

A Narrative Structure Analysis of Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses how rape narratives provide insights into the conceptualization of rape, trauma, abuse, and recovery of rape victims. Using William Labov's theoretical model of narrative structure analysis and Michael Halliday's transitivity system, the article examines Alice Sebold's rape narrative, *The Lovely Bones* (henceforth *TLB*). The analysis shows that the narrative structure of rape narratives helps understand deeper meanings and underpinned concepts of rape. Such meanings and concepts reveal the real horrors of rape, the gravity of the pain and suffering of rape victims, and the ways of their eventual recovery. Despite its limitations to only *TLB*, the article offers potential alternative approaches to examine rape narratives to uncover the deeper meanings and suggests new concepts of rape and sexual violence affecting the perspectives to be taken while dealing with rape in general and rape victims being women and children in particular.

Keywords: Narrative analysis, rape, stylistics, transitivity system, trauma

INTRODUCTION

Stories are fundamental to all experiences of human life (Boyd et al., 2020). Stories are channels making meaning and enable us to order and make sense of events

and situations around us (Bruner, 2003; Polletta et al., 2011; Presser, 2016; White, 1980). When someone tells a story, s/he constructs it into a narrative form. Therefore, a narrative is the main constituent of the meaning system construes human experiences and a style of communication that arranges the experiences into meaningful periods (Polkinghorne, 1988). Moreover, a narrative is a sequence: the events are deliberately selected, connected, organized, and evaluated as meaningful for an audience (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997).

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Given that the function of reportability in narrative helps determine the nature of events being interesting and worthy to attract the readers' attention. On the other hand, if a narrative has insufficient reportability, it would interrupt or "evoke the crushing response, 'So what?'" (Labov, 2013, p. 21). Additionally, narrative functions as a scientific investigation of an event(s) in which the agency is attributed to the character(s) of the story, and causal links between the characters and the events are inferred (M. Murray, 2003). Using multiple categories of narrative structure, a narrator constructs his/her stories in cooperation with others. As a result, we are provided with ideologies reinforcing our stories and life experiences.

Stories exhibited whose voices are heard and whose are silenced (Gilbert, 1994). Rape narratives and rape memoirs allow rape victims to control their experiences and depict the horrific reality of rape without modifying their narratives under the influence of prevailing culturally sanctioned practices (Probyn, 2005; Roeder, 2015). Rape narratives have the power to shame readers, and by providing the protagonist's reaction, the mode allows the audience to question their assumptions about rape. The scope of rape narratives includes understanding the horrors of rape, rape practices, rape myths, the pain and suffering of rape victims, and the survival of rape victims, mostly women and children. In Morrison's (1970) rape narrative *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola's story is shared; she was eleven years old when she was brutally

raped. The story centralizes rape, the most widespread, outrageous, traumatic, life-changing experience. Roynon (2014) states that *The Bluest Eye* explores the vulnerability of young girls and how specific cultural and economic circumstances shape the vulnerability and those who exploit it. The manipulation of voice and point of view (i.e., the use of silence and euphemism as well as graphic details of rape) depicted the oppression, exploitation, and destruction of Pecola, the rape victim.

Differently, Gay (2017), in her rape memoir, *Hunger*, shares her brutal gang rape (at the age of twelve) and its severe impacts on her post-assault life. Jurecic and Marchalik (2017) discussed that the memoir begins with Gay's rape, and the following pages reveal how the consequences of the act affected her mind and body for the next 30 years. However, she never gets maudlin; instead, she insists that readers reorganize the daily indignities and cruelties she endures. Similarly, Anderson (1999) speaks about her rape in the book *Speak* and shares the traumatizing and destructive experiences of her rape. The story portrays a gloomy vision of the social environment in which the protagonist lives. Being a rape victim, however, Anderson emphasized her resistance, resourcefulness, and emotional strength. The story reinforced the dynamics of trauma, resistance, development, and recovery of the rape victim (Ahmed, 2019). In this line of giving voice to the voiceless, Sebold (2002) writes *TLB*, a story of Susie Salmon, who was raped and ended. Susie was fourteen when she was savagely raped

and butchered in the hole in the ground by her neighbor, Mr. Harvey, a thirty-six-year-old man. Thereafter, she opens her eyes to her heaven and yearns to return to earth to continue her life that ended abruptly. Unable to return, she speaks from beyond the grave. In this manner, Susie can access the lives on earth and frequently visit her past, which helps provide minute details of her rape experiences.

Narrative analysis has emerged as a scholarly field in the last three decades. This multifaceted and multidisciplinary field of research uses stories to describe human experiences and actions (Polkinghorne, 1995) and is an accepted mode of inquiry in many domains of anthropological, sociological, and educational research (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Gilbert, 1994; Nespor et al., 1995; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Yuen et al. (2021) analyzed rape narratives and revealed the essential factors that encouraged rape victims to rise and make a difference for other rape survivors and to improve their psychological condition by sharing their ordeal. On the other hand, the silence reinforces rape myths in which victims are blamed, stated tempting to act, and negative social reactions lead to the victims' suffering post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), self-blame, and maladaptive coping strategies (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). As sharing rape experiences could be either helpful or harmful for survivors, it is obligatory to understand what makes rape narratives useful for survivors. Recently, Jean-Charles (2014) examined the

representation of rape in rape narratives of Vera's *Under the Tongue* and Beyala's *Tu t'appelleras Tanga* and strongly advocated the "victim-survivor" model instead of the survivor as the former encompasses a wide spectrum of rape experiences being a comprehensive model to explore rape, cultural criticism, and trauma studies. The model allows pain and survival to coexist, collide, and coalesce. Given narratives illustrate the fluid process of moving between victim and survivor in the aftermath of rape. In *Under the Tongue*, the narrator-protagonist describes herself, "A tongue which no longer lives, no longer weeps. It is buried beneath rock... I know a stone is buried in my mouth, carried under my tongue. My voice has forgotten me" (Vera, 1996, p. 121). The incest's ramifications on the victim's body are threefold: the loss of her voice, the fracturing of her body, and a crippling brand on her mind and sense of self (Jean-Charles, 2014).

While these studies, among many others, have established that rape narratives could be of practical use in human life and real social settings, more needs to be known about rape narratives. More specifically, more needs to be known about the narrative structure, for example, the stages and organization of a rape narrative. As a literary form, rape narratives carry messages composed using a wide range of choices, for example, lexical and grammatical (Leech & Short, 2007), to express a particular meaning or a set of meanings. Moreover, like in other genres, meanings in literary rape narratives relate to the social and cultural contexts in

which they are produced, distributed, and consumed. This article draws on stylistics, particularly Labov's (1972) narrative structure analysis theoretical model and Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity, to investigate the structure of Sebold's rape narrative *TLB*. The article dissects narrative structures to exhibit new meanings and concepts of rape being intimidating and gruesome, the pain and suffering of rape victims, and the ways of their resurfacing and recovery.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The narrative, the most common form of discourse, remains a prominent concern in the literature study (Bal, 1997; Prince, 1982; Todorov & Weinstein, 1969). Accordingly, narrative analysis has attracted different disciplines of human sciences (e.g., psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy) and has rapidly grown as a scientific approach to qualitative research (Polkinghorne, 1988; Toolan, 1991). Practically, it (narrative analysis) has become an essential part of the professions studying occupational narratives and life stories. Especially for linguists, it remains fundamental to know how narratives encompass meanings that lead to human thinking and talking (Johnstone, 2016). Historically, the analysis of narrative structures goes back to Aristotle, who, in *Poetics*, discussed the content and form, which construct various structures of a narrative. Regarding narrative structures, Johnstone (2016) comments that Labov's works remain influential. Labov regards the

narrative as "one method of recapitulating experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) occurred" (Labov, 1972, pp. 359-360).

Words and narratives "shape the ways in which it is (not) possible to understand the issues at stake, they are legislated against, measured and resourced and the responses which are deemed most urgent and appropriate" (Boyle, 2018, p. 2). The conceptualization of rape and sexual violence is construed through different producers, voices, and genres in the specified contexts informed by socio-cultural practices (Pinsky et al., 2017). Rape narratives and violence narrated in different contexts are not only representations but are active agents producing meanings and concepts and shaping understanding. For example, in Erdrich's (2012) novel *The Round House*, the intimate and devastating effects of sexual violence against a woman, her family, and her community are depicted. Skenandore and Bladow (2018) analyzed *The Round House* and found storytelling a subtle way to heal and move away from violence and pain. Similarly, Larson (2018) discussed that the young rape victim in Gay's (2017) rape narrative, *Hunger* recovered in her post-assault life but never lived her normal life again; however, her narrative is a source of motivation for rape victims struggling and fighting with hardships in their post-assault lives. Most importantly, the rape narratives become a source of self-invention, offering new opportunities to uncover violent human life experiences (Gilmore, 2017).

Gay's (2017) rape narrative is about "how one should heal" (Larson, 2018, p. 2). Given that storytelling becomes a lens through which rape victims can envision their way out of pain and trauma, where they can create models and mirrors to experience the spaces of resurfacing and recovery. On the other hand, instead of their support and help in resurfacing, rape victims are suppressed and subjugated; rape culture has immensely affected the concept of rape, where rape victims are blamed, silenced, and punished for the act they never did (Sharma, 2020). For instance, Maart's (2008) rape narrative *The Writing Circle* depicted a rape victim Isabel who was brutally raped in her garage a few meters away from her home. After the assault, Isabel lived a traumatic life and constantly thought about the security of her young nieces. Even though Isabel "had gone through all sorts of procedures" to protect and keep them safe, she was "unable to give them any hope of being free of this horrible situation" (Maart, 2008, p. 1). J. Murray (2011) concluded that gender in *The Writing Circle* is used as a woman's vulnerability to rape which flows from the gendered imbalances of power within society and, consequently, the challenges of conceptualizing strange rape encompassing a history of rape myths.

Moreover, O'Neill's (2015) *Asking For It* is a story about the devastating effects of gang rape and public shaming, told through the awful experiences of a young girl, Emma O'Donovan. Emma's father questioned her credibility, asking, "[b]ut why were you there?" and "[w]hy were you in that

bed in the first place, Emmie?" (p. 262). The questions demonstrated the reasons for the rape surrounded by the prevailing rape myths. Mastrantoni (2021) remarked that rape representation in literature would help understand the insidious implications often interlocked with rape representations and foster a meaningful conversation about rape among rape myths. Thus, the prevailing concepts and understanding of rape increase the pain and suffering of rape victims inducing post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety (Miragoli et al., 2014). This consideration underlines the importance of evaluating rape narratives to understand various concepts and meanings of rape and to treat stress disorders in rape victims to restore resiliency in their lives (Basile & Smith, 2011; Miragoli et al., 2017).

Evaluating the significance of rape narratives in rape victims' healing and resurfacing, Delker et al. (2020) studied the influence of cultural stigma and narrative redemption on the storying of rape and sexual violence and discussed that along with rape victims, to a greater extent, the act of storytelling and sharing rape experiences benefit other rape survivors. It was concluded that sexual trauma stories as more difficult to tell and less likely to be told than other, less stigmatizing stories, even when stories end positively. Stressful encounters require a coping strategy to conquer them. Interestingly, Rodríguez-Dorans and Jacobs (2020), focusing on the theory of narrative analysis, showed the critical role of language in demystifying

social issues of patriarchy, rape, violence against women, and women suppression. Furthermore, it described language giving structures to a narrative in terms of the order of the events, time and space settings, and, most importantly, unity and coherence. Concludingly, Borg (2018) remarked that unity and coherence in rape narratives empower traumatized rape victims by giving them more control over their lives.

Voicing the silenced rape victims, Sebold meticulously describes the horrific experiences of rape (Whitney, 2010). Kilby (2018) explored Sebold's writing through intertextuality and found that the intertextual links in Sebold's rape memoir *Lucky* and fiction *TLB* enhance the understanding of young rape victims' brutal rape experiences, while *TLB* opens with rape, murder, and mutilation of a young girl Susie, *Lucky* begins with reference to the girl who was raped, murdered, and mutilated in a tunnel. Therefore, the understanding of one narrative can be enhanced by the other. The deeper meanings and newer concepts of rape can be established by having such theoretical perspectives on rape narratives (Kilby, 2018). Moreover, Wehling-Giorgi (2021) compared Alice Sebold's rape writing with Elena Ferrante's and discussed the links between rape, abuse, trauma, and untold experiences of rape victims disclosing rape narratives resisting patriarchal powers. Even though the rape narratives of the two writers are set in different geographic locations, they challenge rape culture in which the rape victims are trapped in imposed boundaries having the lapses, gaps, and absences of

the traumatized imagination. Wehling-Giorgi (2021) exclusively mentioned that *TLB* "remains fundamentally anchored on earth and motivated by a profound sense of mourning and her desire to be among the living" (p. 135).

Surprisingly, rape affects an individual physically and emotionally and severely affects the victim's family and society (Burlingame & Layne, 2001). In a study of Sebold's *TLB*, Bliss (2008) analyzed the photographs used in the narrative. The photographs show the "disruption" of the family after the rape and murder of one of the family members; the rape destroyed the typical mother-daughter relationship (Bliss, 2008, p. 861). Furthermore, the photographs in *TLB* have the special function of establishing an eternal connection between the dead (Susie) and lived ones (Susie's mother and other family members). Therefore, *TLB* demonstrated the pain and suffering of rape victims and their families, their never-ending intimidating and traumatic memories (Sharma, 2020). Sharma added that *TLB* "is an invaluable contribution to the rape narratives of victims suffering throughout their lives" (p. 205).

From a different perspective, Bennet (2009) remarkably stated that dead narrators (as Susie in *TLB*) have more control over their narratives. The dead narrators are the ones who arrange the rape events in their stories to ensure that the murderer is not the active agent manipulating the plot. More importantly, victims' actions are motivated by their psychological damage and fear, not by a compelling and clever murder plot.

Given that narrative analysis is a potential theoretical approach to understanding rape narratives. Therefore, this article stylistically analyses the narrative structures of Sebold's rape narrative *TLB* using Labov's (1972) theoretical model of narrative structure and Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity system. It is aimed to uncover the hidden meanings of rape, constructing the traumatic realities of rape events, the gravity of pain and sufferings of rape victims, and the ways the victims opt for their regaining and resurfacing.

Theoretical Framework

Narrative Structure Analysis. Labov (1972) views the minimal narrative as a sequence of two clauses that are temporarily ordered. If the order of the clauses is altered, the original semantic interpretation will be changed. For example, "I punched this boy, and he punched me" (Labov, 1972, p. 360). The two clauses consist of a minimal narrative. If their order is changed, it will become "[t]his boy punched me, and I punched him (p. 360). The original meaning has been changed.

Narratives involving the beginning, middle, and end are generally complete. However, Labov (2013) provides a fully developed model of a narrative structure having six categories, with each having its function: (i) abstract (indicates what the narrative is about), (ii) orientation (describes the setting; time, and place), (iii) complicating action (recounts and orders a chain of events surrounding the narrative's *most reportable event*, the event that

consists a notable shift in circumstances), (iv) evaluation (offers a description of different perspectives in the narrative), (v) resolution (reflects on results of the event), and (vi) coda (brings the narrative to an end, and redirects focus to the present). Even though ABSTRACTS exist in the beginning and CODAS, in the end, these categories can be found anywhere in a narrative, and interestingly a narrative does not need to include each single of them. Therefore, a narrator has "many options for constructing a narrative" (Labov, 2013, p. 27). A storyteller builds his/her story using a primary experience whereby different stages of narrative structure would help make its interpretations significant in the form of clauses and underpinned evaluation. According to Labov and Waletzky (1997), a narrative has the function of sequencing an event having specific words and structures. Moreover, narrative structure analysis is a potential alternative to interpreting narrative meanings in detail (Labov, 1972). Therefore, the Labovian model of narrative structure analysis consists of significant paradigms to analyze narratives having different levels of length, organization, content, and complexity.

Transitivity System. The transitivity system is considered the most significant method of examining the ideologies embedded in a text (Beard, 2000; Simpson, 1993). Moreover, Fowler (1991) called transitivity an essential system to represent human experiences. In the transitivity system, clauses are evaluated to dissect events and situations of different

experiences. Additionally, the system investigates language to exhibit the *process* (i.e., happenings), *participants*, and the *circumstances* constructing a clause (Martin et al., 1997); the process tells the nature of the action or the event being described in the clause; the participants are the involved factors being actor, sayer, sensor, goal, and receiver in the process of the clause; and the circumstances are related to the settings including time and location of the process. Largely, the events and processes are represented through the transitivity system; it helps determine the agent (who) and agency (how) of the action performed. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) divided the process in the transitivity system into six categories: material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential. In contrast to the participants, the circumstances consist of circumstantial elements like time, location, cause, reason, and manner of the action in the clause. Therefore, the participants are involved directly, while the circumstances indirectly involve the clause process.

Halliday initiated transitivity and first analyzed William Golding's *The Inheritors*. Broadly, transitivity is part of Hallidayan theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (known as SFL; see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014), which proposed the perspective of language as "a meaning-making system with an emphasis on choice" (Neale, 2002, p. 44). By transitivity system, Halliday introduced all the features of the clause which contribute to the linguistic representation of the speaker's experience (Halliday, 1969, p. 81).

METHODS

The primary purpose of this article is to provide an analytical lens to rape narratives that can explore new meanings and concepts of rape, trauma, and abuse and examine how rape victims recover in their post-assault lives. Stylistically motivated, the article applies the Labovian narrative structure analysis model and Hallidayan transitivity system to interpret narrative structures emerging from the clauses used in the text.

Data

It is a descriptive study based on Sebold's rape narrative *TLB*. The study's data consist of young rape victim Susie Salmon's narrative discourses collected from *TLB*'s first and last chapter. Initially, both chapters, along with the entire novel, were thoroughly read; the three stages of rape: pre-, while-, and post-rape, covering the whole experience of rape, were marked. Then, the narrative discourses within these rape stages were tabulated. Thereafter, the discourses about Susie's rape event were extracted, and others were excluded. The data set is chosen for several reasons. For instance, the first chapter is about Susie's abduction, rape, and butchering, whereas the last chapter depicts Susie's transfer from one heaven to another. The collected narrative discourses were further investigated to identify and categorize the clauses constructing narrative structures.

Method of Analysis

The analysis begins with identifying and categorizing six Labovian narrative structures based on the clauses used in

Susie's narrative discourses. Table 1 presents the Labovian model of narrative structures.

Secondly, the narrative structures are further investigated to obtain deeper meanings and new concepts of rape through Halliday's transitivity processes. The transitivity model is shown in Table 2.

The entire structure of a rape narrative about the range of experiences from the initiation of the rape act up to its effects on rape victims in their post-assault lives could be apprehended thoroughly. Given that the rape narratives explored in this way (having rape in parts and whole) would help come out horrors of rape, pain, and suffering of rape victims.

RESULTS

After applying the Labovian model of narrative structures to Susie's narrative discourses, all six categories (along with clauses therein) are found (see Table 3).

The findings show that each narrative structure in *TLB* denotes an important part and stage of the rape event contributing to the whole. The structures not only helped construct a complete story of rape but also offered a perspective to look into the parts representing numerous gruesome experiences of rape. Initially, the ABSTRACT category informed readers about the story's subject by describing

Table 1
Labov's (1972) model of natural narrative

Narrative category	Narrative question	Narrative function
Abstract	What is this narrative all about?	It marks the beginning of a story and attracts the reader/learner's attention.
Orientation	Who is involved in the story? When and where did it take place?	It helps the reader/listener to identify the characters, time, and place of the story.
Complicating Action	What happened?	The main part of the narrative structure describes "what happened" in the story.
Resolution	What finally happened?	It recapitulates the final key event of a story.
Evaluation	So what?	It functions to illustrate the main points of the story.
Coda	How does it get ended?	It tells the end of the story and redirects the reader/listener to the present.

Table 2
Processes in Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity system

Process category	What process categories construct?	Participants	Circumstances
Material	Happening of an event and doing an action	Actor	Goal
Mental	Perception, affection, and cognition	Senser	Phenomenon
Relational	Attributive and identifying	Carrier, token	Attribute, value
Behavioral	Physiological and psychological	Behaver	Behavior
Verbal	Saying and signaling	Sayer	Verbiage
Existential	Existing	Existent	

Table 3
Narrative structures in TLB

Narrative category	Extracts from <i>TLB</i>	Context of situation
Abstract	The penguin was alone in there, I thought, and I worried for him. When I told my father this, he said, "Don't worry, Susie; he has a nice life. He's trapped in a perfect world." (p. 4).	Before Susie's rape and death, Susie is with her father.
Orientation	My name was Salmon, like the fish; first name Susie. I was fourteen when I was murdered on December 6, 1973 (p. 6). My murderer was a man from our neighborhood. My mother liked his border flowers, and my father talked to him once about fertilizer (p. 6).	After Susie's rape and death, Susie is speaking from her heaven.
Complicating Action	I fought hard. I fought as hard as I could not to let Mr. Harvey hurt me, but my hard-as-I-could was not hard enough, not even close, and I was soon lying down on the ground, in the ground, with him on top of me panting and sweating, having lost his glasses in the struggle (p. 12). Mr. Harvey started to press his lips against mine. They were blubbery and wet, and I wanted to scream, but I was too afraid and too exhausted from the fight (p. 13). I felt huge and bloated (p. 13). He was inside me. He was grunting (p. 13). I wept and struggled so I would not feel (p. 13). He brought back a knife... He took the hat from my mouth... The end came anyway (p. 15).	During Susie's rape, she was raped and butchered in the hole in the ground in her neighborhood by Mr. Harvey.
Evaluation	I wish now that I had known this was weird (p. 7). Mr. Harvey would say these words to my mother (p. 7). My mother sat on a hard chair... with her mouth open... Her pale face paler than I had ever seen (p. 10). My father was driven into motion... He wanted to know details... (p. 11).	After Susie's rape and death, she narrated her family's experiences and how her rapist dealt with the situation.
Resolution	When my father's car pulled into the drive, I was beginning to wonder if this had been what I'd been waiting for, for my family to come home, not to me anymore but to one another with me gone (p. 316). "I love you, Susie," she said. I had heard these words so many times from my father that it shocked me now; I had been waiting, unknowingly, to hear it from my mother (p. 317). I was done yearning for them, needing them to yearn for me. Though I still would. Though they still would. Always (p. 318).	After Susie's rape and death, she was looking at her family members and witnessing their reunion from her heaven.
Coda	Now I am in the place call this wide, wide Heaven because it includes all my simplest desires but also the most humble and grand. The word my grandfather uses is <i>comfort</i> (p. 325). If I'm to be honest with you, I still sneak away to watch my family sometimes. I can't help it, and sometimes they still think of me. They can't help it (p. 323).	After Susie's rape and death, she is speaking from her another heaven.

Susie's innocence, purity, family relations, approaching danger, loneliness, and fear through various word choices and clause constructions. For example, the temporal juncture in the relative clause "When I told..." (Sebold, 2002, p. 3) evoked her father's reply (with care and affection) when Susie asked about the lonely penguin in the snow globe. In ORIENTATION, the construction of clauses introduced Susie; the rape victim, Mr. Harvey; the perpetrator, and the place and time of the rape event. The free clause "My name was..." (p. 5) directly mentioned who the rape victim was. The next is the relative clause that disclosed her age (fourteen) and the event of her murder. This relative clause, apart from surface meaning, redirected to the gruesome details of rape; a school-going girl who was in her fourteen (the beginning of life, the age of dreams and ambitions) was abruptly ended by a thirty-six-year-old man.

Moreover, the clause helped expose internal feelings and the mental state of the rape victim, denying death and yearning to continue life. The COMPLICATING ACTION having the temporal juncture, dealt with numerous appalling experiences of rape. For example, the rape victim tried hard, as in "I fought hard" to get released (Sebold, 2002, p. 12). Even though she tried hard, she could not save her; eventually, "I was soon lying down on the ground" (p. 12), confirming her defeat. Additionally, several clauses (i.e., relative clause, reflective clause, subordinate clause) constructed Susie's experiences of being brutally tortured and raped. For example,

the sentence "I wept..." (p. 14) has two clauses describing two different parts of rape; first, the victim was crying and struggling simultaneously, and, secondly, she was doing all this so she could not feel what was happening. Broadly, it showed how a rape victim is physically and mentally destructed and how parts of rape construct the humiliation of children and women in rape events. In EVALUATION, the clauses depicted that rape events affect a victim's life individually and bring atrocities to the victim's family members collectively.

Given that Sebold used free clauses to render the pain and suffering of Susie's family, her mother grew paler (corresponding to lifeless, still, fixated), and her father became restless. The rape event brought destruction to both the rape victim and her family. The RESOLUTION structure explained Susie's coming to terms with and coping with the situation. For this, the free clause of "I love you..." (p. 317) recorded the feelings and emotions Abigail (Susie's mother) experienced. This clause worked twofold; it concluded a mother's care, affection, and missing of her departed girl, and, on the other hand, it helped evoke Susie's emotions toward her mother; Susie was waiting for this moment for a long time. The clause infinitely established a connection between the living and dead; they would stay connected and felt by each other. Finally, the CODA consisting of different clauses brought the story to its end. The relative clause beginning with "if" emphasized what Susie wanted to share, the truth.

Moreover, in the same sentence, the second clause (main clause) referred to the time “still,” which means even after a very long time, Susie looks for her family and vice versa, which is quite natural as in “I can’t help it... They can’t help it” (Sebold, 2002, p. 323). It has been depicted that rape victims live a normal life again after the assault. Nevertheless, it is almost impossible to forget what happened as the memories of rape reoccur in their lives periodically.

DISCUSSION

Real Horrors, Pain, and Suffering of Rape

The investigation of narrative structures having the words and clauses analyzed therein Susie’s rape discourses evoked the embedded reality of rape events. For example, the clause in “I fought hard...” (Sebold, 2002, p. 12) represented Susie, a fourteen-year-old school-going child, as an actor performing a material process of fighting with a thirty-six-year-old man named Mr. Harvey; the goal “hard” added meaning that she was trying every single possibility of her strength whether physical or mental to remain safe which she elaborated as “not to let Mr. Harvey hurt me” (p. 12). Largely, it meant that children and women neither invite nor want to get raped as it is generally precepted in rape events (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010); instead, they fight and struggle to remain safe.

The humiliation of rape victims is inevitable; therefore, rape is considered one of the most severe and traumatizing crimes (Campbell, 2008). The material

process of “lying down” in the following clause reported the state of the actor, the rape victim, directly experiencing the perpetrator’s force. The process of lying down refers to how rape victims are physically tortured and sullied. Moreover, the circumstances “down on the ground, in the ground” (Sebold, 2002, p. 12) involved Susie being raped and directed to the weird and haunted location, adding fear and horror and consequently affecting the victim’s mental health. In addition, the perpetrator is on top and sweating, and having Susie underneath describes the humiliation of rape victims.

Moreover, the clause “Mr. Harvey started...” (Sebold, 2002, p. 13) put Mr. Harvey in charge; he initiated performing actions like pressing his lips against Susie’s. Herein, Susie became passive to receive whatever was forced on her. Instead of using the word “kiss” or “kissing,” which might mislead as to the involvement of the two, Sebold used “to press his lips against mine” (p. 13), which described the act of humiliation where a child was controlled to exercise whatever was possible for the perpetrator. The pronoun “mine” highlighted the feelings of possession and privacy being snatched away by the perpetrator. Along with the physical pain, Susie’s mental suffering is portrayed using the attribute “blubbery and wet” in the next clause. At a deeper level of meaning, the mention of how the perpetrator’s lips depicted Susie’s thoughts; she was shocked at how savagely she was being treated. Broadly, it demonstrated how rape victims, mostly children, and women,

are devalued, dehumanized, and destructed in society (Roynon, 2014). Alarming, in modern human societies, violent rape incidents have reached new heights putting vulnerable women and children at risk (Wehling-Giorgi, 2021). Accordingly, rape incidents should be seriously dealt with on an urgent basis.

Nevertheless, in most rape instances, the victims are silenced and brutally killed outright (Smith, 2010). Sebold's description of Susie's end presented the horrific details of the crime. The use of the goal "knife" that Mr. Harvey brought back directly pointed out the dissection of Susie, similar to the ways animals are cut up and consumed. Along with the physical pain of being cut, she was mentally traumatized. On the other hand, the pronoun "he" is used as an active actor denoting Mr. Harvey, whereas Susie is represented as passive, being scared, exhausted, and frozen.

Moreover, in the following clause, the goal of "hat" and circumstances (of place) "mouth" amplified the pain Susie was going through. The hat is used to wear on the head, but it was stuffed into Susie's mouth to silence her, directed not only to Susie's slow death but also to show how inhumanly rape victims are treated in rape events. Broadly, it meant the requests and pleading seemed irritating to the perpetrators; therefore, they rightfully and forcefully silenced them. Nath and Pratihari (2018) studied that the perpetrators kill the victims outright to conceal their identity and escape punishment. Remarkably, Larson (2018) instantiated that these acts of

silencing rape victims are part of traditional patriarchal patterns in which the raped women and children are forcibly made disabled. Since language shapes, everyday life, the language of rape narratives should be explored to know the horrors of rape and the painful experiences of rape.

Regaining and Rising of Rape Victims

The recovery of rape victims remains a challenge even in modern human society, as rape is physical, mental, and social (Roynon, 2014). Unfortunately, the victims are held responsible for what happened and punished accordingly (Delker et al., 2020). Amid such social practices, rape victims either get killed or forcibly silenced (Gilmore, 2017; Maart, 2008). Nevertheless, Susie rose, returned, and shared her ordeal. The clause patterns used throughout COMPLICATING ACTION and EVALUATION exhibited horrific parts of her rape event, denoting the gravity of the pain and suffering of rape victims.

On the other hand, the narrative structures thereafter (i.e., RESOLUTION, CODA) consisted of the clauses offering the ways Susie opted to move on. The clause "I was beginning..." (Sebold, 2002, p. 316) presented Susie as an actor, and the material process of "beginning" evidently pointed toward moving and shifting, which was illustrated in the goal (i.e., "wonder," "family," and "home"). Importantly, the move is further explained in terms of wonder, family, and home, bringing Susie to the family and the home once isolated and destroyed. Moreover, the following

free clause worked twofold; first, it showed Susie's mother as an actor (active, full of life), and, therefore, taking the initiative to speak and to do something; second, the verbiage "I love you, Susie" (p. 317) invited Susie to be the part of her feelings. This mental behavior of Susie's mother also helped Susie to get strengthen as she was isolated and broken since the fall of her family (after Susie's abrupt end), and she was in wait to hear something like that, especially from her mother. In the following clause, the behavior illustrated that Susie had repeatedly heard words like "love" from her father.

Interestingly, the clauses in the RESOLUTION contained a series of words about family and relations. Therefore, the feeling of unification and reunion of the beloved ones has been provided as an option to soothe the tortured rape victims. Broadly, the intended meaning constructed through the clauses called society being united to provide support for rape victims instead of ignoring and rejecting them.

Eventually, again being an actor, Susie was presented as an actor through the personal pronoun of "I," and the material process of "done" (in "I was done...") demonstrated something accomplished and achieved by her. Through the goal of that clause, Susie stopped "yearning" and "needing" (Sebold, 2002, p. 318) their family members. Importantly, it has been revealed that the mental health of rape victims plays a significant role in their recovery. The words like yearning and needing exhibited Susie's and her family members' feelings

and emotions toward each other. Given that the meanings underneath clauses in the RESOLUTION structure offered how the victim coped with the crime. In other words, Borg (2018) stated that the control of rape victims over their stories helps them heal and regain since they are the masters of their life narratives.

Nonetheless, the complete recovery of rape victims is impossible. The clauses in the CODA structure instantiated this fact. At the end of the first clause, the circumstances of the place made it clear that Susie is in Heaven, which is wide, referred to as a place free of earthly pain and suffering. Additionally, the following clauses marked Susie's fulfillment of desires; "humble and grand" and experiencing "comfort" with her grandfather. However, in the last clause, the actor, Susie, presented through the personal pronoun "I" and showed sneaking away for their family members. The location of time "still" emphatically refers to the huge amount of time spent after Susie's abrupt end, even though she is mentally unstable as she looks for her family, which she left abruptly. Although Susie has departed to the next level of heaven, which shows her move from despair to happiness and satisfaction, she cannot control her feelings and emotions about joining her family back, which haunts her psychological self. It meant that rape victims and their families never fully recovered from rape experiences. Sharma (2020) stressed that "the memories of trauma cannot be forgotten rather every day it aggravates in the consciousness of these rape victims" (p. 205).

CONCLUSION

The stylistic analysis of narrative structures in Sebold's *TLB* has instantiated that rape narratives have new meanings and concepts of rape experiences helping understand not only the horrors, pain, and suffering of rape but also examine how rape victims are regaining and resurfacing. The words and construction of clauses in rape discourses exhibited how rape victims are dehumanized, oppressed, and silenced by perpetrators during rape events which cause gruesome life experiences in rape victims' post-assault lives. Moreover, it has been seen that rape victims should be supported and motivated to live instead of stigmatization and rejection by their families and society. Largely, the article showed the importance of studying rape narratives and discourses through multiple theoretical lenses (e.g., Labovian narrative structure mode, Hallidayan transitivity system) to uncover the horrors of rape and to understand the ways rape victims opt to get resiliency in their post-assault lives. Given that the study could be a tool for an individual, government agencies, and organizations working for rape victims to create policies to curb the crime and facilitate rape victims, respectively.

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