جامعة بجاية
Tasdawit n'Bgayet
Université de Béjaïa

Voices in Conflict

Reclaiming Rape Narratives in Chanel Miller's *Know My Name: A Memoir* (2019) and Lucia Osborne-Crowley's *I Choose Elena* (2019)

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for an M.A. Degree in English Literature and Civilization

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Academic Year: 2022/ 2023

Dedication

To my dear parents, my siblings, and my family.

Abstract

Some experiences appear to be of such complexity that language may fail to adequately capture their nuances. That is why writing about traumatic events is a real act of courage. This study relies on feminist and psychoanalytic rhetorical analysis to examine some aspects of Chanel Miller's *Know My Name* and Lucia Osborne-Crowley's *I Choose Elena*. It aims to determine how Miller and Crowley have confronted their traumatic ordeals following their violent assaults amidst their nations' prejudiced cultures. This investigation addresses concerns related to female oppression under the patriarchal system and evaluates the effects of trauma on rape victims through the "classical" and "pluralistic" trauma models. Moreover, it explores issues of victim-blaming and shame in rape cultures as well as attempts to define the importance of writing in recovering from trauma. This work also emphasises the significance of "rape memoirs" in dissolving the silence and taboos surrounding sexual violence to reclaim subjectivity and agency after a desubjectifying experience.

Key Words: Rape Narratives, Gender Oppression, Trauma, Rape Culture, Life-Writing, Recovery.

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General Introduction

And that deep torture may be call'd a hell

When more is felt than one hath power to tell.

—Shakespeare, "The Rape of Lucrece"

Nowadays, women are exposed to elevated risks of human rights violations and hostility as a result of prejudicial gender norms, which legitimise violence against women. Throughout history, sexual violence has been implemented as a weapon of war and tool for social control to further oppress and subjugate marginalised groups such as African-Americans, Latinos, disabled people, and women. Gloria Jean Watkins, better known by her pen name Bell Hooks, affirms in her acclaimed work, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984), that women are the most persecuted minority due to sexist oppression. She also indicates that sexism, like other forms of group oppression, is perpetuated by institutional and social structures: individuals who dominate, exploit, and oppress, and victims who are socialised to engage in behaviours that make them implicated in the established order (43). However, sexism is more complex than it appears, as this concept is deeply entrenched in patriarchy.

Patriarchy is an institutional aspect that influences power dynamics between the two sexes, whether abusive or not. Sylvia Walby, in *Theorising Patriarchy* (1991), establishes that patriarchy has a long history of use among social scientists, such as Weber (1947), who used the term to describe a form of government in which males govern society through their positions as heads of households (19). The sociologist maintains that the concept of patriarchy must remain central to a feminist approach to society. Walby contends that six patriarchal structures limit the female gender and maintain male dominance. These patriarchal structures include: "the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations

in cultural institutions" (20). Consequently, by adhering to their traditional gender roles that generate instinctive male dominance, a category of men has subjugated women to gender oppression, which has resulted in severe forms of gender-based violence.

Thesis Statement

The rampant and pervasive constructed notions in Western societies, including sexist beliefs, consent norms, and rape myth acceptance, not neglecting the docility and unresponsiveness of some judicial systems, allow the thriving and flourishment of an already established "rape culture." Correspondingly, the present endeavour is an ambitious effort at addressing the despicable reverberations of rape trauma under the constraints of gender oppression and discrimination at the heart of the American and Australian communities. Moreover, this study also seeks to expose the fallacies of rape culture as well as some established rape myths by exploring Chanel Miller's *Know My Name: A Memoir* (2019) and Lucia Osborne-Crowley's *I Choose Elena* (2019). By delving into the selected rape memoirs, this current investigation will determine how the rape victims have succeeded in reclaiming their identities, restoring their agency, and ultimately achieving recovery through authorship.

Literature Review

The subsequent literature review will provide a substantial account of the theoretical framework related to the established research. Nevertheless, since Chanel Miller's *Know My Name* and Lucia Osborne-Crowley's *I Choose Elena* pertain to the newly released works of the twenty-first century, they have been approached by a limited number of researchers in the field. Therefore, the following bibliographic review will primarily consist of the most pertinent publications relevant to the theoretical foundation of this study.

Rayna R. Reiter, in her introduction to one of the most ground-breaking collections of feminist essays, *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (1975), alleges that female subjugation is an inherent aspect of daily existence. However, she indicates that this aspect has not been

introduced by modern capitalism and would not disappear in socialist societies (11). In her essay "Perspectives on the Evolution of Sexes," Lila Leibowitz observes that contemporary physical disparities are interpreted as the product of ancient social-role differences, whereas ancient social-role differences are viewed as the result of physical distinctions that emerged in early human and pre-human civilizations (23). Gender stereotypes can, thus, be assigned based on the cultural beliefs of every social group. This prejudiced behavioural pattern, however, interferes with females' personal and professional fulfilment, which will be illustrated in this study.

Women have been subjugated for centuries; their human rights have been neglected as they have been mostly considered inferior members of their different cultures. Sherry B. Ortner in her article "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" maintains that women's secondary role in society is a true universal and cultural fact (5). She submits that women are subordinated to men in every documented society. Hence, the search for a truly egalitarian, relatively matriarchal civilization has proven ineffective (8). However, Ortner establishes that if femaleness is interpreted as a mediating element in the culture-nature relationship it is because of the cultural tendency not only to devalue women but also to constrain and restrict their functions, since culture must maintain control over its mechanisms (27–28). As a result, men's essential role in culture constitutes one of the root causes of women's oppression. Evaluating the relationship between male dominance and female oppression in the context of sexual assault is, hence, essential to this investigation.

In her essay "The Traffic in Women," Gale Rubin reports that Freud and Levi-Strauss provide conceptual tools for developing descriptions of the element of social interactions that is the focus of women's oppression as well as certain features of human personality. Subsequently, Rubin proclaims that this aspect of social life is referred to as the "sex/gender system." A "sex/gender system," according to Rubin, is the collection of arrangements through

which a society transforms biological sexuality into objects of human activity (159). She contends that the sex/gender system is a neutral phrase that holds that oppression is the result of the specific social interactions that organise it (168). Thus, the gendered division of labour is a critical factor in the political economy of gender norms. This dichotomy of gender relations serves as a stigma that reinforces biological differences between the sexes; thus, producing gender roles. Nevertheless, this patriarchal ideology is harmful to rape victims. That is why seeking to gain an understanding of this aspect is critical to this inquiry.

During the Victorian era, men's and women's roles have been more strictly defined than at any other time in recorded history. Separate spheres that worked alongside Darwin's theory of "survival of the fittest" have been established, which has attached particular importance to men's standpoint on the evolutionary ladder. Nonetheless, what is more intriguing during this specific time frame is that female insanity has occupied a special place among Victorian authors and practitioners. The example of Bertha Mason in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, where Bertha's madness destabilises the male protagonist's stability, demonstrates an unrestrained depiction of female insanity. Elaine Showalter, in *The Female Malady* (1985), reveals that according to Victorian psychiatrists' statistics, women are more vulnerable to insanity than men because their reproductive system interferes with their physical, emotional, and mental faculties (54-55). As a result of these perspectives governing Western philosophy, female suffering remained invisible.

Even the origins of trauma theory can be attributed to the female condition, as Jean-Martin Charcot's speculations came to light while working on hysterical women at the Salpetriere hospital. At the expense of responding to women's concerns, most of them have been categorised as insane or simply hysterical. Hence, solving the mystery behind some females' traumatic reactions is critical. In the part "Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle," from *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), Dori Laub proclaims that trauma

survivors do not only need to survive in order to tell their stories; they also need to tell their stories in order to survive (63). Due to the specificity of rape narratives, rape victims' traumatic tales must be communicated to expose some inescapable truth. Hence, the significance of narrative expression will be emphasised in this study.

Nelanthi Hewa, in her article "The mouth of the internet, the eyes of the public: Sexual violence survivorship in an economy of visibility," explains how stories of sexual violence in the media are repackaged, spread, and made profitable for both media outlets and internet platforms through a capitalist system of visibility. She mentions that Chanel Miller's story of the "Stanford victim" has received international attention (1). However, Hewa maintains that even if Miller's literary publication has allowed her to restore her narrative, the permanence of online material is a double-edged sword for rape survivors (5). Nonetheless, Hewa has dismissed the fact that Miller, like any sexual assault victim, is a social individual who has been silenced by a prejudiced culture. Such attitudes foster the thriving of rape culture, which normalises sexual assault and restricts action against it, which will be addressed in this investigation.

In her Master thesis, entitled *Shout Your Story: The Rhetorical Influence of Rape Memoirs on Public Discourse* (2022), Allison Christina Kennon has explored the literary strategies through which rape memoirs enter public discourse, relying on Chanel Miller's *Know My Name* and Tarana Burke's *Unbound*. She writes that memoirs frequently expose the author's societal beliefs and identity groups (7). Kennon conveys that even if Turner acknowledges some guilt for Miller's assault, he still objects to heavy sentencing (41). Thereupon, Kennon affirms that *Know My Name* compels readers to truly engage with Miller on her terms, whereas Brock Turner was gradually turning into a background figure (44). Thus, exploring Miller's rape narrative while simultaneously addressing the broader cultural and societal factors surrounding her rape may prove extremely valuable.

Methodology

The present research will attempt to solve the mystery behind Chanel Miller and Lucia Osborne-Crowley's psychological and emotional suffering following their rapes, drawing on some important concepts in feminist discourse, such as gender oppression and discrimination, as well as patriarchal prejudice. Building on the perspectives of Gerda Lerner, Susan Brownmiller, Allan G. Johnson, Jan Jordan, Sara Mills, and Kate Manne, this inquiry will attempt to delve into some detrimental and misleading social constructs that play a pivotal role in the cultural representation of rape. Additionally, considering trauma theory, specifically rape trauma, and relying on both the traditional and pluralistic trauma models, this investigation will offer a deeper insight into women's abilities to cope with and recover from traumatic experiences through writing.

Significance of the Study

Understanding the nature of trauma and its implications is crucial. In a world where sexual assault is highly commonplace and controversial, rape is a serious crime that is often neglected and met with antipathy, abstention, and embarrassment. Some ideological patterns even suggest that the topic of rape should be exclusively discussed by rape victims themselves. Accordingly, this study will not only raise awareness about sexual assault but will also explore the devastating effects of trauma that arise from the tragic event and the recovery process of its victims. Similarly, as rape narratives promote the recognition of the innumerable connections a single experience has to wider sociocultural problems, this investigation will provide a new perspective on the matter by exposing the fallacies of rape culture.

Structural Outline

Relying on feminist and psychoanalytic literary theories, the present investigation will explore Chanel Miller and Lucia Osborne-Crowley's struggles with gender discrimination, rape trauma, and self-assertion in societies dominated by patriarchal prejudice. This current

research is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter of this work will expose the biographical, socio-historical and theoretical frameworks of the study. The biographical foundation of this academic work will consist of the biographies of both Chanel Miller and Lucia Osborne-Crowley, in addition to the summaries of their literary works. The socio-historical background, will consider the prevailing social and cultural atmospheres related to the two leading figures' environments.

Moreover, the last section of the first chapter will display the theoretical foundation of this research endeavour. In the first place, it will deliver a brief history of the development of feminist theory and delineate the main feminist waves. Following that, the key feminist concepts related to this study will be exposed and clarified. In relation to psychoanalytic theory, the historical origins of trauma theory will be defined before introducing the primary aspects relevant to this investigation. Subsequently, the principles of the traditional and pluralistic models of trauma that will be exploited in this study will be demonstrated.

The second chapter, will constitute the core analysis of this academic research in conformity with feminist and psychoanalytic approaches to literature. This chapter is organised into four essential titles that will examine the multifaceted memoirs that have been selected for this study. By exposing the realities faced by Miller and Crowley through a feminist analysis of female subjugation and oppression under patriarchal prejudice combined with an investigation of the sociology of shame, this paper will demonstrate how this violation is perceived and normalised within rape cultures. It will additionally assist in dispelling some of the enduring myths and misconceptions attached to this topic. Furthermore, this section will also consider Miller and Crowley's experiences with rape trauma and reveal how art can appear to be an effective tool for overcoming trauma and achieving recovery.

Chapter One: Biographical, Socio-Historical, and Theoretical Framework

The present chapter is intended to introduce the central parameters of the established research. It is scheduled to start with the autobiographical framework and proceed with the socio-historical and theoretical foundations of the current investigation. Correspondingly, this section offers a literary and historical examination of Chanel Miller's and Lucia Osborne-Crowley's lives and experiences, as well as an evaluation of the conditions associated with the two leading figures' social settings. Moreover, this part also provides a clear overview of the main feminist concepts and psychoanalytic theories selected for this study.

1. Biographical Framework

1.1. Chanel Miller: Biography

Chanel Elisabeth Miller, born June 12, 1992, is an American writer and artist currently living between San Francisco, California, and New York City. Chanel Miller is the elder of two daughters of a Chinese mother and an American father. Her mother emigrated from China to become a writer after the Cultural Revolution, and her father is a retired therapist.

For four years, the woman whose sexual assault case at Stanford University sparked public outrage has only been identified as "Emily Doe." In her riveting 2019 memoir, *Know My Name*, Miller reveals her real identity and shares her story with the public, which can also be interpreted as a provocation to those who would incriminate her. She has become publicly recognised after Brock Allen Turner, a former Stanford University swimmer, sexually assaulted her on the Stanford University campus in 2015. After Turner has received a lenient sentence in 2016 and served only three months of his six-month sentence, Chanel Miller made a decision that stirred public opinion.

The following year, her twelve-page victim impact statement at Turner's court appearance in 2016 was declaimed by CNN and the House floor and has promptly gained popularity after its online publication by *BuzzFeed News*, and it has been read 11 million times

in four days. The online article published by The New York Times, titled "You Know Emily Does Story. Now Learn Her Name," indicates that Mr. Turner has been sentenced to six months in county jail by the presiding judge, Aaron Persky, of which he served only three for good behaviour. Moreover, the online article also reveals that, despite the fact that Ms. Miller's case occurred before the #MeToo movement, her statement and Mr. Turner's sentence have emerged as part of the recent intense debate about rape, sexism, and sexual misconduct (The New York Times).

Chanel Miller can be considered an influential figure in today's culture. Her story illustrates a prejudiced culture predetermined to protect perpetrators and implicates a criminal justice system intended to fail the most resilient person. Nonetheless, reading Miller's absorbing memoir illuminates the courage required to move through suffering and win through recovery. Analogously, Miller's publication is an epitome of the liberating power of words, whereby she has succeeded in reclaiming the narrative of her assault, evolving from a discredited victim to a confident survivor.

1.2. *Know My Name*: Overview

Chanel Miller has attended Gunn High School and graduated in 2010. She has enrolled in the College of Creative Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she has earned a bachelor's degree in literature in 2014. Throughout her educational career, she has been inspired by authors such as Rumi, Virginia Woolf, Chang-Rae Lee, Carlos Bulosan, and Deepak Chopra. Miller's ambitions are similar to those of her mother, an author who has immigrated to America to follow her passions. Although Chanel has aspired to be a writer since her early childhood, her assault has abruptly altered the entire narrative.

Chanel Miller revealed to CBS' "60 Minutes" that despite the support of her closest relatives, she has become angry, withdrawn, and depressed. She has almost relinquished her dream of becoming an illustrator of children's books after seeing reports in the media that have

blurred her vision and nearly shattered her lifelong ambition. Prosecutor Alaleh Kianerci alleged that because Chanel Miller seemed to have no memory of the assault as she must have been completely unconscious at the moment, her perpetrator was able to write the entire script. Hence, after exploiting her when she has been most vulnerable, he has eventually achieved notoriety for himself on her behalf. However, the young survivor's vigour and determination has radically changed the entire situation.

Know My Name, Chanel Miller's 2019 memoir, is an expanded version of her 2016 victim-impact statement that has evolved into a manifesto for sexual assault survivors. Her beautifully crafted, eloquent narrative, comprised of 14 chapters filled with fervent emotions, serves as a memorial for all worldwide victims of sexual assault. In January 2015, Chanel Miller had been assaulted by Brock Turner, an Olympic hopeful and privileged student from one of America's most prestigious schools. Chanel Miller, then 22, has attended a fraternity party with her younger sister, Tiffany. Later in the evening, she has been discovered intoxicated and unconscious near a dumpster by two Swedish graduate students, who have rescued her by stopping the assault.

Despite the fact that Miller has been found behind a dumpster by two witnesses, coverage has centred around Brock Turner's swimming career and prospects to join the US Olympic team. Meanwhile, speculation swirled that Miller is partly to blame for her own assault. During the trial, Chanel Miller has been identified in court documents as "Emily Doe" to protect her identity. Nevertheless, viewing her anonymity, she has been depicted by the media as "an unconscious, intoxicated woman," while Turner has been praised for his triumphs. After her aggression, Miller struggled with excruciating pain and prolonged periods of anxiety. In her victim impact statement inserted at the end of her memoir, Miller writes, "I tried to push it out of my mind, but it was so heavy that I didn't talk, I didn't eat, I didn't sleep, I didn't

interact with anyone" (280). As she was also suffering from shame, embarrassment, and dishonour, it has taken her eight months to disclose her assault.

Given his notoriety, Turner has received a very lenient sentence, which has sparked outrage and debate about how the justice system treats sexual assault survivors. Nevertheless, when *Buzzfeed News* has published Miller's anonymous victim impact statement in 2016, the case has ultimately gained national attention. Following her three years of silence, the woman who has inscribed the striking victim impact statement has released a piece of writing in which she reclaims her identity. For Miller, authorship is a form of restorative justice that has offered the entire world a faithful account of her narrative. Her writing functions as an act of identity reclamation as well as a form of writing therapy, allowing her to convert the experience of ongoing trauma into art. Even though her offender has only served three months behind bars, he has been later identified as a lifelong sex registrant.

Miller did not receive justice at the time of her rape, but subsequent sexual assault victims did. 90 days after reading her stirring victim impact statement the law was changed, and California Judge Aaron Persky was recalled. But, most importantly, as Miller herself records in her memoir, "From grief, confidence has grown, remembering what I've endured," she also adds that "from anger stemmed purpose. To tuck them away would mean to neglect the most valuable tools this experience has given me" (270). Thus, through her honest and effective prose, she demonstrates that, even if recovering from trauma is arduous, it remains an achievable quest.

1.3. Lucia Osborne-Crowley: Biography

Lucia Osborne-Crowley is a London-based British-Australian essayist, writer, journalist, and legal researcher. She was born on February 28, 1992, in London but raised in Australia's Brisbane and Sydney. Crowley, has earned a First-Class Honours degree in international studies from the University of Sydney in 2013 and a Juris Doctorate with

Distinction from the University of New South Wales in 2018. Crowley has worked as a journalist since 2014, initially as a staff reporter for a local Sydney newspaper before moving to *Women's Agenda* and then to *The Wall Street Journal*. She is currently based in London and works as a legal affairs correspondent for *Law360*.

Lucia's debut book, *I Choose Elena*, was released in 2019, in which she recounted her experience of being violently raped at the age of fifteen. In her poignant memoir, composed in the form of medical essays, Crowley presents an honest and profound delineation of the severe effects of trauma on both psychological and physical levels. Her second publication, *My Body Keeps Your Secrets: Dispatches on Shame and Reclamation* (2021), introduces women's body secrets in the age of social media. Crowley's latest anticipated work, *Witness: The Trial of the Century*, is her account of the trial of Ghislaine Maxwell, who has been convicted of multiple charges of sex trafficking of minors and now faces 55 years in prison for her role in Jeffrey Epstein's abuse of four girls. Crowley's recollection of events is a clear representation of a criminal justice system that is ill-equipped to provide justice for abuse survivors, regardless of the circumstances. The book will be released on August 17, 2023.

Lucia Osborne-Crowley is viewed by some literary critics as a notable emerging author of the twenty-first century. Through her honest and impartial account of her traumatic experience, Crowley hopes to demonstrate that empathy is the most effective tool to overcome trauma and shame and that listening and sharing stories are central to consolidating empathy and connection. Her literary publication that will be evaluated in this study, namely, *I Choose Elena*, is a deeply affecting memoir of how an innocent victim has reclaimed her body after a decade of chronic trauma. Nevertheless, the young woman's effort at confronting her fears is the ultimate proof that only through compassion and understanding can we start to dissolve the vicious cycle of sexual violence.

1.4. *I Choose Elena*: Overview

For Lucia Osborne-Crowley, the act of writing is one of reclamation. Her memoir is, therefore, a trauma narrative that draws upon several academic as well as some significant literary works that helped the author find her voice among young female survivors. Her compelling and eloquent reflexion on trauma, *I Choose Elena*, is based on her acclaimed essay "The Lifted Brow," which allowed the author to disclose her emotional anguish and denounce the crime that countless victims are still enduring.

Throughout her memoir, Crowley discloses a series of notable quotations from authors such as Elena Ferrante, Octavia E. Butler, Rupi Kaur, Zadie Smith, and Margaret Atwood. She also referred to some critical works on trauma, citing Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* and some of Peter Levine's works, mainly *In an Unspeakable Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness*, *Trauma and Memory: Brain and Body in a Search for the Living Past*, and *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*. She also mentioned Bressel van der Kolk's *The Body Keeps the Score*, which assisted her in understanding her condition and confronting her trauma.

Unsurprisingly, the title of her work derives from one of Cheryl Strayed's famous columns, "Dear Sugar," in which she introduces a rape victim who claims that we have to decide who we allow to influence us. As opposed to choosing the perpetrator of her assault, she chooses Vincent Van Gogh. Likewise, Crowley chooses her favourite character, Elena Greco, from Elena Ferrante's fictitious work *My Brilliant Friend* (2011). By drawing on Ferrante's vulnerable and resilient protagonist, Elena Greco, Crowley chooses to be influenced by the endurance and honesty of Elena rather than by the brutality of her assailant. In her memoir, she writes: "I can choose to be influenced by a violent man in an abandoned bathroom or I can choose to be influenced by the strength and honesty of Elena" (60).

At age fifteen, Crowley has been raped at knifepoint. On a rainy winter's night in Sydney, in August 2007, the youthful teenager has arranged to spend her Saturday night with three of her friends. At approximately 9 p.m., the group of teenagers stood before a McDonald's in Sydney's Pitt Street. Promptly, she has been marched into the McDonald's by a stranger, who has violently raped her in a dusty, disused bathroom. In the opening chapters of her memoir, Crowley mentions that she knew for certain that "it was the sharpest and most severe pain she had ever experienced" (9). This abrupt moment has defined Crowley's next fifteen years. The rape victim has been consumed by structural shame and subjected to silence by a culture that condemned most female victims to muteness. As articulated by Crowley in her work: "The truth was unspeakable" (11).

Prior to her aggressive assault, Crowley was a determined and successful gymnast with a promising career. Nevertheless, a couple of minutes have altered the course of her entire life. Consequently, the next fifteen years of her existence have been marked by a deafening silence and structural shame that have prevented her from communicating her assault. But, during the extended years of brutal psychological trauma, the gymnast's entire body has heavily collapsed into fragments. Two years after her assault, she has been cast down by unbearable abdominal pain. Over the next few years, she has started to lose the ability to regulate her body. She expresses in her publication: "I lost all sense of my physical self" (13). Later, she has been diagnosed with Crohn's disease and endometriosis, two lifelong illnesses that can be managed, but not cured. However, the leading #Metoo movement incited her to break her silence.

When the #MeToo movement erupted, the structural shame that had prevented Crowley from expressing her anger and articulating her trauma have started to fade. Sharing her traumatic experience is relieving because shame can only emerge in silence. The Australian author's articulate observation of trauma reveals that a traumatic experience is not a life sentence; it is fear that keeps victims in outrage. Her memoir is also an honest declaration of

the atrocities endured by sexual assault survivors. Her journey highlights the experiences of several rape victims around the world who have been engulfed by guilt and shame and never considered sharing their experiences. Thus, Crowley's thought-provoking memoir stands as a testimony for female survivors who have suffered from the effects of sexual assault.

2. Socio-Historical Framework

2.1. Perspectives on Violence in American Society

The American republic was established on a set of ideals that were subjected to scrutiny during the Revolutionary War. Moral and religious principles revolved around Christianity, and civic and political values are at the core of the American federation. Considering that immigration is at the heart of American culture, the notion that all individuals, whether Native American, African-American, or European, are created equal and are, thereby, equally entitled is a founding concept in American democracy. However, this ideology has proved more relevant in theory than in practice. Undoubtedly, the fabric of American society conceals deeply racist policies that adversely affect indigenous, black, and other ethnic and minority groups. Equivalently, gender discrimination and prejudice also prevail in areas such as education, employment, wage rates, retirement, and criminal justice, despite their prohibition by the federal court.

Fundamentally, the American population consists mainly of multi-ethnic descendants of various immigrant groups, many of whom have contributed to the growth and development of the American nation. In his article, entitled "Remaking American History," Carl N. Degler asserts that the primary force behind the transition from racial and gender conflicts to today's balanced combination of races and genders has been a shift in the content of American history (7). The American historian mentions that women, like blacks, did not begin to participate in massive numbers at historical gatherings until the content of the American past started to include them (8).

Furthermore, in her article, "The Story of Violence in America," Kellie Carter Jackson affirms that American history is distinguished by alarming levels of violence. Following Reconstruction, she evinces that collective violence against African Americans persisted and increased levels of criminal violence emerged in American cities during the twentieth-century post-war period (11). She also proclaims that white supremacy and violence are forms of patriotism in America. The 21st-century historian maintains that even if we can become verbose about football, baseball, and apple pie, these aspects only scratch the surface of American nationalism (12).

Equivalently, G. Erlick Robinson also referred to another form of violence in her article, "Violence Against Women in North America." Robinson reveals that, despite the assumption that North America is a location where women have equal rights and status, violence against women remains widespread. Child abuse, physical violence, rape, and domestic violence affect 40–51% of women in their lifetime, reports Robinson (185). Consequently, she submits that despite laws and "modern" attitudes towards women, violence remains a major health issue among women in North America. Although North American society expresses a desire to eradicate violence against women, Robinson argues that extensive education, beginning in schools, is essential for altering the customs and attitudes that allow such violence to thrive (190). Education is a weapon for preventing violence against women. It is a tool for spreading the transparent message of a zero-tolerance policy for every category of abuse in every cultural group and for altering discriminatory gender norms that encourage gender-based violence.

2.2. Women's Liberation Movement in the United States

Following the ratification of the 19th Amendment on August 18, 1920, which conferred women the right to vote, second-wave feminism emerged to maintain the struggle for women's rights. The Women's Liberation Movement, which arose from the civil rights, student, and anti-war movements, adopted the civil rights idea of liberating those who are subjected to

prejudice and oppression. Feminist activism erupted in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s in the United States and across the globe, actively transforming society by attempting to expand women's rights and opportunities. Wage equality, the abolition of domestic violence, the removal of severe restrictions on women in managerial positions, and the abolition of sexual harassment, in addition to the sharing of responsibility for housework and childrearing, were all important pursuits for feminist activists of the twentieth century.

Led by journalist, activist, and co-founder of the National Organization for Women, Betty Friedan, the women's rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s has provoked tremendous societal changes with far-reaching economic, political, and cultural ramifications. Friedan's renowned work, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), has contributed to initiating a national conversation about gender roles in the cultural decade. In the opening chapter of her work, "The Problem That Has No Name," Friedan confesses:

> For over fifteen years there was no word of this yearning in the millions of words written about women, for women, in all the columns, books and articles by experts telling women their role was to seek fulfilment as wives and mothers. Over and over women heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity (44).

Undeniably, the deep cultural changes that occurred in the United States in the 1960s transformed the role of the American woman. Following the end of World War II, several women wished to enter the paid labour market. However, their dissatisfaction with substantial gender disparities in salaries, challenges associated with sexist prejudices, and the prevalence of sexual harassment at work called for action.

In her article "The Origins of the Women's Liberation Movement," Jo Freeman asserts that most perceptive experts were captivated by the recent emergence of a feminist movement

(792). Freeman mentions that women's liberation groups, styles, and organisations run rampant. This diversity, however, has resulted from only two distinct origins, with numerous offspring remaining largely clustered around these two sources. The two branches, observes the feminist scholar, are frequently referred to as "reform" and "radical" or as the movement's sole authoritative book defines them, "women's rights" and "women's liberation" (795). Nonetheless, Freeman remarks that the two branches' origins are very similar. She explains that these parallels help shed light on some of the micro-sociological factors at play in movement formation (797).

In her article "Black Power in the 1960s: A Study of Its Impacts on Women's Liberation," Shirley N. Weber observes that white women in America have historically appropriated Afro-American movements' strategies, issues, and language in order to construct and legitimise their movements. The statements made by Black Power activists in the 1960s were later raised by women in their struggle for liberation, as both groups' struggles are classified as struggles for liberation through self-determination (491). Subsequently, the issues that blacks advocated for in 1963 and 1966 were endorsed by women in 1969, notes Weber. As a result of these key dimensions, it has been demonstrated that blacks have increased women's awareness of their situation and significantly influenced the direction of the Women's Movement (497).

However, the women's liberation movement spawned some contentious issues, such as female genital mutilation and abortion, which gave feminist ideologies a poor impression. Sally Markowitz affirms in her article "Abortion and Feminism" that abortion has been a permanent case of concern for women and has earned a creditable, if not marginal, place in the writings of moral philosophers in recent decades (1). In her article, entitled "Abortion," Barbara Hayler reports that abortion has grown into the most common surgical procedure in the country since the Supreme Court pronounced it a constitutional right in 1973. Nevertheless, there is still

considerable disagreement about the extent of the right to abortion and its implications (307). Therefore, she expresses that shifts in power dynamics are indeed threatening in a patriarchal society where male identity is largely determined by power over women, which explains the abortion controversy (322). Tragically, the American government is still experimenting with abortion laws, which constitute a major issue in US policy.

In her article "The 'F' Word: How the Media Frame Feminism," feminist Debra Baker Beck states that the movement's struggles to survive can be traced back to several factors, including its difficulty dealing effectively with the healthy debate and experiences of American women. However, she sustains that there is a compelling argument to be presented that the mass media's disdain for active, assertive women—and the way the media portrays them—has turned all "feminists" into a frightening radical minority (139). Besides, she also discloses that the media exploits dichotomies in order to perpetuate Western ideals. Because feminists challenge the very foundation of a patriarchal society, they are inevitably portrayed as outsiders, troublemakers, and even evil women (140). Subsequently, Beck formulates that the starting point for generating a more "female-friendly" media is to put more women in decision-making positions (152). Equal participation by women in executive roles is essential. From the workplace to mainstream media, having more females in positions involving authority can promote gender equality, reduce conflicts, and improve decision-making processes.

2.3. Perspectives on Violence in Australian Society

In 1902, Australia was one of the first countries in the world to grant women the right to vote. Equal rights and equal opportunity are intrinsic to Australian values. Likewise, respect for the individual's freedom and dignity, religious freedom, parliamentary democracy, gender equality, and tolerance are among the moral standards of Australian society. Nevertheless, there are some constraints that are still facing Australia, including economic issues, poverty, homelessness, and violence against women.

In his article, titled "Australian Society," Henry S. Albinski remarks that the major movements and concerns of the times manifested in contemporary Australia include assertiveness among young people, women's liberation, environmental improvement, a rethinking of conventional notions governing geopolitical power competition, and more. Nonetheless, he further indicates that modern Australian society and political style continue to reflect the distinctive cultural legacies as well as shape the climate and direction of the social change debate (133).

The latter years of the first decade of the twenty-first century have witnessed a multitude of difficulties and transitions for Australia, which has been highlighted by Juliet Pietsch and Haydn Aarons in their 2013 publication. In a chapter from *Australia: Identity, Fear, and Governance in the 21st Century*, titled "Social Attitudes Towards Contemporary Challenges Facing Australia," Pietsch and Aarons have mentioned that terrorism, climate change, human rights, community destruction, work and livelihood, and crime are not new challenges and alterations, but they take on new aspects and affect us in different ways at these points in history (1).

Furthermore, while the majority of Australians recognise that violence against women is a growing issue, few individuals realise how these attitudes erupt. In an article entitled "Violence Against Women in Non-Urban Areas of Australia," it has been specified that non-urban areas have been associated with increased instances of violence against women (Hooker et al 535). It has also been reported that, among all young Australian women, psychological abuse is the most frequently reported form of IPV (intimate partner violence). In addition to that, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has disclosed that even if much of the evidence, which is quantitative in nature, focuses on intimate partner violence, the voices of young non-urban women appear to be absent. Hence, young women who have been victims of violence may suffer from poor mental health, poor reproductive health implications, and

homelessness (545). Since cultural and societal conventions educate men to be hostile and assertive, women's lives are frequently jeopardised and disrupted. Violence against women remains dramatically pervasive in certain cultures, as gender-based violence is deeply rooted in gender inequality, which threatens females' safety and health.

2.4.   Feminist Protests in Australia

Feminist protests have long been an important and distinctive part of Australian history. The first women's suffrage society in Australia was founded in 1884 in Victoria, when the voting rights issue largely influenced women for the first time. Many people were outraged by the inequality and violence they witnessed and experienced on a daily basis. They organised protests and public debates to raise awareness and appeal for their claim. It was not until December 18, 1894 that the South Australian Parliament approved the Constitutional Amendment, Adult Suffrage Act. It not only granted women the right to vote in the colony, but it also allowed them to operate for parliament. Subsequently, after New Zealand, Australia became the second country in the world to grant women's suffrage on a national scale.

In her article "History, Cultural Studies, and Another Look at First-Wave Feminism in Australia," Susan Magarey confesses that a century after the passage of the first Australian legislation granting women the right to vote, it is difficult to imagine how extraordinary, how exotic the prospect of the second sex, campaigning for, let alone gaining, the right to elect representatives to the legislative bodies that governed their lives—citizenship rights—could have appeared (97). Nevertheless, even after gaining some privileges, achieving gender equality and eradicating gender prejudice remained an ongoing struggle.

Susan Sheridan notes in her article "Transvestite Feminism: The Politics of the *Australian Woman*, 1894" that during second-wave feminism, literary productions have become a catalyst for readers to debate their own lives and observations (349). Trish Luker mentions in a chapter extracted from *Everyday Revolutions: Remaking Gender, Sexuality and*

Culture in 1970s Australia, entitled "Women into print: Feminist presses in Australia" that one of the enduring slogans of the second-wave women's movement held that "the freedom of the press belongs to those who control the press" (121). Luker evinces that women who authored about feminist issues for alternative and left-wing publications frequently encountered sexism and condescending attitudes, as well as problems getting their work published, because feminist issues were not seen as central to the political struggle (124).

In their preface to *The Women's Movement in Protest, Institutions, and the Internet: Australia in Transnational Perspective*, Sarah Maddison and Marian Sawer (2013) contend that Australia has gained international recognition for the unique model of women's policy machinery developed during the 1970s, when women's movement associations entered the state for a response to their requirements (15). In a chapter titled "Hiding in Plain Sight," Marian Sawer and Merrindahl Andrew proclaim that the evolution of women's liberation in 1969–1970 opened different pledges to providing an alternative to masculine hierarchies (117). Nevertheless, though the twenty-first century shows effective participation of both genders in various activities when compared to earlier centuries that made women only responsible for domestic chores, several females still face discrimination on the basis of gender.

In a modern context, the feminist movement has adopted new perspectives to advocate for women's rights. In another chapter of the above-mentioned work, titled "Blogging and the Women's Movement: New Feminist Networks," Frances Shaw affirms that since 2012, feminist politics in social media and blogging networks have grown increasingly. As an evidence, Shaw mentions campaigns such as Destroy the Joint in Australia and the way Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard's speech accusing opposition leader Tony Abbott of a history of misogyny went viral on social media networks in Australia and around the world (167-177). Therefore, since male dominance and aggression remain pervasive, feminist concerns are still relevant in the 21st century.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Feminist Literary Theory: An Overview

Feminism has drastically transformed the conventions of what is currently taught and introduced different political agendas for literary criticism. Early feminism was deeply influenced by the European Enlightenment in the late 1700s, when women sought to extend the new reformist rhetoric about liberty and equality for both sexes. In her article, "On the French Origin of the Words Feminism and Feminist," Karen Offen affirms that the term "féminisme" has long been credited to Charles Fourier (1772–1837), the audacious thinker who coined myriad French neologisms and who realised profoundly that the essence of women's emancipation resided in removing their legal and economic subordination to men (45). Offen indicates that since1892, the terms "féminisme" and "féministe" have been widely used in French, Belgium, and Switzerland (47).

In "The beginning of secular feminism," Margaret Walters writes about Christine de Pizan who was born in 14th-century Italy but raised in France and who has been documented as the first Western woman to live by her pen. She mentions that her most notable work, *The City of Ladies* (1404), criticises distinguished books for spreading "so many wicked insults about women and their behaviour;" Three allegorical women, Reason, Rectitude, and Justice, discuss the origins of misogyny. In 1599, Walters also points out that Marguerite de Navarre authored *the Heptaméro*n, which defended women against misogynistic attacks (19).

In another essay titled "The early 19th century reforming women," Walters reveals that the most renowned nineteenth-century arguments for women's rights were written by men, as both William Thompson and John Stuart Mill recognised the contribution and inspiration of their wives (43). However, at that point in time, women were far from reaching female emancipation, as they were living under the constraints of gender oppression. Even if some

influential thinkers, such as John Stuart Mill promoted legal and social equality for both genders, women were still deprived of many advantages.

In his 1997 reaction to pain and perplexity, *The Gender Knot: Unravelling Our Patriarchal Legacy*, American Author Allan G. Johnson admits that though men suffer as a result of their participation in patriarchy, this is not because men are oppressed as men. He clarifies that gender oppression is rather associated with a cultural devaluing and subordination of women as women. Hence, Johnson defines oppression as a system of social inequalities that allows one group to dominate and benefit from the exploitation and subjugation of another (23). Correspondingly, gender oppression is an affront to human rights and freedom.

3.1.1. A Brief History of Feminist Waves

Fundamentally, from Mary Wollstonecraft's 1792 feminist manifesto to Virginia Woolf's extended essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929) to Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1964) and Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970) to Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (1975) and so many other texts, feminism has witnessed a number of developments.

Mohajan Haradhan indicates in his article "Four Waves of Feminism: A Blessing for Global Humanity" that the evolution of the feminist conflict over time is frequently referred to as "waves" of transition. He contends that modern civilization has already experienced three waves of feminism, with the fourth wave initiating in 2012 (3). In her article "Four Waves of Feminism," originally published online in Pacific magazine, Professor of History Martha Rampton states that the first wave of feminism emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a result of urban industrialism and liberal, socialist politics. The objective of this wave was to broaden opportunities for women, with an emphasis on suffrage. She reports that the second wave occurred in the 1960s and lasted until the 1990s. This wave arose in the context of the anti-war and civil rights movements, alongside the growing self-

consciousness of various global minority groups, underlines Rampton (Pacific University Oregon).

The third wave of feminism appeared around the middle of the 1990s and was influenced by postcolonial and postmodern ideologies. Furthermore, Professor Rampton emphasises that many concepts were subverted during this period, including notions of "universal womanhood," body, gender, and sexuality. However, Haradhan alleges that in the fourth wave, social media serves as a powerful tool for countering women's harassment, professional discrimination, media sexism, and gender-shaming (15). Through social networking services, this wave of feminist activism allowed several advocates around the world to make their voices heard almost instantly.

3.1.2. Violence against Women and Feminist Theory

One of the most common issues confronting modern feminists is gender-based violence, which often manifests itself in psychological and domestic abuse, honour crimes, human trafficking, or sexual harassment. As specified in the *Encyclopaedia of Critical Psychology*, "gender-based violence" (GBV) is illustrated as any form of violence directed towards an individual or group based on their gender (Collins 767). Shirin Heidari and Claudia Garcia Moreno declare in their article "Gender-based Violence" that the global scale of violence against women and girls is alarming and that it is increasingly considered not only a major violation of human rights but also a public health issue affecting the physical and mental health of millions of females (1).

Incontestably, female victims who have suffered extreme acts of violence, as in the cases of Chanel Miller and Lucia Osborne-Crowley, experience severe psychological distress and trauma. Nevertheless, as Susana T. Fried asserts in her article "Violence against Women," while violence against women is no longer considered taboo, the conundrum is ultimately making it socially unacceptable (90). Besides, she also affirms that, according to estimates, one

out of every three women in the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime (90).

Lerner notes in her major work, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986), that women have more control over their lives in societies where they have more economic power than in societies where they have none (217). Hence, women's economic independence is essential for the eradication of women's abuse. Once deprived of financial resources, women become heavily dependent on their male counterparts, rendering them more vulnerable and overtly exposed to domestic violence. As a result, the intersection of male privilege and gender discrimination can be characterised as manifestations of misogynistic attitudes towards women.

Equivalently, among the problems facing feminism, particularly radical feminism, is that of rape. Rape was framed as a property crime around the 15th century, with some recognition of the woman victim herself as the rightful owner of the "sexual body property." Nevertheless, the property model was not questioned until the late twentieth century (34), confesses Louise du Toit in her work *A Philosophical Investigation of Rape: The Making and Unmaking of the Feminine Self* (2008).

Conveniently, Brownmiller's seminal feminist text, *Against Our Will*, *Men, Women, and Rape*, succeeded in making contemporary feminist antirape discourse more visible in 1975. In her landmark book, Susan Brownmiller reveals that when men discovered they could rape, they proceeded to do it (14). Accordingly, Brownmiller defines rape as "nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear" (15). For their part, Randy Thornhill and Craig T. Palmer provide another illustration of rape. In their 2000 publication, *A Natural History of Rape: Biological Bases of Sexual Coercion*, they explain that "rape is copulation resisted to the best of the victim's ability unless such

resistance would probably result in death or serious injury to the victim or in death or injury to individuals the victim commonly protects" (1).

Rape has perpetually constituted the perfect area where violations of human rights are witnessed, and where trauma settles and seldom finds an escape route. Nevertheless, the fact that society normalizes sexual violence and blames its victims for their own assaults creates and later perpetuates rape culture. The term "rape culture" was first introduced by the New York Radical Feminists Collective in *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women* (1974). In *Transforming a Rape Culture* (1993) by Emilie Buchwald, Pamela Fletcher, and Martha Roth, rape culture is defined as a set of beliefs that promote male sexual aggression and violence against women. In a rape culture, women perceive a continuum of threatened violence ranging from sexual remarks to indecent assault to rape itself. A rape culture also accepts physical and emotional terrorism against women as the norm (II).

In the first part of her work, *Rape: The Politics of Consciousness* (1979), entitled "Politics 1971," Griffin asserts that, though myth holds that principally "bad girls" are raped, this history has no basis. She demonstrates that a rape study conducted in the District of Columbia discovered that 82% of rape victims had a "good reputation" (17). As an analogy, Chanel Miller and Lucia Osborne-Crowley had neither a poor reputation nor were they engaged in any form of filthy business. Consequently, it becomes perfectly clear that rape culture is largely derived from patriarchal ideology and maintained through sexist discourse and misogynistic attitudes.

3.1.3. Patriarchy, Sexism, and Misogyny

In *Tackling Rape Culture: Ending Patriarchy* (2022), Jan Jordan maintains that "systemic violence against women" has become tolerable in societies where patriarchal ideologies remain dominant. He submits that this is conspicuous in the suppression of women's rape allegations and the minimization of women's bodies as male-use objects (3). In *The*

Gender Knot, Johnson explains that patriarchy is a form of society in which men and women coexist (5). Nonetheless, he alleges that patriarchy, like all social systems, is not easy to alter as it remains complex and has deep roots. Johnson suggests that patriarchy "is like a tree rooted in the core principles of masculine control, male dominance, male identification, and male centeredness" (17).

Undoubtedly, gender roles have consistently been negotiated. In the eleventh part of *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1987), Gerda Lerner proclaims that the roles and attitudes considered adequate for the sexes were expressed in values, customs, laws, and social roles. They were also, and perhaps most importantly, expressed in leading metaphors, which became part of the cultural construct and explanatory system (212). Shulamith Firestone, in *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970), argues that only due to the unequal distribution of power did the physiological distinction of race become culturally significant in the development of sexual classes. Thus, she contends that racism is an extended form of sexism (110). For Firestone, the power hierarchy fosters racism just as it fosters sexism in the nuclear family (111). Hence, sexism legitimizes the patriarchal order.

In her introduction to *Language and Sexism* (2004), Sara Mills states that sexism was presumed to be determined by patriarchy. Nevertheless, she estimates that rather than reflecting a fixed and unchanging patriarchy, sexism is better understood as a set of discursive practices and stereotypical knowledge that evolve over time and can be confronted (21). Throughout her work, Mills argues that sexism is best explained once it is considered an available resource within the language. Thereby, she argues that sexism is equally interconnected with gender stereotypes, for prejudiced actions and norms are predominantly rooted in gender discrimination (127).

Intrinsically, individuals who do not adhere to societal hierarchies are increasingly vulnerable to misogynistic attitudes because they disrupt patriarchal systems. Misogynistic

attitudes are not only held by individuals but have affected the development of our social and legal institutions. Subsequently, this resulted in the stigmatization of women's work and the systemic condoning of violence against women (Johnson 10). In her 2017 publication, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*, Kate Manne advocates that the simplistic view of misogyny fails to concentrate on the subclass that is a measure of patriarchal ideology. Therefore, she asserts that, although frequently personal in tone, misogyny is best understood as a political phenomenon (33).

Correspondingly, Manne describes misogyny as a feature of social systems or environments as a whole, in which women face various forms of hostility because they are women in a man's world and are held to be not adhering to patriarchal standards (34). She also surmises that misogyny should be interpreted as the "law enforcement" branch of a patriarchal order, with the overall function of policing and enforcing its codified ideology (63).

In "Discriminating Sexism," Mann indicates that while sexist ideology will discriminate against men and women, misogyny typically distinguishes between good and bad women and punishes the latter. However, she affirms that sexism and misogyny serve the same goal of preserving or restoring a patriarchal social order (79–80). Consequently, this system maintains men's authority and dominance, whereas women are subjugated and relegated to inferior positions.

In her recently published book, *Entitled: How Male Privilege Hurts Women* (2021), Manne sheds new light on the relationship between gender and power. In the first chapter of her work, entitled "Indelible: On the Entitlement of Privileged Men," she asserts that if a man believes that a woman is intellectually capable in law, business, or politics, he would be willing to have her serve as his subordinate in these fields while still subjecting her or other women to misogynistic treatment such as sexual assault (12). On this account, it can be advanced that

violence against women is closely connected to male entitlement, which displays a form of patriarchal masculinity that preserves gender discrimination.

3.2.   Trauma Theory: Historical Origins

Traditionally perceived as relatively obscure, trauma is now considered a key term in psychoanalytic approaches to literary studies, as understanding trauma also involves learning to expose truths beyond the painful reduplications of traumatic suffering. Trauma can be discerned as both a contemporary and impenetrable issue, due to its recentness and intricate nature that has perpetually been exposed to constant change. However, the field of trauma studies has not been legitimately established until the early 1990s.

Approaches to psychic trauma were not introduced until the late 1800s and have been initially met with scepticism. In *The Trauma Question* (2008), Roger Luckhurst explains that retracing the history of trauma to the rise of a technological and empirical society in the nineteenth century could generate, replicate, and evaluate the "shocks" of modern life. Trauma is, thereupon, a concept that can only emerge within modernity. Thus, he alleges that this broad context creates the conditions for trauma to emerge in specific disciplines from around 1870 to the Second World War in law, psychiatry, and industrialized warfare (19).

Luckhurst states that even though rival theories placed it at opposing ends of the spectrum from physical to psychical aetiologies, the railway spine was the first specific case of a contentious trauma theory (22). Nevertheless, as indicated by Shoshana Ringel in *Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Theory, Practice, and Research* (2011), the relationship between trauma and mental distress was first explored by neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, a French physician who worked with tormented women at the Salpetriere hospital. She reveals that Charcot was the first to identify that the origin of hysterical symptoms was psychological rather than physiological (1). Thus, numerous distinguished physicians, including Pierre Janet,

William James, and Sigmund Freud, attended the Salpetriere to become better acquainted with Charcot's scientific breakthroughs.

In *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1992), Judith Herman explains that unbearable emotional reactions to traumatic events resulted in an altered state of consciousness and hysterical symptoms (22). Additionally, Herman reveals that through the mid-1890s, researchers have discovered that hysterical symptoms could be alleviated by recovering and verbalizing traumatic memories and the overwhelming emotions that surrounded them. This treatment method evolved into the foundation of modern psychotherapy. The technique was termed "psychological analysis" by Janet, "abreaction" or "catharsis" by Breuer and Freud, and "psychoanalysis" by Freud afterward (23).

3.2.1. Towards a Literary and Pluralistic Approach to Trauma Theory

Substantially, the concept of psychological trauma has essentially emerged since the acknowledgement of "post-traumatic stress disorder" (PTSD) by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 1980, establishing its own theoretical foundations and influencing other disciplines. Shoshana Felman, Geoffrey Hartman, Dori Laub, and, most importantly, Cathy Caruth are considered pioneers of literary trauma theory. Cathy Caruth expresses in her introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) that since the Vietnam War, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and sociology have taken a renewed interest in the issue of trauma. Caruth also certifies that PTSD has been used to understand not only combat and natural disasters but also rape, child abuse, and a variety of other violent occurrences (3).

Although Freud's earlier interpretations of the notion of trauma, established in *Studies of Hysteria* (1895), co-written with Joseph Breuer, and eventually expanded in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), appear partially paradoxical, his perspectives remain central to the development of literary trauma studies. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and*

History, Caruth remarks that, in traumatic experiences, what the parable of the wound and the voice tell us and what is at the heart of Freud's writing on trauma is that trauma appears to be much more than a pathology or the simple illness of a wounded psyche. She further illustrates that the truth underlying a traumatic experience, in its belated appearance and address, cannot be connected only to what is known but also to what remains unknown in our efforts and language (12).

Consequently, in the third chapter of her publication, "Traumatic Departures: Survival and History in Freud," Caruth proclaims that trauma is inherently an enigma of survival rather than a result of destruction. In Caruth's view, we can only perceive the legacy of incomprehensibility at the heart of catastrophic experience if we recognise trauma as a paradoxical relationship between destructiveness and survival (67). From this perspective, investigating the wider context of traumatic experiences offers more insight and consideration in the interpretation of literary trauma, which is almost perceived as ineffable. Chanel Miller and Lucia Osborne-Crowley have experienced severe psychological trauma that has altered their mental stability. However, while any traumatic incident is inevitably exhausting, it is only by confronting this aspect that trauma victims may achieve recovery, as healing involves discomfort.

Furthermore, advanced research in literary trauma studies has elaborated new approaches to trauma theory that contest the traditional model developed by Caruth that evaluates trauma as the ultimate unrepresentable. Michelle Balaev asserts in *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* (2014) that although the classic notion of trauma as a silent haunting or utter indecipherable is theoretically effective for certain edges, such as emphasising the damage done, the pluralistic approach emphasises the diverse values and representations of trauma in literature and society, emphasising not only the damage induced

by a traumatic experience but also the many sources that inform the definitions, representations, and repercussions of tragic events (6).

In "Trauma Studies" Balaev notes that criticism has adapted a theoretical pluralism that directly contradicts the traditional Caruthian model. Criticism in this regard has been provided by Ann Cvetkovich, Greg Forter, Amy Hungerford, Naomi Mandel, and Michelle Balaev. The pluralistic model of trauma, as indicated by Balaev, challenges the unspeakable trope by attempting to comprehend not only the structural dimensions of trauma, which frequently manifest as trauma's dissociative effects on consciousness and memory, but also the cultural dimensions of trauma and the distinctiveness of narrative expression (366).

In compliance with the pluralistic model of trauma, Balaev also specifies that traumatic memory, while disruptive, does not always produce pathological symptoms that prevent its retrieval and assimilation into identity. Because the recollection process in the current moment is influenced by cultural and historical contexts that impact narrative recall and generate knowledge of the past, she arranges that this redirects attention to the external, cultural factors that influence the significance of a traumatic event. Therefore, Balaev contends that analysing the cultural context of a person's or a group's traumatic experience allows for more emphasis on representations of extreme experiences such as rape, war, the Holocaust, the Gulag, American slavery, colonial oppression, and racism (367).

Subsequently, even if Caruth and Balaev have delivered antithetical views on trauma, drawing on both scholars' distinct observations appear to be instrumental in performing a thorough and careful analysis of trauma in this study. From this perspective, it may be argued that Caruth's interpretation, which emphasises trauma's "unspeakability," may be applied to the victims' earlier stages of trauma, while Balaev's "pluralistic model" expounds on their traumatic experiences by reflecting on the social and cultural conditions wherein the incidents occurred. As distinguished from collective forms of trauma, including the Holocaust, the

Armenian genocide, and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic, among other constructs that may include slavery, colonialism, and forced migration, interpersonal aspects of trauma, such as rape, can be verbalised, which will be discussed in the succeeding chapter.

Conclusion

The first chapter of the current research paper is the foundation of the whole investigation, paving the way for the careful analysis of the selected literary works. The dissertation's first part has provided an indication of Chanel Miller's and Lucia Osborne Crowley's biographies, significant summaries of their distinguished memoirs, and their literary evolutions. Additionally, the socio-historical context presented in this section is of particular relevance, as it has identified the origins of the social issues encountered by Miller and Crowley in modern times. Another key aspect of this division is the theoretical framework that expounds the fundamental feminist and psychoanalytic principles that will be exploited in conducting the analysis of the two selected memoirs in the following chapter.

Chapter Two: Restoring the Shattered Voices

> All I can say is that on this earth there are pestilences and there
>
> are victims—and as far as possible one must refuse to be on
>
> the side of the pestilence.
>
> —Camus, *The Plague*

The present chapter will attempt to delve into Chanel Miller's *Know My Name* and Lucia Osborne-Crowley's *I Chose Elena* in an effort to examine and scrutinise the traumatic experiences of the two female figures and to demonstrate how they have succeeded in overcoming their afflictions. Through the lens of feminist and psychoanalytic theories, this section will call attention to the themes of female subjugation and oppression under patriarchy; it will delineate the traumatic experiences of Miller and Crowley; and it will also address some of the issues faced by rape victims, namely victim-blaming and shame. Lastly, the closing title of this chapter will emphasise the importance of art in healing trauma by combining both feminist and psychoanalytic views related to the matter.

1. Female Subjugation and Oppression under Patriarchal Prejudice

Across the ages, women have been subjugated to several forms of oppression, including inferior status, restricted social participation, exploitation, and abuse. As a result, the feminist movement is critical both in how it can liberate us from the terrible bonds of sexist oppression and in its potential to radicalise and renew other liberation conflicts (Hooks 42). Likewise, the #MeToo movement founded by Tarana Burke in 2006 to raise awareness for sexual assault survivors is a manifestation of women's frustration and call for action.

Amber J. Keyser in *No More Excuses: Dismantling Rape Culture* (2019) specifies that right after the #MeToo movement, it seemed like the issue was ubiquitous. As sexual assault

perpetrators are more powerful than their victims, they may impose their will on them. This power is partially physical, but it also stems from the offenders' economic and political weight. Unfortunately, people in positions of authority are less likely to be confronted and held accountable for their actions (23). Because these principles were originally disguised behind a system of social structures, notably patriarchy, they have established potency and longevity, serving as the main instrument for gender inequality.

In their respective memoirs, Chanel Miller and Lucia Osborne-Crowley have spared no effort to confront the crime that has been committed against them and to reclaim their identities, which have been utterly impaired by social constraints and psychological trauma. On the one hand, in January 2015, Chanel Miller, then aged twenty-two and working at an educational technology start-up, has been sexually assaulted by Stanford University student, Brock Turner. Turner was only nineteen at the time he committed the offense. Fortunately, two Swedish graduate students have succeeded in managing to stop his assault and restrain him until the police arrived. Nonetheless, the harm has already been done, and as for Miller, the damage brought on by the horrendous event was irreversible. In her work, *Know My Name*, Miller writes: "I to this day, believe none of what I did that evening is important, a handful of disposable memories. But these events will be relentlessly raked over, again and again and again. What I did, what I said, will be sliced, measured, calculated, presented to the public for evaluation. All because, somewhere at this party, is him" (7).

On the other hand, Lucia Osborne-Crowley has been brutally raped at the age of fifteen. The young woman has witnessed one of the most traumatising episodes of her life in August 2007. During an evening among friends, a violent man in his thirties has raped her and threatened to kill her with a Swiss army knife. Rape is, by definition, unpredictable, never determined, never a conflict that one has waged, always a sudden attack, and for no reason (Griffin 69). In her publication, *I Choose Elena*, Crowley recounts: "I remember this moment

clearly: as my attacker held the knife hard against my throat, I thought to myself: When he's finished, he's going to kill me" (9).

Violence against women is deeply embedded in widely accepted social norms that inevitably lead to gender oppression. For centuries, men have been hiding behind the patriarchal model of thought, aiming to consolidate principles involving male dominance, male centeredness, and, most notably their obsession with authority and control. Lerner alleges that in its broadest sense, patriarchy is the manifestation and institutionalisation of male dominance over women and children within the family, as well as the expansion of male dominance over women across society (239).

Sylvia Walby defines patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practises in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women" (20). Subsequently, as individuals are not equally affected by patriarchy, women's plight under patriarchal violence has been generally dismissed. Rape, as any other form of gender-based violence, is a natural expression of male dominance, which has been formerly condoned by the patriarchal hierarchy of male chauvinism. Thereupon, Brownmiller contends that rape has evolved from a masculine prerogative to man's primary weapon of force against women, the primary agent of his will and her terror (14).

Rape is a crime founded on a desire to oppress, disgrace, and potentially harm the targeted victims of this violation. The root causes of this social issue can be directly attributed to male privilege and, in certain cases, misuse of authority. Men do not assault women because society expects them to act accordingly. They adhere to this inappropriate conduct because their environment informs them that they have the right to be in a position of command. That is why Brownmiller believes that rape always constitutes a manifestation of power. But some rapists have an edge that transcends physical strength. They operate in an institutionalised setting that benefits them and leaves victims with few options for redressing their grievances

(256). Within this system, women are unfairly denied their actual entitlement to both feminine-coded and masculine-coded products. This leads to disparities ranging from a woman not obtaining proper pain care to her inability to assume traditionally male positions of power to her being deprived of her rightful authority to participate in discussions in which she is qualified (Manne 15).

Miller and Crowley have reacted differently in the aftermath of their assaults. However, the common thread running through the two victims' compelling stories is that their narratives have been held and interrupted by the prevailing discriminatory cultural and social norms pervading their home nations. Even though Chanel Miller has decided to pursue charges against the perpetrator of her assault, she has later found herself in a critical and frustrating situation. When the detective assigned to the case asked Miller whether she sought to press charges against the suspect, Miller was initially sceptical. Retrospectively, she confesses that her complete ignorance of the criminal justice system in handling rape cases has failed her. Miller reveals:

> I didn't know that money could make the cell doors swing open. I didn't know that if a woman was drunk when the violence occurred, she wouldn't be taken seriously. I didn't know that if he was drunk when the violence occurred, people would offer him sympathy. I didn't know that my loss of memory would become his opportunity. I didn't know that being a victim was synonymous with not being believed (*Know My Name* 22).

Under the patriarchal script, women are subjugated to silence. Nevertheless, in her article "Power, Oppression and Gender," Judith Andre arranges that we are constantly instructed about women's supposed power—a power unique to them, making it irrational to call them oppressed (108). This power referred to by Andre is merely nothing more than female seductiveness, which represents one of the covert influences women exert on men. In most

folklore and mythological tales, mermaids have been associated with the female seductress, the vicious enemy who lures sailors into mysteries beyond their comprehension. However, such female archetypal figures have helped societies define cultural boundaries, since they have often been portrayed as manipulative and deceitful. Thereupon, women are mistrusted and perceived as liars.

In her publication, *Asking for It: The Alarming Rise of Rape Culture — And What We Can Do About It* (2015), Kate Harding illustrates that in rape cultures, most victims of sexual assault and rape never disclose it for fear of being discredited. She also denotes that in such cultures, even if victims are believed, they will be mortified, persecuted, blamed, and ridiculed throughout a judicial procedure that ultimately leads nowhere (8). As rape victims are not protected by the law, gender stereotypes and prejudices about rape filter into the legal system. Due to gender discrimination, women are denied equal justice, equal treatment, and equal opportunity in court proceedings. As a result, regardless of age or ethnic affiliation, the judicial system must take responsibility for the equitable treatment of every female rape victim. Rape victims should be treated with respect and compassion and have their decisions fully supported by the criminal justice system and rape crisis centres.

Katherine Cross, in her essay "Listening Will Never Be Enough," from *Believe Me: How Trusting Women Can Change the World* (2020), declares that recent conversation about violence against women has centred on the notion that women must be heard; survivors are not being listened to; they are being disbelieved, and this contributes profoundly to female subjugation. Therefore, she maintains that rape, harassment, and abuse remain unabated because the victims' cries are those of the unheard (39). Similarly, Julia Serano, in her essay "He's Unmarked, She's Marked," admits that even though she has endured two dating-rape attempts, she has never reported them or spoken out about them, as she knew that she would not be believed. She further ascertains, "I'm sure that I would have been subjected to the

standard retorts hurled at women who come forward with stories of sexual assault," such as, "But he's an upstanding member of the community, he would never do such a thing" (51).

In Chanel Miller's case, most web articles that have been published concerning Brock Turner's accusation have featured him as a champion swimmer on the Stanford swim team, which was irrelevant in the context of an article where he has been convicted of a sexual assault felony. During the trial she mentions: "The judge had given Brock something that would never be extended to me: empathy. My pain was never more valuable than his potential" (205). Miller then elaborates: "The judge argued he'd already lost so much opportunities" (236). In her turn Crowley formulates:

> Like the majority of rape defendants, the man with the Swiss army knife would likely be acquitted. His defence lawyer would talk about the family he probably has now—I imagine he would be about forty-five—and beg the jury not to let a woman with a decade-old allegation ruin the life he has built for himself. They would talk about his career. About how far he's come, about how sad it would be to take that all away from him (*I Choose Elena* 67).

Miller and Crowley's testimonies do not only reflect cultures informed by gender bias that reproduce the myth of male entitlement but, more importantly, a form of silencing that maintains patriarchal oppression. Jordan, in *Tackling Rape Culture,* submits that in relation to women's sexual violence experiences, there is an active dimension visible in how voices are explicitly silenced by others, as well as a more passive form of failing to recognise or ignoring what women say (78). This culture of silence dismisses female experiences by keeping them constrained by sexual violence.

In their introduction to *Rape and Representation* (1991), Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver affirm that whether in the courts or the media, art or criticism, whoever manages to recount the tale and whose story qualifies as "truth" determines the definition of rape (1).

Philomela, a female figure in Greek mythology who represents the unexpected threat that women pose, has long reflected women's silencing and oppression throughout history. Crowley reveals in *I Choose Elena*: "The notion that women are not to be trusted is the balm we use to excuse us from struggling with the listening or the telling. We can't afford to let it go" (68). After having been raped by her brother-in-law, Philomela's tongue has been cut by her assaulter to prevent the truth from being exposed. Analogously, as evidence has indicated that Miller had no recollection of her assault, Turner was then able to develop the story on his own terms and under his own circumstances. From this perspective, the roles have been entirely reversed, as leading him to court has compounded the victim's problem.

The day she has resolved to bring her attacker to justice, Miller expresses: "My three-letter word that morning unlocked a future, one in which I would become twenty-three and twenty-four and twenty-five and twenty-six before the case would be closed" (22). Hence, Miller's statements represent a legal system that ultimately fails to protect rape victims, reflecting a prejudiced culture that perpetuates gender discrimination. Moreover, she has also observed that the defence was virtually attempting to trap her. She notes: "If they could prove Brock genuinely believed I was coherent to consent, they could walk away with the case (158).

Due to the utter dissatisfaction of most rape victims with the judicial system, which not only denies them justice but makes them feel deliberately re-victimized, most of them have lost faith in the legal system. For these reasons, few of those who commit such horrible crimes are brought to justice. Crowley, unlike Miller, lacked the grit and determination to pursue her abuser. Several years after her assault, she declares: "I thought of the cross-examination. They would ask me why I didn't come forward earlier. Why was I out drinking on a Saturday when I was only fifteen? Why did I lie to my parents about where I was going that night? What did you expect would happen? they would ask" (66). Undeniably, Crowley's statements reflect a criminal justice system constructed on gender prejudice, since the latter tends to be more on

the side of the perpetrator than the victim's. In the same vein, she also adds: "To admit, again and again, to a stranger in front of a room full of other strangers, that this had happened to me, and then to have to insist that it had happened to me when I was accused of lying? That seemed unbearable in a way that pretending it hadn't happened to me didn't, so the choice between the two was easy" (66).

Crowley's affirmations suggest that taking legal action against her attacker would only aggravate her current condition. While Chanel Miller felt that she had been disbelieved, Lucia Osborne-Crowley has not taken any legal measures to stop her assailant for fear of being repudiated by the court system, which reinforces male privilege and prevents disclosure. That is why Brownmiller advocates that all acts of violence against victims ought to be punished as serious criminal acts in the eyes of the law. However, she emphasises that the first step towards legal reform would be a gender-neutral law controlling all types of sexual assaults (378).

2. Chanel Miller and Lucia Osborne-Crowley's Traumatic Experiences

In the present climate, sexual assault-related trauma is becoming increasingly widespread in the Western world. In the aftermath of sexual violence, victims encounter daunting and terrible circumstances. Despite the fact that this category of trauma surrounds us, a very limited number of individuals attempt to understand these victims or even recognise the harm that has been inflicted on them. As each survivor responds distinctively to the traumatic event, depending on the conditions surrounding the aggression, the interpretation of this violent crime often appears to be complex. Since Chanel Miller has been assaulted by Brock Turner while incapacitated, her experience often appeared indefinite and obscure. However, Miller's blurred consciousness does not erase the fact that the ramifications of the brutal crime have had no impact on her; actually, it only reinforces the traumatic nature of the attack. On the other part, the violence perpetuated on Crowley can be described as blunt and revolting due to its sudden occurrence and profound effect on the growing teenager.

When she woke up in the hospital with no recollection of the attack, Miller was bewildered, frightened, and she was required to undergo an hours-long rape kit exam. She conveys, when describing these challenging moments: "It is terror swallowed inside silence. An unclipping from the world where up was up and down was down. This is not pain, not hysteria, not crying. It is your insides turning to cold stones" (8). Miller also reveals: "Horror was present, I could feel it moving, shifting my insides" (9). In *Trauma and Recovery*, Herman indicates that traumatic experiences overwhelm typical care systems that provide people with a sense of control, connection, and meaning (47). Hence, the combination of confusion, terror, and horror in Miller's psyche is nothing more than the abrupt effect of trauma.

Recalling the moment of her assault, Crowley writes: "I had no reference point for any of what was happening to me apart from what I'd seen in movies, but I knew for certain that it was the sharpest and most severe pain I had ever experienced" (8-9). As Crowley was overwhelmed with fear, she could not verbalise her experience. In her memoir Crowley expresses: "My friends knew that something had happened but I brushed off any questions they had and we never spoke about it again. I was too scared to revisit that night" (10). Like a Chinese finger trap, as Peter A. Levine suggests in *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma* (1997), we must softly sink into trauma and then gradually draw ourselves out. Anyone who looked straight into Medusa's eyes was said to turn to stone. Such is the case with trauma. It will continue to do what it has consistently done in the past: immobilise us in fear (64). As a result of their inability to appropriately respond to their traumatic experiences, the impact of trauma on Miller and Crowley's lives became more acute.

Traumatic memories lack verbal narrative and structure; alternatively, they are preserved as powerful feelings and images (Herman 52). Herman's observations are analogous to Caruth's conception of trauma as the ultimate "unrepresentable." Caruth maintains that the effort to understand trauma repeatedly brings one to this strange paradox: in trauma, the

greatest contact with reality may also come as a total numbing to it, and that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness (6). Due to the sharp impact of trauma on Miller and Crowley's psyches, the two victims have struggled to articulate their horrible experiences. Hence, the two women's inability to communicate and properly cope with their traumas has hindered them and prevented them from pursuing regular and balanced lives. That is why, Caruth contends that "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on" (12).

Traumatic events produce deep and permanent shifts in physiological arousal, emotion, cognition, and memory (Herman 48). Following their rapes, Chanel Miller and Lucia Osborne-Crowley have suffered from severe traumatic episodes. The complexities of confronting the issue of sexual assault have required Miller to patiently wait five years and Crowley ten before fully recovering from trauma. The victims' traumatic reaction to sexual assault is recognised as "Rape Trauma Syndrome."

In Jenny Petrak and Barbara Hedge's publication, *The Trauma of Sexual Assault: Treatment, Prevention and Practice* (2002), they have illustrated that Burgess and Holmstrom (1974) have coined the term "Rape Trauma Syndrome" to describe the acute traumatic reaction to sexual assault. This syndrome was characterised based on parallels in response identified in 109 child, adolescent, and adult females who had been exposed to aggressive sexual assaults and presented to an emergency hospital department (3). Burgess and Holmstrom in *Rape: Victims of Crisis* (1974) demonstrate that the syndrome includes physical, emotional, and behavioural stress reactions caused by a life-threatening event (37). They further clarify that this syndrome involves two stages: the immediate or acute phase, in which the victim's lifestyle is completely disrupted by the rape crisis, and the long-term process, in which the victim must reorganise this disrupted lifestyle (37).

In the year between her assault and the trial, Miller has alternated between episodes of intense fear, dissociation, and exasperation. She was so consumed by trauma that she could barely pursue her efforts for achieving her objectives. Thereupon, she declares: "Every morning, I had to work harder to talk my limbs into moving" (63). Subsequently, she has resolved to quit her employed position and walk across the country to lift her spirits. Miller has first moved to Rhode Island for an art programme, viewing her passion for art, and then to Philadelphia to settle with her partner. Even though she was psychologically disturbed and emotionally bruised, Miller has made every effort to deflect her attention from all that was happening around her by engaging in new activities, such as stand-up comedy and scuba diving.

Nonetheless, as trauma intrudes into its victims' lives as an unwelcome visitor, its impacts never remain distant from them. In the period leading up to the hearing, Miller has become significantly more depressed. She confesses: "I didn't recognize who I was becoming. Volatile, enraged, touch the topic and I'd explode" (86). Moreover, Miller writes: "Trauma provides a special way of moving through time; years fall away in an instant, we can summon terrorising feelings as if they are happening in the present" (134). Hence, Miller's declarations call attention to trauma's timelessness, as traumatic confrontations alter conventional perception of time. Robert D. Stolorow, in his article "Never Again! Trauma Disrupts the Experience of Time" explains that experiences of emotional trauma become frozen in a timeless present in which we are either permanently trapped or condemned to be perpetually returned. Correspondingly, he proclaims that trauma is timeless because all duration or moving-along collapses in the presence of trauma; the past becomes present, and the future loses all significance other than constant repetition (1).

Lucia Osborne-Crowley has also suffered a timeless, traumatic ordeal that has entirely shattered her life. But what is captivating in Crowley's story is that her trauma did not simply

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remain psychological but has evolved into a physical impairment that has radically elevated her traumatic experience. Even if she has attempted to bury her trauma so as to lead a regular existence, her body has gradually fallen apart. She reveals: "I remember oscillating between total resignation and total panic, one moment feeling exhausted and cynical and the next thoroughly convinced I was dying" (21). In the years following her rape, Crowley has abandoned her athletic career and turned to alcohol to numb her utter pain and anguish. The former accomplished gymnast has eventually suffered excruciating abdominal pain and has been spending most of her time in the hospital. However, since Crowley has concealed the fact that she has been raped, doctors have been struggling to properly determine the real cause of the problem. She confesses in *I Choose Elena*: "Over the next few years my body started to break down, physically, in a way I assumed to be entirely unconnected to the event I had tried so hard to forget" (12).

Surgeons have failed to respond to her symptoms properly because her condition was enigmatic, which has significantly deteriorated the patient's situation. Crowley discloses: "That my pain was not taken seriously is certainly how I experienced these years of medical treatment" (26). The fact that she was unaware that trauma was exacerbating the problem has cost her dearly. That is why Caruth argues that the truth residing in traumatic events cannot be attributed simply to what is known but also to what is unknown in our actions and language (12). Consequently, due to its intricate and intrusive nature, trauma has far-reaching impacts on its victims'. Crowley has been later diagnosed with Crohn's disease and endometriosis, two incurable medical conditions that will most likely accompany her for the rest of her life.

Although the classic notion of trauma as the absolute indecipherable is theoretically useful for certain ends, such as emphasising the damage done; the pluralistic approach highlights the diverse values and representations of trauma in literature and society, including not only the harm caused by a traumatic experience but also all of the factors that alter the

definitions, representations, and implications of a traumatic experience (Balaev 6). Caruth's analysis, which emphasises the "unspeakability" of trauma, is more pertinent when applied to the victims' earlier phases of trauma. However, Balaev's "pluralistic model" allows to examine their painful experiences by reflecting on the social and cultural contexts in which the traumatic events arose. Following an approach that is not constrained by the traditional model's perspective on language allows for an interpretation that establishes language's ability to express the various facets of a traumatic experience in multiple ways.

Trauma is an event that interferes with perception and identity, including the cultural aspects of trauma and the array of narrative expressions. Thus, rape victims are defined by their efforts to overcome their traumas, not by the brutality of the crime itself, which would keep them in the shadow. On this account, Miller arranges: "We all have different ways of coping, self-medicating, ways of surviving the rough patches. To deny my messiness would be to deny my humanity" (60). Equivalently, Crowley conveys: "Slowly I realised that getting better meant being brave enough to occupy my body again. To be brave enough to feel the pain of it, the weakness of it, to bear witness to how broken it had become" (55). Thus, acceptance is the first step to achieving recovery.

Despite the fact that traumatic experiences are commonly believed to result in a wide range of negative impacts, these tragic events can nonetheless shape individuals' personalities. The victims would have a deeper understanding of life, a greater sense of personal strength, and a richer philosophical and spiritual existence. These aspects can be recognised as part of the so-called "posttraumatic growth." In *Posttraumatic Growth: Theory, Research, and Applications* (2018), it has been noted that Tedeschi and Calhoun explain posttraumatic growth as the positive psychological changes that occur as a result of coping with traumatic or extremely challenging life situations (3). It is not the event itself that defines trauma, as

Calhoun and Tedeschi write, but its effect on mental models, exposing them to reconstruction (4).

After having addressed their traumas, both Miller and Crowley have started consulting therapists so as to come to terms with their painful past. When Miller began working with a therapist, she was urged to read the statement that so many people were sharing online, which was the same victim impact statement Miller has released. Nevertheless, as Miller remained anonymous, her therapist failed to notice that she was the one who had submitted such a powerful statement. When *Buzzfeed News* published her victim impact statement, Chanel has received hundreds of emails and letters from sexual assault victims across the world, expressing empathy and support. She has even received a letter expressing solidarity from present American President Joe Biden. Thereafter, Miller's trust in humanity has been restored, as the latter has realised she was not alone in her fight against sexual assault. In her memoir she records: "I was surrounded by survivors, I was part of a *we*. They had never been tricked into seeing me as a minor character, a mute body; I was the leader on the front line fighting an entire infantry behind me" (180).

Considering that rape is predominantly a female-targeted crime, the process by which prior rape survivors have transcended their traumas is the ultimate evidence that trauma is neither rape victims' destiny nor their ultimate source of outrage. Like Miller, Crowley has also started to see a therapist to finally overcome the ramifications of sexual assault. In her memoir, Crowley mentions: "Together, we worked to try to make me feel safe enough to inhabit my body again, to tell the parts of me that had run away that it was okay to come back" (56). She has also learned that a former member of her gymnastics team's medical staff was convicted and sentenced to 175 years in prison for sexually abusing over 260 athletes under his care. Because some of the females assaulted by the perpetuator were Crowley's fellow athletes, she has discovered how extended this particular kind of oppression is in patriarchal societies.

Although recovery was once inconceivable, she has gradually found her way towards self-acceptance and recovery. Hence, Crowley reveals: "My recovery has not been easy. It has been slow, at times excruciatingly painful, and demoralising. But I'm making progress. I have finally placed this memory into the narrative of my life in a way that makes sense to me" (59).

Although Chanel Miller and Lucia Osborne-Crowley have witnessed traumatic incidents that have changed their lives, sharing their experiences and hearing of other victims' stories filled them with solace. Accordingly, Balaev submits that the ability of language to accurately define the cause and consequence of trauma allows for a unique perspective on the psyche and identity. Thus, she affirms that trauma's variability in both concept and form within the pluralistic model reveals the diversity of values that change over time and determine trauma's impact rather than revealing a simplified and indecipherable absence that both marks and remains vaguely unclaimed by the individual or group (367). Though trauma hinders or even interrupts the lives of the impacted victims at a psychological, physical, and physiological level, it may also reveal new connections between experience, language, and understanding that shed light on the cultural significance of trauma.

3. Issues of Victim-Blaming and Shame under the Politics of Rape Culture

Decades ago, female victims have been intimidated into silence after having been sexually assaulted at any age by any male abuser, as this concern has perpetually been addressed by simply positioning the victim on trial and accusing her of causing her own victimisation. Within patriarchal customs, a typical woman should be reliant on a man who determines her worth. However, despite being subjugated to relentless oppression, some females have rarely engaged in any form of resistance. As stated by Griffin, the passive woman is taught to consider herself powerless, unable to act, incapable of even perceiving, incapable of being autonomous, and, lastly, as the object rather than the subject of human conduct. In this way, a woman is denied the status of a human being (20). That is why adhering to strict

patriarchal gender norms causes women to become victims and perpetuates their victimisation as well. In this context, rape serves as an extensive social control function to oppress women.

"Oppression," as indicated by Lerner implies victimisation. Hence, individuals who use this term to characterise women mainly view them as a group of victims. Nonetheless, this female stereotype is erroneous and ahistorical (234). In the introductory section of her memoir, Lucia Osborne-Crowley stresses that being continually regarded as vulnerable and defenceless is a constant issue. She explains: "Overcoming this feeling is one of the hardest lessons a woman can learn. It is an ongoing act of survival" (5). Chanel Miller, for her part, did not identify herself as a simple individual or a rape survivor, but rather as a "victim." She formulates: "My name is Chanel. I am a victim, I have no qualms with this word, only with the idea that it is all that I am" (1). Brownmiller asserts that women are instructed to be rape victims. She contends that essentially learning the word "rape" involves learning about the power dynamics between men and women (309). In *Down Girl*, Manne establishes that being a victim isn't simply a result of unfavourable circumstances. Being a victim involves being morally harmed by another actor and being injured, humiliated, or otherwise wounded as a result of that harm (223).

The origins of the classic fairy tale, *Red Riding Hood*, can be traced back to oral versions from various European countries that substantially differ from the modern-day Grimm-inspired version. Nevertheless, from a twenty-first-century feminist perspective, this innocent tale appears highly illustrative. Even if Red Riding Hood is a fictional character, the moralistic tale's tragic ending indicates that youthful girls should not address strangers, as speaking to a stranger is unsafe and can have unintended consequences. Brownmiller alleges that *Red Riding Hood* is a parable of rape. She clarifies that wolves are nothing but the dreadful masculine figures that render females helpless in their presence (310). This classic "Stranger Danger" story that pervades Western culture, implies that if women are not cautious, they may

be taken by surprise and assaulted at any point in their lives. This, however, suggests that they have deliberately placed their own safety at risk. For this reason, such traditional tales that have been recited for centuries stand as one of the basic foundations of rape culture.

Power and control dynamics contribute to the prevalence and facilitation of sexual assault. The assumption that women appreciate being exposed to potential dangers such as rape leads to the conclusion that rape has been provoked by the victim herself. But, once again, this only remains a myth (Griffin 11). Jessica Taylor, in *Why Women Are Blamed for Everything: Exploring Victim Blaming of Women Subjugated to Violence and Trauma* (2020), sustains that many rape myths are fostered by sexism, with gender role stereotypes and cultural constraints providing a favourable atmosphere for rape myths to be produced, maintained, and disseminated (104).

Gender neutrality is difficult to achieve in the Western world due to sociocultural factors relating to gender and class privilege. That is why learning to recognise and trying to remove dominant conceptions of masculinity is essential for rape prevention, as male privilege induces female subordination and fosters gender-based violence. In *Gender Stereotyping: Transnational Legal Perspectives* (2010) by Rebecca J. Cook and Simone Cusack, it has been indicated that gender prejudice becomes problematic when it ignores individuals' qualities, abilities, wishes, desires, and circumstances in ways that deny their human rights and fundamental freedoms (20).

Instead of placing responsibility where it belongs, pervasive sexist attitudes towards women contribute to victim-blaming, which negatively affects rape victims. Medusa, an ancient Greek creature with snakes for hair who turns men to stone whenever they stare at her face, has long been regarded as a distinctive symbol of horror. She was once a charming maiden but has been transformed into a monster after being accused of provoking her rape. Consequently, her story has been classified as a classic instance of victim-blaming. When

women and girls are raped, abused, or killed in a society where everyone is conditioned to view and treat women in this fashion, it is always their fault (Taylor 104).

The fact that Miller has been attacked at a fraternity party on Stanford's campus while she is no longer a student and that the fact that she was found entirely unconscious and intoxicated at the moment of the assault have made her blameworthy for her own rape. In *Know My Name*, Miller writes:

> *If you go to a frat party expect to get drunk, drugged, and raped. Don't go to a frat party.* You went to a frat and got assaulted? What did you expect? I'd heard this in college, freshman girls in frats compared to sheep in a slaughterhouse. I understand you are not supposed to walk into a lion's den because you could be mauled. But lions are wild animals. And boys are people, they have minds, they live in a society with laws (46).

Irrefutably, the abovementioned extract reflects a toxic culture loaded with gender prejudice that encourages gender discrimination and reinforces victim-blaming. Nonetheless, as suggested by Griffin, it should not be assumed that a woman may avoid this aggressive act simply by behaving (17). In a similar manner, when considering the prospect of reporting her rape at the time of the assault, the first thought that has crossed Crowley's mind was to be blamed and sentenced for the crime that had been committed against her. Thus, she constructs: "I would have to watch as I was painted as foolish, promiscuous girl whose night out went too far and was filled with regret the next day" (67). Crowley further states: "I wish I could say I had the strength to try. But I didn't" (67). Although the young victim would have wished to be awarded justice, the prevailing rape myths and gender stereotypes pervading her culture have immediately prevented her from engaging in any legal procedure.

According to conventional rape myths, the most frequent feelings women face after being raped are shame and guilt (Burgess and Holmstrom 39). Rape victims often experience

feelings of shame and guilt as a result of their inability to stop the abuse and for failing to act in a standard way. However, female victims are also confronted with such reactions because of the degrading act of being partially blamed for their assaults. This phenomenon is maintained through a rape culture that adopts misogynistic language to assign blame to victims; hence, normalising sexual violence within a society's cultural structure.

Even if rape is relatively ubiquitous in Western culture, this dehumanising crime has been normalised in rape cultures and has not been adequately confronted by society. Jordan reports that while the term "rape culture" is relatively new, cultures that support rape have a much longer history. He proclaims that even those who claim patriarchy no longer exists acknowledge its legacy in a cultural setting that normalises sexually coercive practices (14). Rape culture directs shame at victims, asking them to make implausible sacrifices to prevent sexual assault because, as alleged by Jordan, rape is not a rare incident in a rape culture but rather a normal social behaviour (15). Therefore, the primary emphasis is directed towards female rape victims, while male perpetrators are entirely excluded from the equation.

Within their respective communities, Chanel Miller and Lucia Osborne-Crowley have been induced to sacrifice their personal well-being so as to avoid the prevalent prejudiced views with regard to rape victims. Miller has disclosed in an interview with Oprah Winfrey that shame requires a contained space to grow and that it is only after releasing all of the unsettling stereotypical views surrounding this aspect that it loses its destructive power. At first, Miller was fully aware that a crime had been perpetrated against her and that Turner was the perpetuator of the offence. Nevertheless, after having read the multiple online publications related to Turner's sexual assault felony case that were loaded with misogynistic language directed towards her, the seeds of shame have slowly started to germinate inside the rape victim.

Among the negative comments that have startled Miller, she mentions: "I'd read suggestions that I cried rape because I was ashamed I had cheated on my boyfriend. Somehow the victim never wins" (60). Moreover, the court system had a damaging impact on her, as it has reinforced the victim's sense of shame. Miller discloses: "I was embarrassed by who I was to everyone in that room, the one who drank herself to limpness, and now made wet gasping sounds into the microphone" (99). After feeling disgraced by the press and public opinions, Chanel has decided to pour all her resentment inside her compelling twelve-page victim impact statement, which has helped her to dissolve the shame. Besides, her statement became a manifesto for sexual assault survivors who have been confronted with similarly challenging circumstances. Thereupon, Miller reveals: "When I write about weakness, about how I am barely getting through this, my hope is that they feel better, because it aligns with the truth they are living" (260).

Analogously, Lucia Osborne-Crowley's experience with shame is roughly comparable to Miller's personal encounter. Her violent sexual assault has overwhelmed her with shame, which has left her with unbearable trauma and suffocating silence. Crowley was so ashamed and embarrassed to face the public's perception that she had rendered herself practically invisible. In her work, she confides: "We conceal ourselves because we are so ashamed that if we are seen, the rotten core will be seen too. It is an ongoing act of disappearance" (43). Because the images and views that surround rape are so visceral and revolting in rape cultures, rape victims are confronted with obstacles to triggering change and raising awareness about sexual assault. On this account, Crowley notes: "Our culture of shaming and disbelieving women is bigger and more powerful than anyone of us. Because I lived in that world, there was nothing I could do" (70).

As expressed by Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex*, culture as a means for illustrating, objectifying, and interacting with an individual's experience is so male-biased that women

almost never achieve the opportunity to view themselves culturally through their own eyes (156). Due to the constant prejudiced and misogynistic language directed towards women, particularly female individuals who have been subjected to various forms of abuse, their vision have become so blurred that they could barely recognise their intrinsic value. Hence, Crowley maintains: "There is no sense in which we can act in a manner that is 'unlike ourselves' when we have no 'self' to speak of. Shame devours us from the inside out and leaves us empty" (42). Likewise, Miller also observes: "*I thought my body wasn't worth anything. I thought I didn't matter, but I do*" (177). Subsequently, even if women are constantly constrained by conventional norms, their determination and resilience in transcending such obstacles symbolise a new source of optimism in cultures marked by gender prejudice. Crowley remarks, "There is nothing I could have changed about myself or my life to stop this from happening to me. That is the one thing I finally know to be true. But there is one thing we can change: the words we wrap it in. The words we use to fill the silence" (78).

4. Trauma and Art: The Role of Life-Writing in Releasing Trauma

A woman becomes intrinsically invisible after a rape (Griffin 69). As women are instructed to keep their pain hidden, Chanel Miller and Lucia Osborne-Crowley have been subjugated to a suffocating silence that has almost erased their identities. Adams in *Transforming a Rape Culture*, establishes that our language has an inclination to disguise violence. It can draw attention to someone's victimisation while simultaneously concealing the perpetrator's agency and actions (63–64). Thus, it becomes expensive for women to recognise their own requirements when they are rendered invisible by stereotypical language (64). Moreover, the fact that victims of trauma frequently encounter difficulties with narrative expression considerably hinders their ability to articulate their sufferings. Herman assumes that traumatic experiences are distinctive because they overwhelm ordinary human adaptations to

life (47). Nevertheless, as light can sometimes be found in the darkest places, wisdom can be cultivated in the deepest pain.

For centuries, art has been defined as a vehicle for alleviating trauma. Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch are among the most famous artists to portray mental suffering in their creative artworks. After Tereus has cut Philomela's tongue to subjugate her to silence, the latter has weaved her story into a tapestry to reveal the crime committed against her. In his article "The Voice of the Shuttle: Language from the Point of View of Literature," Geoffrey Hartman discloses that, in conjunction with Philomela's technique for telling her story, that we are confronted with an antinomy (a paradox), which is maintained rather than resolved by referring to art as a "concrete universal" (241). However, it is sometimes within this paradox that the truth swiftly finds its way out.

Literary works are also known for their therapeutic properties, as writing allows authors to communicate their grief and anguish in an articulate manner that resonates with readers. Caruth explains that we turn to literature to convey traumatic experiences because art, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the intricate connection between knowing and not knowing. Hence, the languages of literature and psychoanalysis intersect precisely where knowing and not knowing overlap with the notion of traumatic experience (10). The process of writing allows authors to reflect on their traumatic memories and communicate their suffering. Though writing down memories can appear daunting for trauma victims as it takes them back to the source of their traumas, it nonetheless plays an effective role in the recovery process.

For Miller and Crowley, writing appeared to be effective for reclaiming their pasts and healing from trauma. Nonetheless, as Tanya Serisier implies in *Speaking Out: Feminism, Rape and Narrative Politics* (2018), so as to tell their tales as heroes, they must first tell the tales as victims (58). On this account, Miller reveals: "It took me a long time to learn healing is not about advancing, it is about returning repeatedly to forge something. Writing this book allowed

me to go back to that place. I learned to stay in the hurt, to resist leaving" (270). Likewise, Crowley confesses: "I forced myself to spend an hour every day writing poems, no matter how clumsy or heavy-handed they were, as a way of grounding myself. I learned to mediate, and slowly, I regained the mental stillness I used to deploy so skilfully on the gym flour" (58).

The memoir is essential for Miller and Crowley to establish self-representation in societies where women's identities are threatened to be erased due to issues of gender inequality and male privilege. The politics of speaking out have resulted in a subgenre of rape narratives. The existence of this literary genre fosters and promotes storytelling by providing a cultural framework in which it can be heard and understood (Serisier 44). Miller and Crowley's narratives are, thus, firmly established in cultural critique since they have been exploited by the two memoirists to express their frustration with the prevailing societal norms of their communities.

In *Rape and Representation*, Joplin evinces that contemporary women have felt like thieves of language, staging attacks on the coveted emblems of a tradition that has maintained women's silence for ages (35). Within their narratives, they have succeeded in revealing all their vulnerabilities and exposing their truths. That is why Miller declares: "I was tired by existing as an object of observation, powerless as my narrative was written for me (168). Similarly, rather than being impacted perpetually by her attacker, Crowley has decided to be influenced by her favourite fictional character, Elena Greco, from Elena Ferrante's novel *My Brilliant Friend* (2011). She formulates: "I might not have been able to get better. I would not have been able to choose Elena. I might, by now, have been dead and buried. Because I am so fortunate in these ways—because I am still alive—it is my duty to testify" (73).

As a subgenre of autobiography, Buss indicates in *Repossessing the World: Reading Memoirs by Contemporary Women* (2002), that the "memoir" has been left virtually unnoticed by literary critics and theorists, while autobiographies have taken centre stage in the history of

"life-writing." She claims that the lack of examination of the term "memoir" may be related in part to its classification as a life-writing discipline attributed to history rather than literature (2). A memoir is a factual story, not the story of a fictional figure developed to captivate readers. Memoirs require the writers' thoughts, emotions, views, and even judgements on particular social circumstances, as well as the readers' reflections on the issue at hand. Hence, memoirs can be regarded as essential and crucial in triggering societal change.

As this literary genre has recently been adopted by several emerging authors, particularly women, the memoir has firmly established its place alongside the novel. Buss, asserts that the adoption of the memoir by contemporary women to question and reclaim culture is part of an extensive rise in life-writing practises of all kinds, as well as critical attention to such practises (3). Rape memoirs have established their own modest and growing subgenre, indicates Sara Murphy in *Encyclopedia of Rape* (2004). She specifies that many memoirs follow the theme of breaking silence, with the intent of asserting oneself in the face of erasure (127).

As this intimate form of literary expression allows female survivors to openly address the implications of sexual assault, several rape survivors, including Chanel Miller, Lucia Osborne-Crowley, Laurie Halse Anderson, Alice Sebold, Tarana Burke, Bri Lee, and others, have decided to craft their traumatic tales within their memoirs. This particular form of life-writing provides deep insight into the authors' realities and emotional sufferings. Rape memoirs are more than simple stories of rape; they are books about speaking out about rape, its necessity, and its effects. They are written to alter social responses to rape by disrupting the silence (Serisier 51). As an act of respect and solidarity, the authors' names, who are representatives of rape victims, have been deliberately repeated throughout this study. After several years of silence threatened with erasure, revealing Miller and Crowley's identities is the least they deserve. Because these marginalised rape survivors' function as societal subjects

rather than objects, their stories have painted an accurate picture of the complexities of trauma in their readers' minds.

The ability to find meaning and make constructive decisions following a traumatic experience is critical to any victim's recovery process. In this particular instance, writing can help rape victims re-evaluate their experiences by processing their memories from different perspectives. Luckhurst submits that the appeal of the memoir in cultures dominated by trauma appears to be its ability to transcend the narrative conventionality of fiction by reacting to what may be called "the pressure of the real." He alleges that since the traumatic instant cannot be captured, trauma both distends the subject and pushes the boundaries of what constitutes "experience." Therefore, Luckhurst contends that in the most extreme circumstances, the trauma memoir centres on what has been forgotten and only recently recovered (118).

Traumatic experiences do not simply involve the mystery of repeated and uninformed human actions but also the alienation of a human voice that screams out from the wound, a voice that witnesses a truth that the subject cannot fully comprehend (Caruth 10). However, while trauma can temporarily disrupt the typical mechanisms of consciousness and memory of its victims, writing can still help rape survivors construct narrative voices and articulate their most intimate fears, thoughts, and feelings through their memoirs. As a result, rape survivors may eventually alleviate the mental strain of their negative experiences and achieve recovery through authorship.

The wide spectrum of memoirs distinguishes them from autobiographies and biographies. Unlike other forms of storytelling, memoirs revolve around an important aspect of a person's life. This influential literary genre induces authors to relive the greatest as well as the most devastating events of their lifetime, which can be overwhelming if they are not psychologically prepared for this phase. As suggested by Caruth, trauma is intimately linked to the ability to recover from the past (152). Since Miller has presented her statement, she has

gradually started to feel more aligned with herself, which has prompted her to write her memoir. In her publication, she expresses: "I needed to go backward before I could go forward. I now had my instructions. The statement was the wave. It was time to submerge even deeper, return to the beginning" (216). "The beginning," in Miller's view, does not refer to returning to the time of the assault but to reconstructing her narrative in an effort to lend her experience more significance.

Each survivor has an urgent need to share his story, unrestrained by ghosts of the past from which one must protect himself (Laub 63). Crowley has first shared her story with therapists, but it was not until she has been sufficiently acquainted with her own personal experience that she has been finally ready to sew her story into a compelling memoir. Inspired by Italian novelist Elena Ferrante, whose female protagonists succeed in overcoming their dreadful pasts, Crowley was determined to become the protagonist of her own story. As held by Serisier, when rape victims find their voices, these authors evolve from victims of violence to heroines with the potential to achieve victories on their behalf (55). Crowley observes: "I have spent ten years wishing to disappear. But I cannot, and I will not. Because to be invisible is to give up the only tangible thing I have to offer: this cautionary tale" (78). Thereafter, Crowley has learned to bury her fears that have prevented her from overcoming her traumatic past. Thus, as the prior rape survivor has finally allowed herself to openly communicate her experience, her memoir can be viewed as an act of reconciliation that has allowed her to restore her voice and reclaim her past.

The fact that both rape victims have turned all their agonies into distinct literary publications is a real triumph. In this context, Buss establishes that it is a linguistic achievement to generate a language that unites history and self in the act of testimony. It includes not only the effort to speak up in order to contribute to the healing of oneself but also the struggle for the formal aspects of language that allow the act of witnessing to occur (134). Although Miller

and Crowley's fight against psychological trauma and gender prejudice has been difficult and exhausting, their rape memoirs will remain as testimonies to their perseverance in the face of adversity. Dissolving the silence and taboos around sexual violence may be a very liberating experience, a means of recovering subjectivity and agency after a desubjectifying experience of violence (Serisier 11). Accordingly, the release of Miller's *Know My Name* and Crowley's *I Choose Elena* has reclaimed the survivors' rhetorical agency over the American and Australian nations' silencing cultures.

Through her eloquent, poetic prose, Miller has succeeded in reclaiming her identity, which stands as a reminder of the perfect fusion that turns trauma into art. She records: "I survived because I remained soft, because I listened, because I wrote. Because I huddled close to my truth, protected it like a tiny flame in a terrible storm" (274). Crowley, on the other hand, has also exploited her talent and literary creativity to transform tragedy into an innovative literary production. She formulates: "I'm a writer. I can't change the world. What I can change is the size of silence. The weight of it. The way it pulls us under." Crowley, concludes by affirming: "Acceptance is a small, quiet room" (78). Consequently, their rape memoirs are more than simple narratives; they also stand as testimonies that pay tribute to the survivors' determination and resilience.

In the same fashion of Anne Frank's, *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1952), Virginia Woolf's *A Writer's Diary* (1953), Helen Keller's *The Story of My Life* (1902), Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), and bell hooks' *Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood* (1996), in addition to countless other memoirs, Miller's *Know My Name* and Crowley's *I Choose Elena* offer honest perspectives on women's tribulations. Caruth asserts that awakening is the cite of trauma (112). Nevertheless, Miller and Crowley's visions have been positively affected by their traumatic awakenings, as it has caused them to lay greater emphasis on their future. However, what has contributed to both victims' traumatic awakenings is the liberating

effect of writing, which represents their preferred means for fighting against rape culture. As expressed by Brownmiller: "Fighting back. On a multiplicity of levels, that is the activity we must engage in, together, if we—women—are to redress the imbalance and rid ourselves and men of the ideology of rape" (404).

Conclusion

By relying on feminist and psychoanalytic rhetorical analysis, this chapter has investigated and analysed the most important and pivotal elements raised in Chanel Miller's and Lucia Osborne-Crowley's rape memoirs. The first section of this chapter has examined topics of female oppression and subjugation, as well as gender prejudice through patriarchal violence and male privilege. The second title has addressed Miller's and Crowley's experiences with rape trauma by combining Caruth's classical trauma model and Balaev's pluralistic trauma paradigm. Additionally, the third title of this division has explored the sociology of shame in Miller's *Know My Name* and Crowley's *I Choose Elena*, focusing on the victims' problems associated with victim-blaming and shame within their rape cultures. Lastly, the final title has emphasised the significant role of art in reclaiming rape victims' identities, preventing erasure, and recovering from trauma.

General Conclusion

The present paper has examined Chanel Miller's' *Know My Name* and Lucia Osborne-Crowley's *I Choose Elena* from a feminist and psychoanalytic perspective. It has illustrated how female rape victims have addressed their psychological and emotional turmoil despite the prejudiced attitudes perpetuated by their cultures. This research has also shown how healing from trauma can become challenging in rape cultures and how the rape memoir may function as an effective instrument for reclaiming the victims' identities and achieving recovery.

The first chapter of this dissertation, which is divided into three sections, has shed light on the study's biographical, socio-historical, and theoretical foundations. It has first started by providing Miller and Crowley's biographies, with a particular emphasis on Miller's literary ambitions and Crowley's promising future. However, following their brutal rapes, the two female figures have felt compelled to pursue a literary career in an effort to ultimately restore their shattered voices. This section also includes relevant overviews of Miller's *Know My Name* and Crowley's *I Choose Elena*. Moreover, the socio-historical framework of this established research incorporates cultural environments associated with the two emerging authors. Thus, it has succeeded in presenting faithful depictions of violence against women in American and Australian societies as well as offering an insight into feminist protests in both nations. This section is essential, as it allows for an enhanced comprehension of the subsequent parts of this work.

The theoretical framework of this study, has outlined the evolution of feminist theory and has defined the leading feminist notions relevant to this conducted research. It has concentrated on the harmful practises that deprive women of their agency and rights, which play an instrumental role in the cultural depiction of rape. It has relied on the perspectives of Gerda Lerner, Susan Brownmiller, Allan G. Johnson, Jan Jordan, Sara Mills, and Kate Manne on the matter. In regard to psychoanalytic theory, the historical origins of trauma theory have

been identified before introducing the main facets of the traditional and pluralistic trauma models. Combining Caruth's and Balaev's distinctive trauma paradigms has been effective for conducting an extensive trauma analysis in this study. Adopting this approach to trauma theory has expanded the research's theoretical scope by considering the social and cultural contexts in which Miller and Crowley's traumatic experiences have occurred.

The second chapter of this paper has been established to complete the critical analysis of Miller's *Know My Name* and Crowley's *I Choose Elena* through the lens of feminist and psychoanalytic theories. The first section of this chapter has demonstrated how gender prejudice and male privilege have directly led to Miller and Crowley's oppression and subjugation. Both victims have been reduced to mere objects, incapable of articulating or opposing the injustices committed against them because male entitlement frequently offers men the ultimate freedom to abuse and exploit their counterparts. The second title has portrayed Miller and Crowley's traumatic experiences through Caruth and Balaev's trauma models by highlighting how rape trauma's long-term ramifications have adversely affected the victims' lives. It has additionally called attention to trauma's "timelessness," as Miller and Crowley have felt trapped in the wake of their assaults, unable to immediately recover from their traumas. Besides, by referring to the concept of "posttraumatic growth," it has been indicated that traumatic experiences can influence individuals' identities and contribute to the victims' self-fulfilment and wisdom.

The third part of this division has addressed some of the issues faced by Miller and Crowley within their communities. Following their rapes, Miller and Crowley have been subjugated to silence as a result of the corrupted and prejudiced American and Australian criminal justice systems. This section has argued that patriarchal gender norms promote female victimisation and victim-blaming, while pervasive gender stereotypes and rape myths reinforce rape victims' sense of shame and guilt. It has also emphasised the centrality of sexist attitudes

and misogynistic language in perpetuating a rape culture that blames rape victims and normalises sexual violence.

The concluding part of this chapter has proved how authorship can convert trauma into art. It has indicated that even if women are rendered invisible following their rape due to their prejudiced rape cultures and encounter difficulties with narrative expression because of trauma, their voices can nevertheless be restored. It has underlined the importance of the memoir genre in reclaiming individuals' identities and releasing trauma. Furthermore, it has focused on Miller and Crowley's traumatic awakenings and revealed how the therapeutic effect of writing has been instrumental for their recovery. By weaving their traumatic experiences into eloquent rape memoirs, the female rape victims have reclaimed their narratives and reflected on their experiences. But, most importantly, the two rape survivors were finally prepared to achieve recovery, move forward, and redirect shame where it belongs.

The present study has evaluated Miller's and Crowley's rape narratives from a feminist and psychoanalytic standpoint, indicating that confronting gender-based violence, prejudiced attitudes, consent norms, or rape myths may gradually contribute to dismantling rape culture. This research work has demonstrated that only through determination, verbal expression, and advocacy can females ultimately rid themselves of the discriminatory, sexist, and misogynistic notions pervading their cultures. It has further explained that authorship can transform dread into aspiration and trauma into art, which enriches human existence. Correspondingly, drawing on this humble research endeavour, aspiring researchers whose interests intersect with this field of inquiry might feel inspired and motivated to expand on the subject at hand. *Know My Name* and *I Choose Elena* are multifaceted literary works that may be approached from several perspectives, particularly aspects related to psychoanalytic theory, as these memoirs abound with mental issues to be explored.

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Résumé

Certaines expériences semblent être d'une telle complexité que même le langage manque à saisir adéquatement leurs nuances. C'est pourquoi écrire sur des événements traumatisants est un véritable acte de courage. Cette étude s'appuie sur une analyse rhétorique féministe et psychanalytique afin d'examiner certains aspects de *Know My Name* de Chanel Miller et *I Choose Elena* de Lucia Osborne-Crowley. Elle vise à déterminer comment Miller et Crowley ont fait face à leurs épreuves traumatiques suite à leurs agressions violentes au cœur des préjugés culturels de leurs nations. Cette enquête aborde les préoccupations liées à l'oppression des femmes sous le système patriarcal et évalue les effets du traumatisme sur les victimes de viol à travers les modèles de traumatisme "classique" et "pluraliste". De plus, ce travail de recherche explore les problèmes tels que la culpabilisation des victimes et l'humiliation dans les cultures de viol et tentes de définir l'importance de l'écriture pour se remettre d'un traumatisme. Ce travail souligne également l'importance des "mémoires de viol" dans le but de dissoudre le silence et les tabous entourant la violence sexuelle en vue de permettre aux victimes de récupérer leur autonomie et leur rôle actif après une expérience déséquilibrante.

Mots Clés : Récits de viol, oppression sexiste, traumatisme, culture du viol, écriture, rétablissement.