale Biography entitled “*Laurie Halse Anderson*” (2010, para.6), Anderson also worked as a freelance magazine writer and editor.

One among her stunning young adult novels is *Speak*. *Speak* was firstly published in 1999. Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Speak* attains popularity since it reflects the social problem we take-for-granted for ages. It gains lots of awards both National and State Award & Bookseller and Media recognition. As written completely in the author personal site, among them are National Book Award Finalist (1999), Printz Honor book (2000), ALA Best Book for Young Adults (2000), and etc (“Youngadult Speak”).

Speak begins by introducing Melinda Sordino’s life which is suddenly falling apart. She becomes the main target of bullying after she ruins a party by calling the cop that night. She does not know to whom she must tell what actually happen and decides to keep it hidden inside her mind. Her 9-years-exbestfriend, Rachele, just the same as others hate her and

believe she is nothing but a freaking looser. She does not want to know why Melinda shuts her mouth tight saying nothing or why she calls the cop. Lots of teen included Andy Evan are arrested. The arrest enrages people even more. Her parents are busy arguing each other and they prefer talking through sticky notes instead. None tries hard to dig out what is lying behind that tightly closed mouth. Until her art teacher, Mr. Freeman, becomes the only one who recognizes that her silence hides a big scar inside and slowly open it up; sexually abused trauma. When Andy attacks her, trying to rape her again, she manages to defend herself. At the end, she manages to cope and speak up. She tells everything she could not tell ever since that summer party.

I am attracted to use *Speak* as the object of my research. How Melinda's silent tendency is influenced by her parents, counselors, teachers and friends interested me to analyze it further. It is also one of my purposes to gain more people to not only feel the magic spell of this novel, but realize how important we are as part of society. This novel potrays one of social issues in America in 1990. I believe Anderson is influenced by social problem on her society at that time. Nowadays, *Speak* is still irreplaceable as silence tendency of sexually assaulted children is still remain unsolved.

As a result, the title is chosen as it aims to show how Melinda's closest relatives, her parents, counselor-counselor, teachers and friends, contributes to her choice to keep the secret of getting sexually assaulted buried deep inside her mind.

1.2. Identification of the Problem

Melinda's Friends, family, teachers and counselors influence Melinda's decision to disclosure about the rape. This is one of social issues that we found in America in 1990s. Friends, family, teachers and authorized person as part of society contribute to the tendency of sexually-assaulted children to keep silent and hide their trauma inside.

1.3. Scope of the Research

I limit my research only to analyze how the author portrays Melinda's thinking as sexually assaulted victim about her parents, friends, teachers, and counselor. This study investigates the data along with sexual assault statistics and report in America when the novel is published.

1.4.The Research Questions

- a. How does the author depict sexual assault in *Speak*?
- b. How does the author depict reasons behind Melinda's decision to disclosure about the rape?

1.5.Objective of the Research

Social problem in *Speak* interested me to analyze it and spread out how important it is for us to read the novel and act more wisely. By investigating *Speak* we may at the end see how ignorant we are as part of society and how big the impact we will make by avoiding our ignorancy. Not only parents, but also friends, institutional as school, play important role to fully understand sexual violence and be brave to speak up in case it happens to them. I do hope my research will enrich literature research through sociological perspective.

1.6.Review of Related Studies

There are scarcely previous researches using *Speak* as their object. O'Quinn argues in her Journal *Between Voice and Voicelessness: Transacting Silence in Laurie Halse Anderson's Speak* that *Speak* is challenging the oppression of silence of woman. O'Quinn (2001) believes it was a well-modeled gender rule that says nice girls keep the matters of self & family private and Anderson's *Speak* is against it (p.54). I found her research tries to explain that silence in sexually-assaulted child is influenced by self-abnegation culture. It is explained that some consider how to present themselves as it would seriously impact how they were perceived by the world. History of silence as self-abnegation is challenged by realistic character who at the end overcomes her different situation. O'Quinn provides novel

excerpt to strengthen her ideas. O'Quinn uses feminist perspective and both intrinsic and extrinsic approach for her research.

While McGee (2009) believes "...Anderson carefully shows Melinda is none of voiceless, fragile or purely powerless girl. Instead, she finds strength despite her lack of a traditional "voice"... (pp.175-176). He then believes it is an empowerment narrative in the traditional sense because Melinda's power does not come only from speaking about what happened. McGee elaborates some supporting theories or statements such as Hermman's, Gonnick's, Cadden's, Sprague and Keeling's, etc. McGee uses Foucault's psychoanalytic's approach for his research.

Other research is from Agustin (2016). She believes Melinda is the representation of Laure Halse Anderson. She traces back Anderson's story and how this novel contributes to reduce adult sexual violence in society. Agustin uses Alan Swingewood's Sociological perspective & Biographical Approach for her research (pp.1-16).

Based on three researches above, the three of them use the same object as I do but have different focuses and theories. O'Quinn focuses on her belief that Melinda's silence is influenced by patriarchal's idea about self-abnegation on woman and uses feminist's perspective. While McGee believes Melinda's silence is the form of psychological's coping and uses several theories which main theories used is Foucault's. Agustin focuses her analysis on how Melinda represents her and how the novel reduce adult sexual violence in society. She uses Alan Swingewood's theory. In contrast, I focus my research on how Melinda's relative indirectly have a part on Melinda's decision to keep silent as she mistrust them. I use Alan Swingewood's theory (Sociology of Literature) that literature provide a mirror to its age.

1.7.Theoretical Framework

I use sociology of literature proposed by Alan Swingewood in analyzing the research. Sociology is the study of society through literary works. Swingewood on *The Sociology of Literature* says “Sociology is essentially the scientific, objective study of the man in society, the study of social institutions and of social processes; it seeks to answer the question of how society is possible, how it works, why it persist” (p.11). The reflection of real society in specific time and place can be seen through literary works. In literary world, authors use literary works to give a glimps of their idea of various aspects of life in society. There are three perspectives in a sociology of literature. The first perspective is the documentary aspect of literature. As Swingewood states, “the most popular perspectives adopts the documentary aspects of literature arguing that it provides a mirror to the age” (p.13). He also says that the documentary aspect of literature is a direct reflection of various facets of society such as social structure, family relationships, class conflict and etc. In other words, a literary work concerns with various social problems in human life. The second perspective concerns with the work of production of the literature especially to the social situation of the writer (p.17). It means that writer and her literary work are related to each other. The third perspective is concerning with the reception of a particular society toward the literary works. Swingewood says, “one demanding a high level skills, attempt to trace the ways in which a work of literature is actually received by a particular society at a specific historical moment” (p.21). This approach will look closely of how a literary work being accepted in a society at the specific time. Therefore, I use his first perspective to analyze my research which says literature provides a mirror of the age.

1.8.Methods of the Research

In conducting this research, I will apply the library research. According to Elmer E. Rasmuson Library in *Research, Instruction, and Library Research Process Outreach Services* (2016), Library research involves the step-by-step process used to gather information in order

to write a paper, create a presentation, or complete a project. As you progress from one step to the next, it is commonly necessary to back up, revise, add additional material or even change your topic completely. This will depend on what you discover during your research (Rasmuson, 2016). I will follow three steps. Those three steps are collecting data, analyzing the data, and presenting the data.

1.8.1. Collecting data

In collecting the data, I will take it from both primary and secondary data. Primary data are taken from *Speak* novel by Laurie Halse Anderson. Since I focus on how people around Melinda affect her to keep silent, any data of Melinda's thinking about those people are taken. Extrinsic data, such as American sexual assault history, are taken from trusted journals and national statistical data are also provided and discuss along with primary data.

1.8.2. Analyzing data

In analyzing the intrinsic data, I would analyze how her thinking actually implies reasons of why she keeps silent and mistrust anyone. Then, I will identify the extrinsic elements of the novel such as children sexual assault statistics in America and children sexual assault news reports and relate it to my analysis in discussion. After that, I apply third perspective that literature mirror its age by Swingewood and extension of reflection theory which is proposed by Albrecht.

1.8.3. Presenting the Result of Analysis

In presenting the data, I use the qualitative method. According to Hancock B., Windridge, K., and Ockleford, E. (2007) in an online book titled *An Introduction to Qualitative*, "Qualitative research attempts to broaden and/or deepen our understanding of how things came to be the way they are in our social world". It proves the analysis by emerging arguments and opinion since the data are words, statements or paragraph and not in form of number.